NAIROBI EVANGELICAL GRADUATE SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY

Reasons Why the Youth Desert Church at Teenage:
A Study of Kagumo Fullgospel Local Church Assembly

BY

GERALD IREGI THUO

A Thesis Submitted To The Graduate School in Partial
Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Arts in Christian Education

JULY, 2008

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July, 2008

Student's Declaration

REASONS WHY THE YOUTH DESERT CHURCH AT TEENAGE: A STUDY OF KAGUMO FULLGOSPEL LOCAL CHURCH ASSEMBLY

I declare that this is my original work and has not been submitted to other College or University for academic credit

The views herein are not necessarily those of the Nairobi Evangelical Graduate school of Theology or the Examiners

(Signed)_____

Gerald Iregi Thuo

July, 2008

ABSTRACT

This research was done to find out why the youth desert church at teenage. The objective was to find out the role of the foundations laid at Sunday school level, the role of parents and the kind of programs that appeal to the youth. Grounded theory was chosen for the research. Nine teenagers were interviewed, five of who were active and four who were inactive in church programs. Six youth leaders were involved in the focus group discussion. It emerged that poor input by the church leaders in establishing appropriate programs and training teachers for this age group led to them leaving the church. Other factors had to do with the senior youth's attitude towards the teenagers, lack of sufficient parental support and negative influence from peers.

The research established that despite the good foundation laid in Sunday school, more needs to be done to maintain the teenagers in church. The parents and the church leaders ought to play a more active role to motivate the youth to remain active in church. The youth need to be fully involved, their talents recognized and used within the church for them to remain active. It was recommended that the youth group be reorganized taking into consideration their age brackets and more interesting and involving activities should be included in the programs.

TO

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Rose was a charming young girl as she grew up. She was very obedient and was an active participant in the Sunday school class. Her father was a respected pastor in the local church and her mother was the women leader. After joining secondary school at age fourteen, Rose changed drastically. She was no longer interested in joining her parents to church and was often rude to them. Her parents were quite upset and distraught. They were wondering what had gone wrong and what they should do in the present situation

(a true story). This is not an isolated case, because many of those who have grown up in the church tend to forsake the church after attaining teenage. If we are going to have a generation that knows God, then it is important that the youth be trained and nurtured spiritually so as to know God and not leave church later on.

In the Bible we also find such situations where people at certain times forsook the ways of God as illustrated by the following verse, "After that whole generation had been gathered to their fathers, another generation grew up, who knew neither the Lord nor what he had done for Israel" (Judges 2:10 NIV). This was a situation that took place in the history of the Israelites. It would be indeed a terrible situation for such a situation to take place in our local church. This is why the Lord commanded the Israelites to teach their children His ways (Deut 6:7). How can young people today be brought up in a way that will help them cling to the teachings of the Lord up to their old age? Christian teachers and pastors must endeavor to answer this question.

Problem Statement

Many children from Christian families appear to abandon church when they reach teenage. Such children may have been active in Sunday school activities but become inactive or even leave the church altogether after attaining teenage. The literature offers explanations for this phenomenon as it exists in the West, but little research has been done to explain it in the Kenyan context. This study aims at unearthing young peoples' perception of factors leading them to abandon church at teenage.

Ethical Considerations

The study helped the participants to reflect on their lives as they take part in this study. All participants had an opportunity to strengthen their faith in God. Those sampled were interviewed voluntarily without any undue pressure. The interview was conducted in a way that participants were not embarrassed in any way.. The names of the participants were held in confidence and did not appear anywhere in the findings. This was done to enable them share any information with any fear. The participants were also interviewed at their time and place of convenience.

Purpose Statements

The purpose of this grounded theory study was to understand young peoples' perception of factors contributing to their desertion from the FGCK Kagumo local church assembly. For the purpose of this study, desertion from church was defined as absenteeism from church service and church activities on a regular basis. The youth are those aged fifteen to twenty years.

Research Questions

The central question: What factors contribute to the youth deserting church during their teenage years?

Sub questions

a. Do the Christian foundations laid in Sunday school help the youth integrate with the church in their teenage years?

b. Does parental involvement in the children's spiritual development assist the teenagers in making faith related decisions?

c. What kind of church programs appeal to the youth in their teenage years?

Definition of Terms

Local Church Assembly: A group of churches under the leadership of a senior pastor.

Pre- youth: The young people at the age of 12-14years.

Teenagers: Young people (15-20 years) who are in the secondary school going age. In this research, this term will be used interchangeably with the adolescents. They are the main focus of the study. In the set up of this research they are part of the youth group.

Youth: Young people who are unmarried. They are mainly in ages of 15-30 years.

Senior youth: The youth who are in the ages of 20-30 years.

Youth leaders: These are the youth pastors, majority of them are in the senior youth group and some are married.

Significance of the Study

The study will be useful to various people as follows:

- It will give the youth participants who may have deserted church an opportunity to reflect on their life, allowing them to reconsider their decisions and come back to the church.

- It will give the youth participants still active in the church a chance to reflect more on their life and commitment to God in a way that will encourage them remain firm in their faith.

- It will be useful to the youth leaders who are the immediate pastors to the youth in helping them know the relevant and practical ways of following up the youth.

- It will help other church leaders to reflect more critically on their role in the spiritual formation of the youth and help them come up with appealing programs that sustain youth participation in church.

- It will be useful to parents as it will reveal the role they should play in the spiritual growth of their teenagers.

- It will benefit the larger church family because when the youth are properly taken care of, there will be proper harmony within the church family.

- The wider community also will benefit in that when the youth remain faithful members of their churches, there will be fewer youth involved in social evils. The society will be a safer place to live in.

Delimitations

The study was confined to the youth within FGCK Kagumo local church assembly. The study only dwelt on identifying what made the youth abandon church at teenage. The study focused on the youth who deserted church, their peers who were active in church and the youth leaders.

Limitations

The findings were specific to the context of FGCK Kagumo local Church assembly and so they cannot be generalized. However, the findings can be used in other congregations who may have a similar background. The findings were only the perceptions of those interviewed and may not have included all the factors that contribute to this problem. Few areas may also have changed between when some of the youth left the church and the current situation and hence the findings may not be one hundred percent applicable even in the Kagumo local church assembly.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

A literature review in qualitative research such as "grounded theory studies, case studies and phenomenological studies will serve less to set the stage for the study" (Creswell 2003, 30). This is because this kind of study is explorative where the researcher seeks to listen to the participants and build an understanding based on their ideas (Creswell 2003). It is however important to have a substantial literature review as it will, among other things, be useful in giving the work overall credence as scholarly work (Peter 1994). The literature review in this study is based on some of the things that happen at the adolescent stage of development, some of which may in turn affect the adolescent's participation in church.

The Definition of an Adolescent

Adolescence is a stage between childhood and adulthood. Dobson says, "Adolescence is a cultural term meaning the age between childhood and adulthood in a particular society. It is the period when an individual has neither the privileges of childhood nor the freedom of adulthood" (1999, 165). During this time the adolescent will be trying to find out who he is and it can be a time of great confusion in the life of such a person. An adolescent is therefore a boy or girl in the transitional stage of maturity (Collins 1988, 167). According to him adolescence begins at puberty and extends between childhood and adulthood. Collins defines adolescence as a period of growth to Maturity. According to him adolescence begins at puberty and extends to the late teenage or early twenties. He further states, "It is a time when a young person

changes physically, emotionally, intellectually and socially" (1988, 167). Such

changes bring about many other modifications in behavior, which are associated with

this age group. Collins says, "The teenage world is often confusing and it changes so

quickly that immature young people do not always adjust efficiently" (1988, 167).

Fleege writes, "the adolescent is passing through a period of uneven

physiological growth which brings to him undreamed experiences and ideas. These

changes sweep over him and are frightening to him due to their newness to him"

(1992, 124). It is no wonder that the adolescent may take a path that one may never

have expected of him or her.

According to Collins "Adolescents are going through a significant change

period, characterized first by the need to adjust to a variety of physical changes,

second by the influence of great social pressure and third by the challenge of making

life decisions about values, beliefs, identity, careers, lifestyles and relationship with

others including those of the opposite sex" (1988, 167). Hence, it is important for the

adult world to know this if they are going to be of any use in helping the youth adjust

to the new life.

