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LEADERSHIP PRACTICES INFLUENCING YOUTH PARTICIPATION IN CHURCH ACTIVITIES WITHIN MAINSTREAM PROTESTANT CHURCHES IN NAIROBI, KENYA

DIANE KAWIRA MUGAMBI

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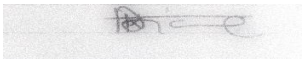
A THESIS PRESENTED TO THE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION AND SOCIAL SCIENCES, DEPARTMENT OF DEVELOPMENT STUDIES, IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY OF ST. PAUL'S UNIVERSITY.

SEPTEMBER, 2026

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DECLARATION

I declare that this proposal is my original work and has not been presented for a degree or any other award in any other university.

Signature;  Date: 23/09/2026

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Declaration by Supervisors

I/We confirm that we approve the submission of this proposal for oral examination as the University students' Supervisors.

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Second Supervisor

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my beloved parents, Mr. James M .L. Ing'ala & Mrs. Peninah Mugambi, whose unwavering love, sacrifices, and steadfast support laid the foundation for my academic journey. Their faith in me has been a constant source of strength and inspiration.

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Finally, I extend my sincere appreciation to the churches within Nairobi that graciously granted permission for this study, and to all participants whose contributions made this research possible.

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ABSTRACT

Youth participation in mainstream Protestant churches in Nairobi, Kenya, has shown signs of decline, raising concerns about the effectiveness of leadership in maintaining engagement. This study investigated how leadership practices influence youth participation in church activities within mainstream Protestant churches in Nairobi, Kenya. Specifically, it examined how leaders' discipleship guidance, mentorship initiatives, group facilitation skills, and empowerment strategies relate to youth participation, while considering the moderating role of socio-cultural factors. Grounded in Transformational Leadership, Positive Youth Development, Social Learning, and Social Capital theories, the study employed a mixed-methods design. The target population included 4,500 youths across nine groups, with 369 respondents selected through multistage sampling. The study collected quantitative data using structured questionnaires and analyzed them with descriptive statistics, cross-tabulations, and regression, while qualitative interviews provided contextual insights. Results show that discipleship consistently corresponded with higher participation, while mentorship, group facilitation, and empowerment were also linked to engagement, though access and implementation varied. Socio-cultural factors, including peer influence and cultural norms, affected participation to a lesser extent, and religious identity showed the weakest association. Qualitative accounts highlighted that structured leadership guidance, regular mentorship, and opportunities for youth to take on responsibilities were associated with higher engagement, while inconsistent programs and social pressures contributed to uneven participation. The study concludes that structured leadership drives youth participation in Nairobi's mainstream Protestant churches, with socio-cultural factors playing a secondary role. It recommends urgent action to strengthen discipleship, deliver consistent mentorship, organize active youth groups, and provide genuine leadership roles with accountability to sustain engagement.

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ABBREVIATION AND ACRONYMS

AACC	All Africa Council of Churches
ACK	Anglican Church of Kenya
CITAM	Christ is the Answer Ministry
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
MCK	Methodist Church in Kenya
NCCK	National Council of Churches of Kenya
NCCS	National Centre for Charitable Statistics
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
PCEA	Presbyterian Church of East Africa
SDT	Self-Determination Theory

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CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

1.1 Chapter Overview

This chapter aims to give a clear introduction to the study. The chapter also discusses the problem statement, the purpose of the study, the objectives of the study, justification of the study, significance of the study, the limitations of the study, the delimitations of the study, research objectives, research questions, and the operational definition of terms and assumptions of the study.

1.2 Background of the Study

Youth engagement in church activities is declining worldwide, even as young people form a critical demographic for the future of faith communities (Abbas, 2025; Soe, 2020). Youth participation in churches, and more specifically those in some Nairobi Protestant churches, has been declining. Julius (2024), in his study about the transitional challenges that youth face in Kenyan Protestant churches, found that major churches experienced decreased attendance from their younger members between 2019 and 2023. Research by Abbas (2025) and Oden (2024) suggested that changes in society's values, social pressures, and generational factors have contributed to an increase in youth engagement but there is not much local data on these issues yet. While data on the direct effect of each factor discussed here remain insufficient, this study analyzed how these factors interact with church leadership practices and their effect on youth engagement with mainstream Protestant churches, identifying factors that encourage or discourage active involvement in church activities.