Collins divides adolescence into three overlapping periods. These are: the pre-

adolescence period, beginning around ten or eleven years and continuing for a couple

of years. The second is the middle adolescence from fourteen to eighteen years and

post-adolescence beginning from late teenage to early twenties. According to my

observation most of the changes take place within the middle adolescence and where

adolescents behavior changes drastically.

Megill writes, "There is a danger during adolescence when the individual will

develop not a sense of ego identity, but of identity diffusion; a doubt as to what life is

all about and a doubt about one's place in it" (1981, 122). If such confusion occurs to

these youth, then they may behave in a way that may not be understood by others. It is, however, important that others know what is happening to these youth if they are going to be of help to them. Megill says it is important to be aware of some of these changes that are taking place in the youth if we expect to help them (1981, 122). Some of these changes are outlined below.

Changes Taking Place in Adolescence

Adolescents are going through rapid changes, which are physical, mental and emotional.

Physical Changes

There are physical changes that occur in both the girls and the boys during the adolescence stage. Megill states, "During early adolescence, girls begin menstrual cycle, while in boys nocturnal emissions occur. In girls there is development of breasts, appearance of pubic hair, changing body contours and voice change in boys. With these changes also come various feelings which may be confusing to the young person" (1981, 123). These physical changes come together with other inner changes. Collins says, "These physical changes have social and physiological implications. Most adolescents have times when they feel awkward, self conscious, and dissatisfied with their physical appearance" (1988, 167). Adolescents can find such changes frightening especially if they do not like what they look like and cannot change it. Collins further says, "There are few physical changes that occur during the middle adolescence stage but the adolescent must adapt to his or her new identity as a person with an adult body. Sexual urges become intense especially in boys and control is difficult in view of peer pressures" (1988, 168). When such youth get involved

sexually due to these sexual urges, their guilt may make them feel that they are not strong members of the church and as such they may even keep away.

Some of the problems that the youth face at adolescence may have something to do with the changes that are taking place in the adolescent's bodies. Gangel and Wilhoit say, "Many of the problems experienced by adolescents stem from the lack of a solid identity. Uncertain of who they are, locked in rapidly changing physical bodies, and confused by the changing opinions of others, adolescents live in a turbulent inner world" (1997, 250). The changing physical body is something that they cannot escape from and they should be guided on how to accept it and live with it.

Mental Changes

Adolescents are not only growing physically but also mentally. Megill says, "This is a time of new seriousness, of occasional thoughtfulness and often of questioning" (1981, 123). As the adolescents question issues, they may come to doubt things formerly taken for granted. This is due to their expanded mental capacity. Megill further says, "During the late adolescence, the young people are thoughtfully raising questions about what their lives should be and about the meaning of life" (1981, 124). He therefore advises that the church gives opportunity for meaningful involvement and service and must deal with the intellectual and ethical questions. The church at this stage ought to change the nature of their ministry to the youth so that they do not teach for the rote memory but must address the developing mental capacity.

Collins says, "The development of more abstract, self critical and reflective thinking leads to an initial questioning of parental values and an increased ability to worry and be anxious" (1988, 168). Hence, if parents know the reasons why these youth question the formerly accepted values, they can help them pass through this

stage with some more understanding. Richards also says, "They may challenge our clearly held values not because they reject but because they must probe and question in order to make the faith of their parents and the Christian community their own" (1985, 36). This kind of questioning is healthy because it also represents an opportunity for these youth to be firmly grounded in the faith. Richards also advises that indeed the youth should be encouraged to talk and think through their faith (1985, 36).

The mental changes in the youth enable them to grasp ideas they could not have grasped before. As Fleege says, "Because of the developing mind, he has become capable of catching the deeper insights and grasping new relations which previously were beyond his mental grasp, thus now appearing in a changed light and possessing new meaning" (1992, 124). The youth, though in the same environment, perceives new meaning because his mind has developed and he has changed.

Emotional Changes

The youth are also changing emotionally which will make them seek emotional independence. Fleege affirms the necessity of adolescents' self-assertive thrusts in their effort to establish emotional independence (1992). Such assertive thrusts are an indication that the youth is indeed developing emotionally. Therefore he suggests that the adolescent needs help in working his way toward self-reliance and emotional maturity (1992). Those working with these people ought to look for ways of making these youth cope with the changing emotional changes.

One of the things that may illustrate this emotional change is the changed feeling towards sex. Megill says, "By the time the adolescent is fourteen, he is usually quite interested with sex and may have strong feelings which can be frightening to a young person" (1981, 123). It appears therefore that adolescence is not a time to leave

these young people totally on their own. They should be helped but also given some freedom.

Adolescent's Interpersonal Relationships

Just as adolescents undergo changes in various ways, their interpersonal relationships also are affected. We can look at the various relationships that exist between the adolescent's peers and the adult world.

Relationships with Peers

Peers play an important role in the life of adolescents. As Collins puts it, "It is important to be liked and accepted by other adolescents." He further says, "There is also a great desire to be accepted and to identify with the current teenage language" (1988, 171). The sense of belonging among the peers is the driving force in these youth. Collins also states, "The peers are important and now become even of greater significance as the adolescent seeks to break away from parental influence, values and control" (1988, 168). Other adolescents encourage the youth in his endeavors. Most of the decisions that the adolescents make may be influenced by their peers. This may have to do with issues such as sex, drugs, and dressing. Collins affirms this when he says that the peers' attitude toward sex, drugs and motor may encourage the adolescent as he has need for love and acceptance. He says that adolescents are involved in sexual intercourse even though it leads to guilt, self-criticism and sometimes cases of pregnancies (1988, 168). This may explain in part why some of those who go to church drop out. The church and the parents can try where they can to ensure that the adolescents are surrounded by the right kind of peers so that they will not be influenced so negatively.

Adolescents however will need peers since they cannot live in isolation. This is because what other peers say seems to be what makes the adolescent feel at ease. This has been mentioned by Megill when she says, "The approval of the peer group is very important to a young person" (1981, 123). It should be noted that the interaction with peers will reduce the influence of parents on the adolescents. Dobson says "adolescent peer group pressure accounts for some of the strain between generations and reduced parental influence during this time" (1999, 173). The young persons should be guided so that they associate with the right peers so that they will not be easily influenced to engage in wrong behavior in order for him to belong. The church I believe can do this by ensuring that there are sufficient activities for these youth so that they are interacting with those who can influence them positively.

Adolescents in schools present a challenge to their parents as they are far away from them and so they have no say at all concerning their peers. This is particularly more so in boarding schools where children have to be away for long before coming back to their parents. This is captured by Lingren and Suter when they say, "As students start attending school and move away from dependence on their families, they become members of peer groups that characteristically satisfy psychological needs that are not met by families"(1985, 125). Much as the parents feel that they are loosing influence on their children, it is important to note that the peers satisfy needs that the family is not able to meet. As such where the relationship is healthy, they play an important role in the life of these adolescents. Lingren and Suter also point out that, "Family influence is strongest during the early years of childhood but as children become involved with play groups and develop close friendship, peer groups begin to exert significant influence over the lives, thoughts, feelings and actions of most young people" (1985, 125). Lingren and Suter seem to be confirming an important concept

that indeed peers are the closest people in the life of the adolescent and not the parents and other adults. The golden question however remains, how do parents and the church ensure that these young people have peers who will influence them positively?

Relationship with Parents and the Adult World

During the adolescent stage, there is a desire to be independent from their parents. Therefore if the adolescents are not very close to their parents, it is only because of the developmental stage that they find themselves in. The adolescents will need to feel that they are in an environment that has stability. To ensure such a stability Collins advises that there is need to have clear parental guidance so that the youth will not feel confused, anxious and angry (1988, 169). Where the parents have been living what they teach their children they will make a more lasting impression on their children that will be difficult to erase easily (1997, 173). It is therefore important for the parents to play their rightful role not only at the stage of adolescence but throughout as their children grow up.

The behavior of the adolescents and especially toward the adult world also appears to change drastically. Such a change has been captured by Lingren and Suter when they say, "adolescent's feelings towards parents, teachers and other authority figures are often mixed. The need for independence compared with the unwillingness to ask for assistance often leads to gestures of defiance" (1985, 125). When the youth appear reluctant to behave as they used to, it is because they are seeking for that independence. Fleege also mentions why adolescents behave the way they do as they complain that their parents do not know them well enough, and do not realize that they are grown up (1992, 123). By appearing to cut links with the parents and the adult world, the youth are the ones who feel not understood. As such they will tend to sever their relationship with the adult world.

Adolescence stage is not rosy for the youth even as they may appear to de-link themselves from the adult world. This has been captured by Klausmeirer as he discusses the development of children. He states that during the adolescence stage one of the tasks of the youth is to achieve independence from parents and other adults. He discusses three facets in this task, namely to achieve increasing independence from parents, maintain affection for parents without remaining dependent on them and to develop respect for older adults without depending on them. This task he says causes confusion and worries in some homes and may result in rebellion by the adolescent and rejection by parents (1995, 82). The adult world and the parents' knowledge of what is going on in the life of these adolescents can be useful in making this time less stressful for both the adolescents and their parents.

The bad behavior witnessed among the adolescents is partly due to lack of interaction between them and the adult world. This has been stated by Lingren and Suter who said that peer pressure, group norms and the lack of interaction of young people and the adults appear to be major forces behind delinquency (1985, 122). Hence, it is important the adults strive to maintain a healthy interaction with the adolescents even though at times it appears a difficult task. As he talks of modern youth, Megill says "there is an increasing gap between the generations. Youth and their parents live in two different worlds" (1981, 120). This should not mean that the youth should be left entirely on their own but should be guided with love so that they do not get lost.

It is of great importance to know that both the mature and the young learn to coexist, as they need each other. O'Donovan puts it clearly when he says "the old need to train and prepare the young to take their place. The young need to learn from the old and to submit to them so that God's will for future generations will be done" (2006,

207). The adult should strive to ensure that they do their desired job of training, which may be the only way of trying to bridge the generation gap. Parents should also realize that they have the responsibility of bringing up their children in godly way irrespective of the age that they are in. As LaHaye puts it "the real purpose for Christians having children is to bring them to adulthood to serve and glorify God" (1997, 173). This is indeed a challenge to the parents but they must not give up or despair but should continue playing their roles as parents.

Fleege also mentions the relationship of the adolescent and the adult world when he says that in his effort to establish self-reliance, the adolescent might reject parental help and understanding although at the same time craving it (1992, 127). This illustrates the conflicting character of adolescents. If he accepts parental advice or submits to parental control, he feels that he is being thrown back to childhood. This may explain why the adolescent does not appear to follow parental advice but more of the peers' advice. Possibly participation in church activities may decline as a result of the revolt from the parents' advice.

Adolescents and Religion

Adolescents like to assert themselves in all areas including their attitude toward religion. Toward this end the youth may start asking questions about what they may have taken for granted before. Fleege captures this very well when he writes,

> To build a self less dependent on his parents, the adolescent must challenge himself constantly with new experiences. Consequently he experiments with himself and his environment by forming new friendships, by developing new and absorbing interests in science, machines, dancing, daydreams, in music, in problems centering around religions, political, philosophical psychological, humanitarian and social issues by adopting a flair for loud clothes and peculiar mannerisms, by rejecting social standards and parental advice and even arguing about religious values. (1992, 127)

Youth will ask many questions as they try to establish their judgment in many areas, including those related to the issue of faith. Megill mentions this when he says, "There is a developing conscience and interest in moral and religious questions as young people no longer accept without questions the moral judgments of their elders" (1981,123). This will be a time therefore when the youth will question what they may have accepted before without any questions. The questions that the youth ask seem to be related to the stage that they are in. Collins who states that adolescents are going through changing values, morals and religious beliefs has captured this and says,

> As they get older, however, the adolescents begin to question parental viewpoints and peers have greater impact on the molding of beliefs and values. Often, young people get no help with the process of values clarification except from equally confused and struggling peers. Religious doubt, a decrease in church related activities and a turning to some other faith (at least temporarily) are all common in adolescence; much to the distress of parents and church leaders. (1988, 171)

While this tells us whom the adolescents listen to more in term of values, it also tells us why their attendance to church may decline. At this time what they particularly need are people who can stand with them and tell them truth that is not distorted.

Dettoni and Dettoni put the adolescents in a stage known as synthetic conventional faith according. At this stage, the adolescents see themselves in relation with others. They write, "At this stage people tend to be highly committed to church because for them church becomes an idealized extended family." (Dettoni and Dettoni 1998, 78). This appears to be quite different with what the above mentioned writers have said concerning the adolescents at this stage. Dettoni and Dettoni further say that at this stage, "There is an overdependence on significant people within the community of faith. Pastors, youth leaders, or other significant persons are the source of both judgments" (1998, 78). Adolescents can easily be influenced in spiritual matters especially if they take one of the spiritual leaders as their role model. Parents ought to

keep encouraging the adolescents to remain active in their churches. LaHaye advises, "Christian parents should be supportive of their local church in front of their teens and insist on their active participation in everything their local church offers for their age level" (1997, 155). Parents should therefore keep reminding their teenage children the importance of participating in church activities. Church will be a better place than any other alternative the youth would opt for.

Gangel and Wilhoit have made a unique observation when they say that the fact that the adolescents have left church should not mean that they have rejected God. What they have rejected is the institutional religion but still retain the personal religion. According to them "the rejection of the institutional church may actually be an opportunity for spiritual growth and nurture" (1997, 252). While such an observation seems to be quite different from what others have stated, it will be quite useful to those dealing with these youth so that they do not judge them so harshly.

Adolescents and School

According to a study done by The Institute for Juvenile Research, Illinois Department of Mental Health, school experience, television, the media, work experience and peer society play a great role in the socialization of the adolescents (1985, 122). This is important to those handling the youth as it gives them a clue as to what affects them greatly at this stage. Many of the adolescents go to boarding schools at this stage. Datta states, "There are several distinct ways in which schools can transmit political values, beliefs and skills to pupil. In the first place, children may be initiated into politics by the way in which the school is organized and administered" (1981, 39). This is an illustration that school life is a place where the students can be influenced to think in a certain way. Datta has this to say concerning boarding schools, "An isolated boarding school can reinforce attitudes of elitism-the tendency on the part

of the individual to consider himself, not only different from, but superior to, the common people" (1981, 39). Such attitudes if acquired by the adolescents may make them forsake the values and beliefs that they held dear before as they may consider themselves superior.

Stonehouse, discussing spiritual formation, writes, "Now the school is a culture of its own, which establishes goals for itself. The school may connect with family and community values or it may establish its own goals and standards of achievements" (2001, 59). The school, according to this observation, can indeed change what may have been inculcated by parents and especially in boarding schools where these students are away from such parents for long periods. Downs also says, "The teenage may go off to college well equipped with all the right answers but not equipped to defend them. When their moral reasoning is attacked and they have not developed adequate reasons for why they believe, their moral content will be quickly abandoned" (1997, 105). This is food for thought for parents and pastors who should help to explain to the youth the why of their faith and not only present to them do's and don'ts. Cowley also affirms, "Secondary school can pose many challenges for young people. Not only do they have to adapt to a totally different environment, but they are also moving into adolescence, a time of vast changes in their physical, mental and emotional make-up (2001, 86). School therefore may impact the children negatively in the process of being educated due to the kind of students they interact with. Depending again on the kind of interaction they do get in school, many of these youth may be influenced to forsake church activities.

Adolescents and the Media

The mass media also is rated high as one of the things that have great influence on the adolescents. Some of the things that are presented in the media may disagree

with what is taught in the church or what the parents may have instructed their children. The fact that the parents and the adolescents are not very close at this stage makes the media a great source of information for these youth. Devries points out that as the youth get isolated from their parents, they are more susceptible to the power of television (1994). Considering that the adolescents get isolated from their parents due to the developmental stage they are in, influence of TV and other sources of mass media as well are bound to influence their behavior. Dettoni and Dettoni say, "The youth make judgments based on figures that appeal to them." (1998, 78). Some of the characters and issues that they are exposed to in the mass media will definitely affect these youth negatively. This may affect them in the way they do participate in church activities.

In summary, the youth at teenage are going through a lot of changes that pose several challenges to their lives. Some of these changes encourage them to make certain decisions, which may make them remain inactive in church activities. However a clear understanding of the changes taking place in the youth will assist those who are working with them to understand them well and put in place programs that will assist them remain active in church.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODS AND PROCEDURES

Qualitative research was chosen for carrying out this research. This is one of the research approaches that are now recognized. Creswell described the chief characteristics of a qualitative design as one that takes place in the natural setting, uses multiple methods that are interactive and humanistic and views social phenomena holistically. He also describes it as being fundamentally interpretive and the researcher gets meaning out of the interpretation of the data (2003, 182).