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Globally, religious institutions continue to play a strong role in community development and social cohesion. For instance, in the United States, the National Center for Charitable Statistics (NCCS) reports that over 1.56 million non-governmental organizations (NGOs), many faith-based, contribute about 5.4% to the country's gross domestic product (GDP) (NCCS, 2022). The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA, 2022) estimates the global youth population at over two billion. Despite this, youth engagement in church activities is declining, and leadership's influence on participation remains unclear (Julius, 2024; Abbas, 2025; Oden, 2024). This underscores the need to examine how leadership practices in

discipleship, mentorship, group development, and empowerment shape youth involvement. Understanding these practices helps identify barriers, reveal effective strategies, and provide evidence-based guidance for enhancing youth participation and sustaining church programs.

Despite the growing recognition of religion's role in sustainable development, a pressing global concern remains over how young people connect with and participate in faith communities. Research on evangelical youth by Christianity Today reaffirmed these findings, reporting that about 70% of American youth had stopped attending church (Stetzer, 2017). The trend extends beyond the United States, as evidenced by studies conducted in other countries. For instance, Kithure (2022) highlighted that in France, only 15% of its citizens attended church, while in the UK and Australia, church attendance rates were even lower at 10% and 5.6%, respectively. Similarly, in the Netherlands, only 5.6% of citizens attended church regularly. These figures show the pervasive difficulty churches face globally in retaining young people's involvement in religious activities. They highlight how crucial it is for churches to create and implement practical plans to attract and retain young people in their communities.

Brailey and Parker (2020) explore Christian mentoring and its wider ramifications from an Australian viewpoint. They emphasize how young people's needs are changing and how crucial it is to lay a biblical framework for successful mentoring programs. In line with their understanding, Christian mentoring falls under pastoral theology and is a form of spiritual guidance and support for believers. The authors stress that good mentorship views people's lives through an integrated, holistic lens, meeting not only spiritual needs but also mental, emotional, and practical ones. This all-encompassing approach to mentoring highlights the value of offering thorough support and direction and reflects a greater grasp of the complexity present in each person's life. These observations highlight how important it is to combine spiritual ideas with effective strategies in order to support believers' true growth as individuals.

Research from Mexico (Gooren, 2024) provides a different view on what affects youth participation in church activities. It shows that social factors strongly influence whether young people stay involved, highlighting the role of group development in encouraging

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adolescent engagement. Gooren's study used only secondary data, which limits how accurately it reflects current realities. In addition, the data may not capture shifts in youth engagement, changes in church leadership practices, or recent social or cultural trends, which could affect the findings' applicability today. This underscores the need for a more thorough study that captures the opinions and experiences of young people and other key stakeholders actively involved in the church.

Although overall church attendance remains high in many African contexts, these figures do not clarify youth participation. This distinction supports the widely recognized claim that "Africans are notoriously religious," as theologian Mbiti noted (Kithure, 2022, p.2). Survey results from the Pew Research Center (2018) show that at least 80% of people in sub-Saharan Africa attend religious services frequently. The study further found that up to 98% of Africans consider religion very important in their lives. Complementing this, Afrobarometer data indicate that roughly 78% of adults across African countries attend a church, mosque, or other worship service at least once a week (Afrobarometer, 2022). These findings add behavioral evidence to earlier claims, offering a more complete picture of contemporary religiosity in Africa.

Youth involvement in the church is a critical issue for societies pursuing sustainable development. Religious influence often begins at home, as parents' guide their children in moral values, religious beliefs, and ethical behavior, shaping how they perceive both family and faith (Ivypanda, 2020). Through active participation in church programs, such as mentorship, discipleship, group development, and empowerment, youth develop leadership, social responsibility, and teamwork skills that extend beyond the church into broader socio-economic and community development contexts (Idakpo, 2019). Early religious and ethical formation, combined with structured church engagement, plays a key role in shaping young people into responsible citizens who can contribute to national development.