Qualitative research was chosen because the study was to take place in a natural setting which is the participant's home or the church ground. The research was quite humanistic as the participants were the sole sources of information. It was also interactive, as the researcher interacted with the participants. It was also interpretive, as the researcher tried to get meaning out the data that was collected.

Grounded Theory Research Design

Creswell elaborates five recognized strategies of inquiry that can be used in qualitative research: ethnographies, grounded theory, case studies, phenomenological research and narrative research (2003, 15). Grounded theory was chosen for this research. Grounded theory is defined by Creswell as one method in which the researcher attempts to derive a general, abstract theory of process, action or interaction grounded in the views of participants in a study (2003, 14). The stated design was chosen because the researcher was not testing a theory but trying to develop one

through the interactions with the youth at the local church level. The researcher tried to unveil the theory as to why the youth desert the church at teenage.

Data was collected using open-ended interviews, which did not limit the participants but gave them an opportunity to express themselves fully. In the interviews, the researcher met the respondents personally and collected information from them through their responses to his questions. Through the interaction with the participants the researcher was able to pick the themes as to why the youth desert church at teenage. Such themes kept emerging as the data was collected from one participant to another. Focus group discussion was also conducted with the youth leaders. Questions were designed to direct such discussion. The data collected from the leaders was used to enhance the findings from the interviewed youth.

Research Participants

In qualitative research, the participants are purposely selected to "help the researcher understand the problem and the research question" (Creswell 2003, 185). In this case the researcher targeted some of the youth who have deserted the church as well as some of their peers who were currently active in the church. The researcher interviewed four youth currently not active or not active at a particular time and five who have been active in church. This latter group was more accessible and their perception as to why their peers left the church offered an important input to the research. Youth leaders were also met in a focus group discussion and selection was dictated by their availability to form such a group. Two of the members were those who are part of the junior youth ministry together with four others to make six. Six members is the recommended number for a focus group discussion (Nguluu and Mulwa 2003, 85).

Data Collection Strategy Procedure

The researcher allocated himself a time frame of about four months for data collection and analysis. This time was used to gather data from the individual interviewees, from the focus group discussion, analyze it and make conclusions. This time was sufficient to get the information from the respondents and confirm any unclear information from such respondents.

Number of Interviewees

Purposive sampling was used in selecting the interviewees. This was because in qualitative research one purposely targets a group of people believed to be reliable for the study (Tromp and Kombo 2006). In this study, two groups were interviewed independently. These are the youth aged 15-20 years who have left church and their peers who are currently active in church and the youth leaders. "In qualitative research, the research should take place in the natural setting" (Creswell 2003, 181). However, with the youth, the researcher interviewed them in a place where they felt comfortable and at ease so as to elicit the needed information. Some were interviewed in the church and others in private areas. Their natural setting which could be their home was not convenient because they were not willing to be interviewed in front of their parents or their siblings. Face to face interviews were preferred, as they gave participants an opportunity to provide historical information and allow the researcher to control the line of questioning (Creswell 2003).

The researcher approached the identified respondents in person and requested them to participate in the research (Tromp and Kombo 2006, 104). Interviews were audio taped while the researcher took notes.

The researcher conducted a focus group discussion with the youth leaders. The discussion was held in the church compound and at a time when it was convenient to

those selected to participate in the research. The researcher participated in the discussion by asking questions and guiding the discussion (Chandran 2004, 107). The discussion was also taped and the researcher took notes.

Data Analysis Strategies

In qualitative studies, researchers obtain detailed information about the phenomena being studied, trying to discern patterns, trends and relationships from the data (Mugenda and Mugenda 1999, 117). As Creswell mentioned, "[data analysis] is an ongoing process that involves continual reflection about the data, asking analytical questions and writing memos throughout the study" (2003, 191). The researcher therefore sought to analyze the data after every interview as data collection and analysis were taking place simultaneously.

In data analysis the researcher used what other researchers have recommended. First, the researcher transcribed the interviews and typed the field notes. This was the first step in organizing and preparing the data for analysis (Creswell 2003). The researcher then perused the data collected and identified what was relevant to the research questions and objectives (Tromp and Kombo 2006, 119). From there the researcher wrote notes on the margin of the typed notes as he got the general thoughts about the data (Creswell 2003, 191).

A coding system was then developed based on the data collected. Since this was a grounded theory study, the researcher generated categories of information known as open coding. During open coding, the researcher developed themes, which were the major topics or major subjects that come up for discussions (Tromp and Kombo 2006, 119). These themes were developed from what the participants said, as the researcher analyzed the data from one interview to another. From these themes the researcher built additional layers and developed them into a theoretical model

(Creswell 2003, 195). The common themes were grouped together to make a theory that helped to explain the phenomena. Axial coding was done where the related themes were grouped together and subcategories identified (Starcher 2006).

Selective coding was then carried out where related categories are grouped together (Creswell 2003, 196). In the selective coding all the emerging categories were unified under the main or core categories and a theory emerged which helped to explain the reasons as to why the youth desert the church at teenage. It should however be noted that data analysis is a continuous process. As Creswell puts it, "It is an ongoing process involving continual reflection about data, asking analytical questions and writing memos throughout the study" (2003, 190).

Validation and Verification Strategies

The researcher tried to ensure that the findings are accurate and credible through the following strategies:

a) First the researcher triangulated the different data sources by examining evidence from the sources and using it to build a coherent justification for the themes (Creswell 2003, 196). Data was collected through multiple sources such as interviews, and the focus group discussion.

b) The researcher used member checking to determine the accuracy of the qualitative findings (Creswell 2003, 196). The checking was done especially with the youth leaders. The youth leaders were given the final report and asked whether it gave an accurate account.

c) The researcher established an audit trail. The notes, the transcribed data and the tapes were preserved. This will enable anyone who may want to verify the findings to follow what was done (Starcher 2006)

Interview Guide

The interview guide was essentially derived from the research questions in chapter one and is attached to this thesis as an appendix. Semi- structured interview guide was used where the questions asked were written, though the order and wording was different from respondent to respondent (Orodho 2000, 209). There were two sets of questions, one for the individual youths (appendix I) and another set for the youth leaders who were involved in the focus group discussion (appendix II).

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

I did open coding after which I was able to establish thirty-six areas of concern in my study through the one to one interview. These areas were confirmed through the focus group discussion from which an additional four categories came up. Therefore I had 40 categories. The list of these codes appears as appendices III. I later interviewed one youth who is active and is currently in secondary school. My intention was to confirm whether I had achieved sufficient saturation and indeed no other category was mentioned he confirmed most of the mentioned categories.

After going through the transcribed information, I did the axial coding where I wrote down the evolving themes. I was able to get six major areas along which the other sub categories were to fall. Some of the categories were merged after careful scrutiny. For example livelihood, employment and careers were merged into one subcategory and called employment. Other subcategories merged were the age difference, generation gap, and language which were put in a subcategory named age difference, depending on the issues that the youth were raising. Some of the categories were not repeated many times and were in the end ignored. It is good to note right from the onset that some of the categories were expected as can be seen from the literature review and the researcher's expectation. However some of the categories came as surprises as the analysis went on. The six major categories and subcategories identified were as indicated table 4.1.

Table 4.1. Major and minor categories of coding

MAJOR CATEGORIES	SUBCATEGORIES
Motivation that made youth remain in church	a. Church programs b. Parents' involvement c. Motivation by teachers d. Peers
Challenges that affect youth participation in church	a. Peer influence b. Relationships c. Unpreparedness to join youth d. Employment e. Rite of passage f. Age difference
Effects of senior youth on younger youth	a. youth inactivity b. Youth leaders c. Role models d. Groupings e. Aloofness
The effect of the larger church on the youth	a. Common activities b. Involvement of leaders c. Recognition d. General concern
How the parents influence the teenagers	a. Programs/activities at home b. Support
How the teachers affect the teenagers	a. Conflicts with the youth b. Mode of counseling c. Teaching skills

Motivation that Made Youth Remain in the Church

Those interviewed had been active in the church from an early age. Their

motivation to be in the church came from varied reasons which were categorized into
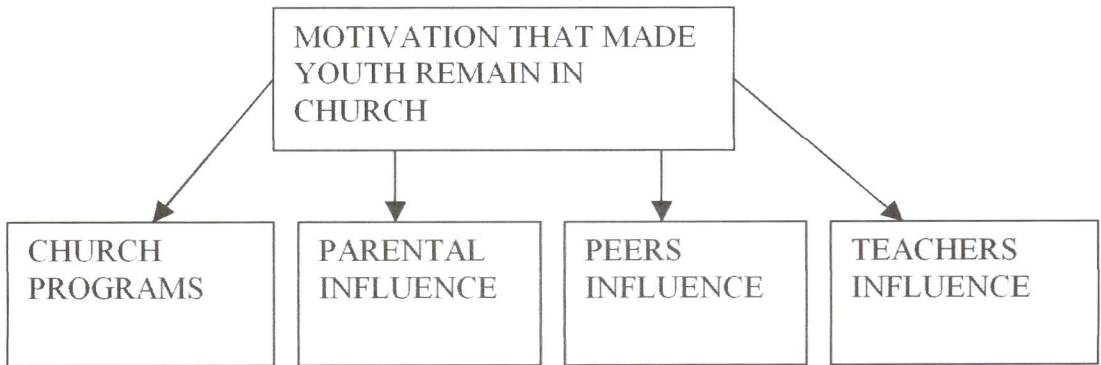
the following four areas.

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                    ┌─────────────────────────┐
                    │ MOTIVATION THAT MADE    │
                    │ YOUTH REMAIN IN         │
                    │ CHURCH                  │
                    └─────────────────────────┘
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CHURCH PROGRAMS	PARENTAL INFLUENCE	PEERS INFLUENCE	TEACHERS INFLUENCE

Figure 4.1: What motivates the youth to remain in church

Church Programs

It was clear that the activities of the Sunday school helped to motivate the youth to come and remain active in the church during their Sunday school days. The poems, memory verses, skits, dancing and singing which were done in the Sunday school were an attraction to them. One respondent said that the Bible stories were very interesting and they currently enable him to understand the Bible as he reads it. In general the Sunday school was seen as interesting and full of activities in which the youth were fully involved in during their early years. This was a surprise because my expectations was that the Sunday school is not providing the right foundation for the youth.

Parental Involvement

Some of those interviewed went to church at an early age due to the parents' influence. One of the interviewees said that he does not remember when he started going to church as he found himself there. Later on he said that he found the church interesting but the initial motivation came from the parents. Other respondents also attribute their being in church to their parents' influencing them to join the church at the initial stages. The finding agrees with what was expected since during the literature

review it was mentioned that parents have a certain spiritual influence on their children (LaHaye 1997).

Church Teachers Influence

Some of those interviewed said that the teachers motivated them to be active by giving them certain presents. These were given to those who came early and those who were able to recite memory verses or answer questions on previous lessons. It was claimed by those interviewed that the presents were withdrawn at a certain time and the number of those attending church went down. This category was not expected and it came as a surprise. It was however important to note that some of the things we may consider trivial go a long way in impacting lives in an eternal dimension.

Peers Influence

Some of those interviewed said that they were encouraged to remain active in the church by their peers. One respondent said that he was influenced to start coming to church by another youth that they were referring to as 'pastor' when he was in class six, at 11 years of age. His mother had tried before to encourage him go to church, but it was the desire to be with his friend that influenced him to finally go to church. The researcher expected the peers to influence others negatively but these findings helped to illustrate that the peers may also influence positively. Children can therefore be useful in bringing others to church.

Conclusion

From the findings, the children in the Sunday school remained active because of their parents who pushed them, programs in the church that were interesting and involving, peers who encouraged them to be in church and teachers who motivated them to remain active.

Challenges which Affect Youth Participation in Church

Within the church set up, it is expected that those who complete class eight should join the youth group at the time when they join secondary schools. However, many of these teenagers are not actively involved in church at this stage and hence the reason for this study. From the interview, it became clear that there are three forms of inactivity, there are those who never attend church at all, those that come to church and not participate in any activity and a few who join other churches. Figure 4.2 captures some of the challenges that the youth are facing.
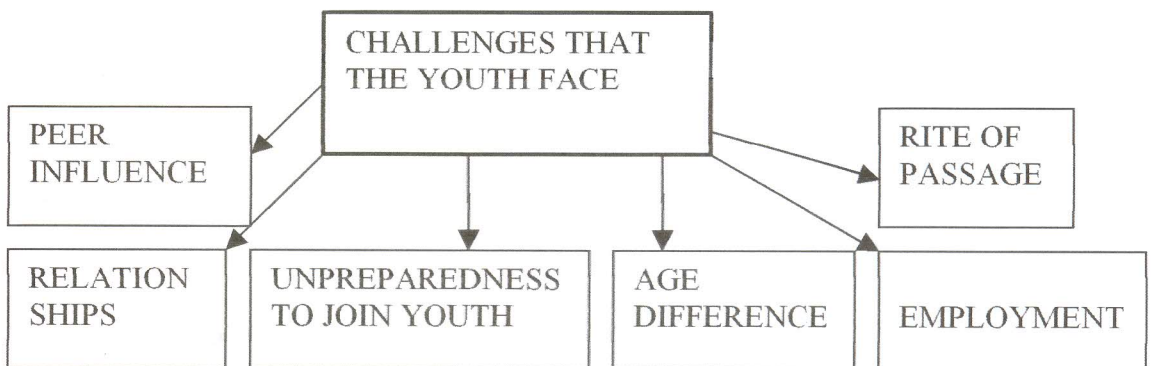

Figure 4.2: Challenges that the youth face which affect their participation in church

Peer Influence

From the interview it became clear that this age group is very sensitive to what others say. Since they do not want to be excluded, they find themselves following others. Some respondents said that it was common for some to fail to go to church since their friends stopped going to church. Those who were inactive at a certain stage, they attributed it to peer influence especially from their former schoolmates. One interviewee who had been a choir leader said that he even had to give up that role in order to make peace with his peers. This confirms what was mentioned in the literature review that teenagers need the approval of other peers in the decision they make

(Megill, 1981). These youth require proper guidance before attaining this age so that they can get hooked up with the right peers.

Relationships

Many of the interviewees said that relating with the opposite sex is fashionable at this stage of life. However, since they know that the church is not for it, some opt to keep off from the church. One female interviewee who was in such a relationship with a former school mate remained in church but was inactive because she could not muster enough courage to stand in front of the others on account of that relationship. She only terminated the relationship after realizing the danger it can get her into and this was after she got 'delivered'. During the focus group discussion, the youth leaders said that the junior youth were not willing to join the youth for fear that such relationships will be exposed.

The female interviewees, who were active in church, said that such relationships led to early marriages and such people kept off completely from the church. They stated that some of the Sunday school teachers were shy and did not discuss the topic on relationships and so many did not get the appropriate guidance that was crucial at this stage. Relationships were also cited as playing a great role in making many of the youth to become inactive in church (Collins, 1988).

Unpreparedness to Join the Youth

Those interviewed said that they were not ready to join the youth at the age of 15 years and they were just forced by their teachers. They felt that they really did not fit there. Most of them started deserted church at that time. There was a general fear of relating to the senior youth whom they were expected to join. The fear was mentioned even by teenagers who are still active in the church. For one, they felt that the

members of the senior youth group were older than they and wondered how they were going to relate.

Some also said that they heard that in the youth group, there were some financial obligations which they felt they were not able to meet as they are not working. Another issue that kept them away was said to be the fear that the senior youth may not understand their language. Some of the senior youth were overheard saying that the teenagers were behaving like children. Another fear was that some senior youth had in the past made some marriage proposals to some of the adolescents immediately they joined the youth group. Some of these fears kept some away from the youth group and some left the church. The findings came as a surprise as well as an eye opener to the researcher. A surprise because normally people like to be associated with the older group but in this case it was not so. It was an eye opener as it revealed a unique reason as to why teenagers were not willing to be part of the youth group.

It became clear that it is needful to prepare the pre-youth to join the youth so that their fears can be addressed. The senior youth should also be alerted so as to be more welcoming to the teenagers.

Age Difference

The teenagers felt that the members of the youth group were of different ages and this made it difficult for them to be cohesive. The same feeling was expressed by the youth leaders during the focus group discussion. The issues raised to illustrate this had to do with the language used to express themselves. One youth leader said that she does not see herself using the term '*wasee*' which is a sheng word used by the teenagers to refer to comrades. One of the teenagers said that he did not see how he was going to relate with the married who are still in the youth group as leaders. The

manner of dressing was another issue raised by the youth leaders to illustrate the age difference where the teenagers' fancy manner of dressing was cited as irritating to the senior youth. The age differences made the teenagers feel that they really do not belong to this senior youth group.

In the set up of this local church, the youth group includes youth in the age bracket of between 15-30 years. This can be attributed to ignorance on the part of the leadership, lack of facilities and shortage of trained manpower. Grouping them this way has affected their cohesiveness as the findings revealed. This sent a clear message that there is need to reorganize the current youth group.

Employment

The researcher also found out that the jobs that some of the teenagers do led to some of the youths not being active in the church. Many of those who are not in school are employed either as sales persons, house helps or have small business of their own. Many of them are therefore not available on any other day except Sunday, which is shared between church activities and their personal chores like washing clothes. They are not available for any meetings planned for after the service and so some end up becoming very inactive to the extent of deserting00 church. The researcher had not expected employment to contribute in such a way as to make people inactive in church. Since these people need a source of livelihood, what is needed is proper counseling so that they may know how to balance their employment and church activities.

Rite of Passage

This issue mainly affects the boys since they are the ones who undergo circumcision as a rite of passage from childhood to adulthood. Three out of the five

male teenagers who were interviewed said that circumcision in a way affected their participation in church activities. One of them said since he was expected to be an adult after circumcision, he felt that he could not go to church since he would have had to mix with boys junior to him who had not yet been circumcised. He said that he could oversleep on Sundays to avoid going to church and he was not active. He only went to church later and only after his parents insisted.

Another one also said that after the rite of passage, boys tend to look down on women. Since most of those teaching them were women, many of them dropped out. The youth leaders confirmed that the boys either became inactive or stopped attending church after initiation. Those interviewed said that since nothing much was mentioned about the rite in the church teachings, they therefore acted on what they heard from other sources. While the researcher had a clue that the rite of passage affects the youth from being active in church, he did not know that they look down on lady teachers in such a manner. This means that more men need to be recruited and be involved in the Sunday school and youth ministry to give a role model to the boys. It is also necessary to have a way of preparing the boys for this rite because it seems to be taking many of them away from the church.

Summary

The challenges that the youth face that affect their participation in church include peer influence, relationships, unpreparedness to join the youth, rite of passage and employment. With proper guidance, the youth may be able to overcome these barriers and integrate properly with the other youth and the church at large.

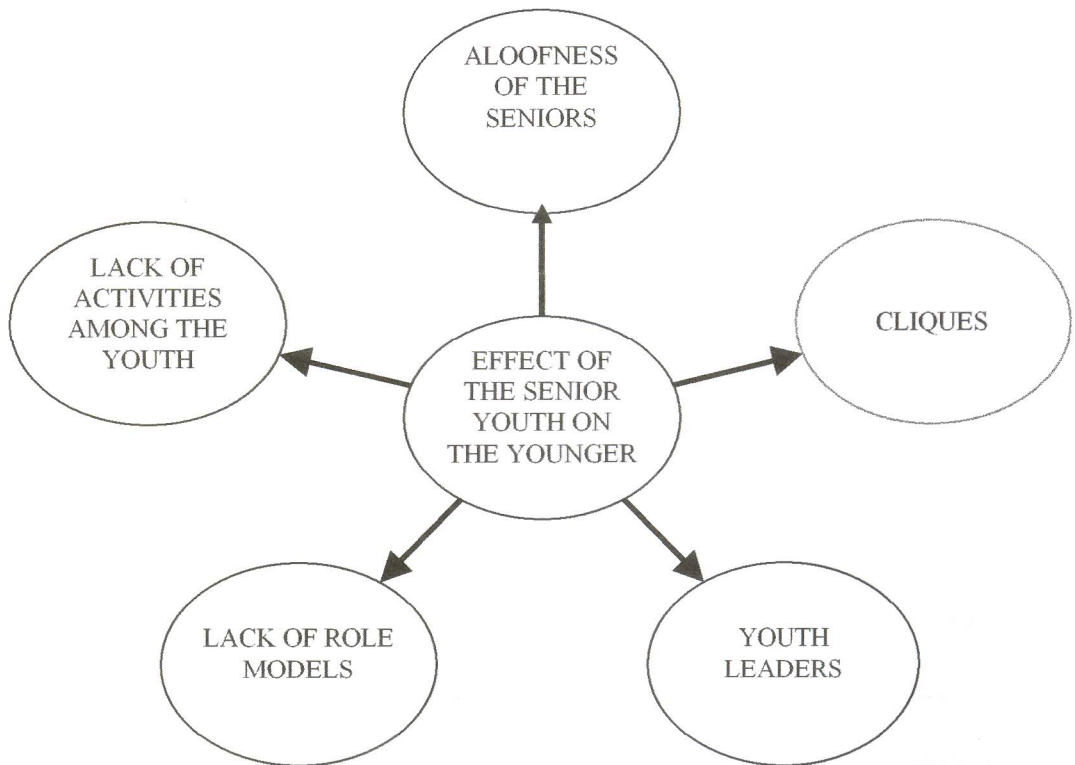Effects of the Senior Youth on the Younger Youth

Figure 4.3: How the senior youth affect the teenagers on church participation

The interviewees said that the teenagers are discouraged from being active in the church by their seniors. As seen in figure 4.3, a number of issues came up during the research.

Aloofness of the Seniors

The senior youth were said to be aloof and disinterested with the incoming youth. The teenagers who gathered courage and joined the youth did not receive the acceptance they expected. One case was mentioned by the youth leaders during the focus group discussion where, during a camp, the senior youth left the room where they were meeting immediately when the juniors entered. Such behavior does not encourage the incoming youth to be active at all in the church.

Some of the interviewees said that they are ignored by the seniors. They do not recognize their presence and some do not even greet them. When one attends their meetings, they feel unwelcome and ignored. When they try to participate in the youth activities, they are treated like children. Those inactive said that they chose to just be attending the main service other than interacting with the youth group where they felt like they were not needed. From the findings, it is clear that a major gap exists between these two groups and there may be a need to dig out further why this is the case.

Lack of Activities among the Youth

The interviewees said that the youth group is quite dormant. They have few activities which they perform without vigor. One of the interviewees who is active said, 'we would want to see the youth doing things with vigor whether it is leading a meeting or preaching.' There is also the perception that there are no specific roles that the youth play in the church. Most of those interviewed were of the opinion that some roles such as ushering, cleaning the church and taking care of the church compound should be carried out by the youth. One incident was cited by the youth leaders in the focus group discussion that one time when the youth were requested to come and do some communal work in the church only the teenagers came. This was also confirmed by the interviewees. The teenagers interviewed said joining the youth might make them lose even the talents they have for lack of a chance to express them.

The researcher was surprised that the teenagers seem ready to play any role that would make them feel wanted. The researcher had always thought that they may not want to do anything manual but the findings gave a different view.

Lack of Role Models

Those interviewed claimed that since the youth appear inactive, there are not many role models to emulate among them. One of the respondents said that he only remained active because he had one who was interested in his spiritual life. This led him to desire to be with him and in the process he grew up spiritually and was able to remain in church. From what some of the teenagers said they lack people among the senior youth who are willing to nurture them.

A serious gap was said to exist between the teenagers and the senior youth according to what was revealed by the youth leaders during the focus group discussion. Such gap can only be bridged if there are mediators and this can be done by the senior youth who may be willing to mentor the teenagers. In the literature review, it was mentioned that the youth have overdependence on significant people within the community of faith (Dettoni and Dettoni 1998). Role models are therefore needed to nurture the teenagers.

Youth Leaders

It was clear both from individual interviews and the focus group discussion that the youth leaders are not interacting with the Sunday school and the pre-youth members. The teenagers said that by the time they were of age to join the youth, they felt that they were joining a group that was completely new to them. There was a feeling that, had the leaders been involved in the two mentioned groups, the pre-youth may have been more at ease in the group and be more active. During the focus group discussion, the youth leaders challenged each other to look for ways of working closely with the pre- youth as well as the Sunday school ministry.

Cliques

The interviewed teenagers said that they see the youth as having a lot of cliques among themselves. They are not seen as a cohesive group. One of those interviewed said that he was at a loss as to which of the groups he was to join. When these teenagers try to join any of these cliques, they feel ignored. From the focus group discussion with the youth leaders, it was confirmed that these cliques do exist. It was also felt that there is need of having common activities that will go a long way in enabling all the youth to blend and relate as one group.

Summary

The senior youth were said to be a group that did not encourage others to join them. This was a major hindrance to the teenagers who were expected to join them. The senior youth should be encouraged to change their attitude toward those joining them as a way of encouraging them to remain active in church.

Parental Influence

Parents influence the teenagers in various ways. Some areas were mentioned during the research as can be seen in figure 4.4 below.
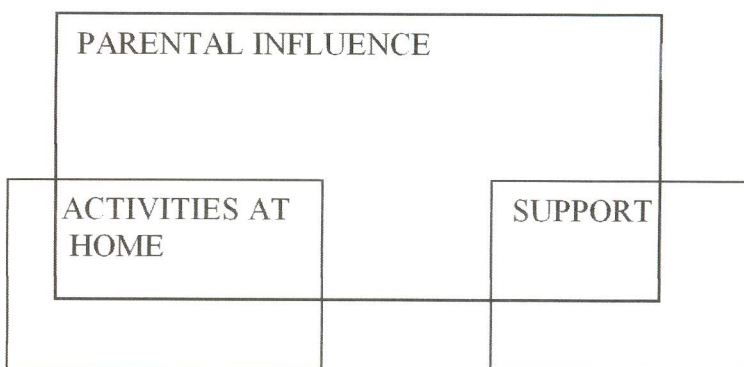
PARENTAL INFLUENCE

ACTIVITIES AT HOME

SUPPORT

Figure 4.4: Parental influence on the teenagers

Activities at Home

Many of those interviewed said that there were few activities that took place at home to enhance what is taught in the church. One of the respondents who is a son of a church leader said that the father trusts the church so much and expects that the church is playing its rightful role. His father only counseled him when he was about to take a decision like joining a new school. Only one of those interviewed said there was a family program where they read the Bible and fellowshipped as a family.

From the interviews and the focus group discussion, it was felt that parents should be encouraged to do more in guiding and training these young people. Some of those that left the church were said to have come from families with spiritual and social challenges where proper parental guidance may not have existed. The youth leaders felt that some of the parents should be included in the youth ministry so as to provide the guidance that may be necessary in an effort to retain more of the youth in the church.

Support

The youth said that their parents do not support them fully as some do not release them to attend youth meetings. They also fail to provide them with the finances needed to facilitate some of the youth meetings. Some said that when they do not have the money they shy away from the meeting as they do not want to be embarrassed. The youth leaders said that some parents do not talk well of the youth group and when this happens such youth disappear from the church with time. The youth leaders felt that the parents should be encouraged to support youth activities as a way of encouraging the youth to remain active in the church. The parents should play a more leading role in their children's spiritual development and in supporting the church as it tries to assist their children.

The Effect of Teachers on the Youth

The teachers who were handling the junior youth were said to have contributed immensely in discouraging some youth from being active in church. Issues of the teachers were mentioned by all of those interviewed and this shows that it was a major factor. Most of the teachers mentioned are no longer teaching the current group but figure 4.5 below shows some of the issues raised.
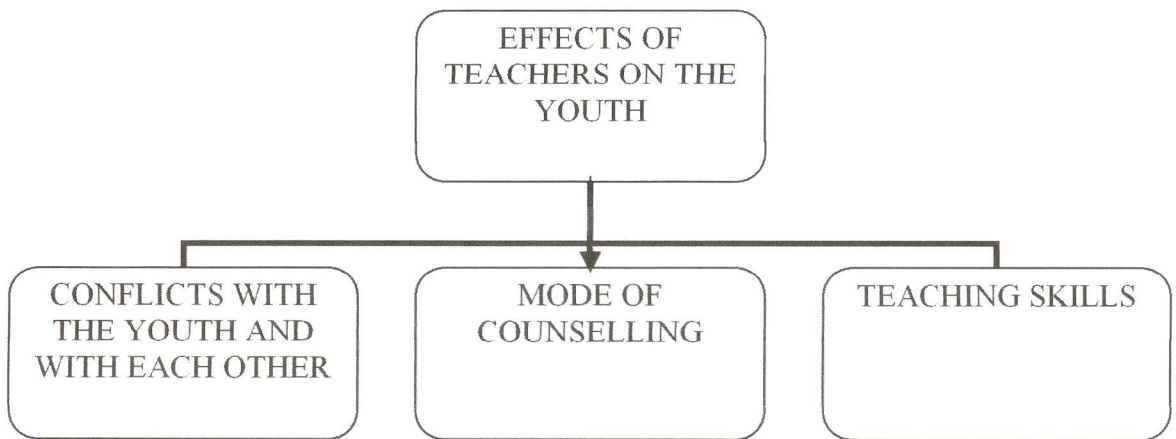

Figure 4.5: Effects of the teachers on the youth

Conflicts with the Junior Youth and With One Another

The teenagers said that when they were in the pre-youth stage the teachers who were handling them, were in conflict with them concerning certain issues especially those of relationships. The teachers quarreled with those junior youth in relationships in front of the others and this embarrassed them, making them leave the church at the time when they were expected to join the youth. The teenagers interviewed could remember so many youth who left the church at that time because of conflicts with teachers. The teachers were also having conflicts among themselves and would quarrel openly in front of the pre-youth. Some of the issues they were quarreling about had to do with meetings such as *keshas* (overnight prayer meetings) and other weekend

meetings. With time the pre-youth got divided as they took sides with their teachers. This discouraged some of them and they kept away from church at a time when they were to join the youth. The researcher was shocked to learn that some of those mandated to help certain groups within the church could become a hindrance to the youth remaining active in church.

Mode of Counseling

One of the interviewees said that the teachers were not counseling them especially on issues of adolescence and they appeared very shy. Another one also said that the teachers were harsh and would not speak to them politely even when they were counseling them. The teenagers interviewed said that they expected the teachers to be calm but they often addressed them with outbursts of anger which discouraged many of them from attending the meetings especially at the time when they were to be prepared on joining the youth.

Teaching Skills

One of the interviewees said that the teachers appeared incompetent in handling adolescence issues. This perception made them not to take the teachers seriously and this in the long run made them to stop coming to church. From these findings, the church needs to invest seriously in training the Sunday school and pre-youth teachers if it is going to make an impact on the youth.

Summary

The teachers did not solve the conflicts among themselves and among the youths properly. They also lacked counseling and teaching skills and were therefore seen as incompetent. This led to many of the junior youth leaving the church. During

the focus group discussion it was felt that it is necessary to train and equip the teachers with appropriate skills relevant for the groups they are handling.

The Larger Church Community

The interviewees said that they did not feel comfortable within the church at particular times because of the issues shown in figure 4.6 below.
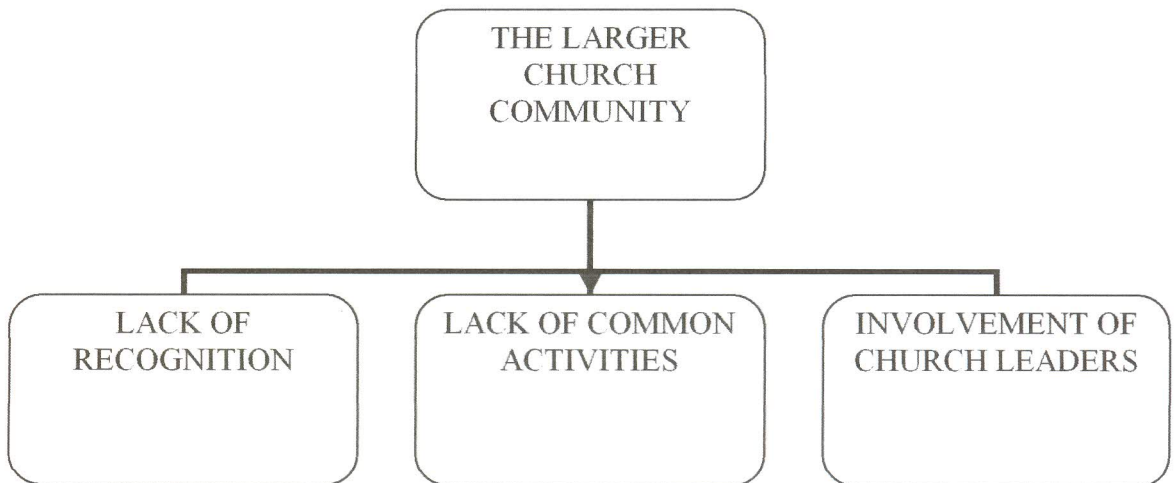
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Figure 4.6: Effects of the larger church community on teenagers' participation in Church

Lack of Recognition

The youth felt that they are not recognized and embraced by the church community. One of them said that it seemed the church did not realize that they have grown. This was demonstrated by the fact that he was rebuked by some members every time he went near the musical instruments as if he was still a child. Such treatment offended him and made him feel like he did not belong. Others said that their talents had not been recognized and used in the church. Some also said that the fact that they were just there and nobody recognized them had made many to drift away without other members taking note of it.

The finding came as a shocker to the researcher who also happens to be a church leader. This is because the researcher has never imagined that the church could be seen as not caring by its members.

Common Activities

Apart from the Sunday service, there is no other activity that brings the church community together. This was mentioned by the youth leaders during the focus group discussion and also came through the interviews. This led to lack of accountability among the church members especially the youth. The interviewees suggested that activities such as talent shows, parties and concerts should be introduced so as to enhance togetherness in the church. It would also help in bonding and ensuring that the youth do not just walk away unnoticed.

Involvement of Church Leaders

The focus group discussion revealed that the church leaders like the pastor and the elders played minimal roles in the Sunday school, junior youth and the youth ministry. The leaders and the youth have therefore not developed closeness and so when the youth leave, the leaders are not able to follow them up. It was felt that if the church leaders are involved at the Sunday school level, they could be able to counsel them properly as they grow up. The youth will also not fear them incase they need guidance in any area. The finding therefore points to the short-coming of the church leaders and also gives them direction as to what they can do.

Conclusion on Chapter Four

After a critical analysis of the issues raised, I carried out selective coding and got three major categories. These include issues that motivate the youth to remain active in the church, the challenges that the youth face and attitudes of others towards

these youth. On the motivation issues, it became clear that the youth want a place where there are interesting activities in which they can get involved and where their talents are recognized and utilized. Such activities are there in Sunday school but they are absent in the youth group.

Some challenges that the teenagers face affect their participation in the church activities. They include relationships, peer pressure, dressing, rite of passage and unpreparedness to join the youth. Lack of appropriate guidance and counseling, and attitudes of others towards the youth have discouraged some of them. It is clear that the senior youth, parents, teachers and the larger church community have contributed to some youth becoming inactive. A general theory that explains the phenomena at Kagumo is that: *Lack of proper integration of parents and church leaders in the youth ministry and a youth group that does not meet the needs of teenagers has led to many youth deserting the church at teenage.*

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATION

The study had the intention of finding out why so many of the youth left the church at teenage from the researchers observation. The research unearthed several factors that contribute to this (as discussed in chapter four) which led to the following conclusions.

The first research question aimed at discovering whether the Christian foundations laid in Sunday school helped the youth to integrate with the church in their teenage years. From the findings it is clear that the foundation laid in Sunday school are not enough to help the youth integrate with the church at teenage years as many of them become inactive and fall away from the church at a later stage. It was also evident that the youth were not prepared appropriately during their pre-youth stage to join the youth which made many of them become inactive at teenage.

The second research question tried to discover whether the parents' involvement in their children's spiritual development assists the teenagers in making decisions relating to their own spiritual lives. From the findings, parents have a role to play in their children's spiritual development. Where they have counseled and insisted that their children remain in church, and given them the right support, these children have remained active through their teenage years. However, a lot still needs to be done to properly integrate the parents with the youth ministry.

The third question sought to establish the kind of programmes that appeal to the youth in their teenage years. Those interviewed and the youth leaders revealed that the youth need a programme that fully involves them, recognizes their talents and

gives them a chance of serving within the church community. Some of these are concerts, talent days, open forum, hikes, games, workshops and video shows. There was also a strong feeling that youth leaders and other church leaders are not involved fully in the teenagers' life at earlier stages. The youth group in the current set up was perceived as not meeting the needs of the teenagers fully and there is an urgent need of reorganizing it.

Recommendations

From the findings and my understanding of the problem, I would recommend the following

1. The teachers handling these teenagers should be trained and equipped so as to be conversant with the issues facing such groups.

2. The youth group should be given specific roles to play in the church such as preaching, leading the service, ushering or cleaning the church as a way of encouraging their participation.

3. More activities should also be included in their programmes such as games, concerts, traveling, talent shows and workshops.

4. The youth leaders and church leaders should be involved in Sunday school, pre-youth and youth ministry as a way of creating a link between the three ministries.

5. The youth group should be led by the unmarried youth themselves as a way of making the teenagers a bit at ease in joining the youth group. The married couples should however be used regularly to teach the youth.

6. There is an urgent need of hiring a youth pastor who will be instrumental in the day to day running of the youth ministry.

7. There is need to prepare the boys for the rite of passage through appropriate counseling.

8. It is essential to establish another group within the church so as to deal with issues of the secondary school going age as the current youth group is made up of people of wide age differences who have different needs.

Issues for Further Study

It may be necessary to carry out research in the following areas:

1. An in depth study of the senior youth perception of the teenagers. This will be crucial in finding a way of bridging the gap that the findings brought out between the two groups.

2. A study of how the church leaders can detect the talents of the youth and tap them for use within the church. This will provide a useful lead in making the youth feel they are part and parcel of the larger church community so that they can remain active.

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APPENDICES

I. INTERVIEW GUIDE

Introduction

The information you give will be treated as confidential and will only be used for the purpose of this study. Please answer the questions as truthfully as possible. The researcher is a student at NEGST pursuing an MA in Christian education. The purpose of the study is to find out why youth desert church at teenage. The interview will take about 45minutes. Kindly answer the following questions

1. When did you start attending Sunday school?

2. What did you like most in the Sunday school?

3. Who encouraged you to attend Sunday school?

4. What are some of the activities that you participated in, in Sunday school?

5. Are there times when you felt reluctant to participate in church activities? Explain? (NB. To be asked those active in church)

6. What discouraged you from active participation in church activities? (NB. To be asked those not active in church)

7. In what ways would you say that the Sunday school training prepared you to integrate with the rest of church community after attaining teenage?

8. Are your parents concerned about your church attendance and involvement in church activities? Explain?

9. Are there family activities that enhance what is taught in church?

10. What programmes motivated you to remain active in the church?

11. What other programs would you recommend to the church to help the

teenagers remain active?

12. What influences the choices you make in church involvement? Explain?

Thank you very much for your assistance. God bless you.

II. FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

To be used with the focus group discussion

Introduction

The researcher is a student at NEGST pursuing an MA course in Christian Education. This discussion is meant to try to find out the reasons why our youth disappear from the church on attaining teenage. The discussion will take about an hour. It is meant purposely for research and therefore please responds as truthfully and objectively as possible.

1. Are the pre-teens who were active in church activities last year currently involvement in the church now at teenage?

2. How does the Sunday school programme prepare the teens to take an active role in the church?

3. Does the church have specific programmes that meet the needs of the teenagers? What more can be done?

4. Does the church give the young people any roles to play in the church after attaining teenage years? How well do they play these roles?

5. What are the main reasons given by the teenagers for not being active in church activities?

6. In what ways can parents assist the teenagers remain active in church activities?

7. What other things do you think influence the youth as they make decisions that affect their involvement in church activities?

III. OPEN CODING

Below are the categories of themes obtained from the data gathered from the teenagers interviewed and the youth leaders in focus group discussion.

1. Parental guidance
2. Youth relationships
3. Motivation to come to church
4. Counseling by teachers
5. Lack of enough activities
6. Employment
7. Age differences
8. Language differences
9. Manner of dressing
10. Relationships
11. Environment
12. Aloofness of older youth
13. Early marriages
14. Lack of common activities
15. Lack of cohesiveness in the youth
16. Church leaders involvement
17. Lack of talents recognition
18. Lack of appreciation by other youth
19. Motivation by teachers
20. Inactivity of youth

21. Conflicts with teachers
22. Teaching programs
23. Peer influence
24. Lack of role models
25. livelihood
26. Rite of passage
27. Financial expectation
28. Lack of follow up
29. Lack of particular roles in church
30. Fear
31. Incompetent teachers
32. Lack of appreciation
33. Lateness of teachers
34. Generation gap
35. Cliquess in the youth
36. Linking related ministry
37. Parent support
38. Lateness of teachers
39. Lack of preparedness to join youth
40. Lack of concern by the church