Youth development focuses on enhancing young people's ability to engage and contribute through the 5 C's of Positive Youth Development: Competence, Confidence, Connection, Character, and Caring (Campbell, 2024). The purpose of Catholic religious education is to foster these 5 C's within youth, especially Character, because it is a growing concern in

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society. To successfully navigate personal and social relationships, young people must develop appropriate life and social skills (Idakpo, 2019). However, many youth remain disengaged from the church not because the church lacks effort, but because current youth programs do not respond to their concerns (Fritz, 2018). Adults are unable to communicate effectively with youth which limits their ability to have an impact through a program (Massaro, 2018). Additionally, because the Church has a rigid structure and emphasizes rules over discipleship and moral development, current youth programs lack a basis for developing youth according to their actual needs (Idakpo, 2019).

From a Catholic perspective, Fritz (2018) argues that youth disengagement is not caused by a lack of effort from the Church. Despite substantial investments in Catholic secondary education and youth ministry, many young people feel their concerns and challenges are not adequately addressed. Massaro (2018) adds that adults often struggle to listen to youth or communicate in ways they understand, which limits the effectiveness of programs aimed at increasing participation. Idakpo (2019) further notes that rigid church structures can prevent ministers from focusing on discipleship and moral development, leaving young people without guidance aligned with their needs.

Historically, the period following the missionary era marked the height of Christian engagement in Africa. Over time, however, attendance in some Protestant churches has declined, though trends differ by context (Ferreira & Chipenyu, 2021). In South Africa, 85.3 % of the population identified as Christian in the 2022 census, yet mainline Protestant and traditional denominations, including Methodists, Anglicans, Catholics, and Dutch Reformed churches, have seen declining membership, even as African Indigenous and neo-Pentecostal groups grow (Forster, 2024). These patterns suggest that specific factors influence youth participation in church activities. These results suggest underlying causes for the decline in church attendance among particular demographic groups, highlighting the need for a more thorough investigation of the variables influencing young involvement in church activities.

In some East African nations, public attendance numbers at religious services have remained stable. For example, roughly 80 percent of adults in Tanzania and Uganda are estimated to attend religious services at least once a week (Pew Research Center).

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However, national statistics indicate that the total number of people reporting to belong to Christianity is decreasing, with approximately 15 percent of persons reporting such affiliation in an average of three separate years (Uganda Bureau of Statistics) from 2002 through 2014. Evidence supports this idea, with findings suggesting a significant difference in youth and adult attendance levels in these same countries. In particular, many people aged 18 through 35 consider themselves Christians, but do not participate to any meaningful level in activities associated with being members of their faith (Vitisia). Vitisia (2016) cites a 2004 study conducted by East African Standard that demonstrates this phenomenon. Kafeero (2022) states that by providing youth with easier ways to find mentors and build relationships through mentoring, youth will increase participation in their church communities.

Despite extensive global research exploring youth involvement in church activities, there is a notable gap in research specifically focused on Nairobi County, Kenya (Kithure, 2022). In recent years, there has been a concerning trend of reduced youth involvement in church activities. Unlike in the early 2000s, many youths in their 20s and 30s are not following their parents' church-going footsteps. Youth express their faith in ways that differ from older generations, including watching church services on television or online, and engaging with gospel music in forms that some church elders find unconventional (Pew Research Center, 2018). However, for this study, participation is operationalized as active involvement in church programs, including attendance at services, participation in mentorship or discipleship initiatives, and engagement in church-led community activities. Viewed this way, the apparent decline in youth participation reflects reduced engagement in these structured church activities rather than informal expressions of faith.

This decline in youth participation is particularly evident in Nairobi, a city whose blend of urban complexity, cultural diversity, and shifting social norms creates conditions that affect young people's engagement with church activities. Bwire et al. (2025) for example, observed that only 38.5% of Anglican youth attended Anglican Church events. This is indicative of the difference between youth attending church services at traditional institutions and the youth being engaged in church events at these institutions. According to Selvam and Githinji (2022), one other problem was that young people do not identify with traditional basic church values and see Anglican worship services as irrelevant in our

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modern technological urban society. Understanding how leadership patterns shape youth participation in church development programs is central to addressing the challenges facing mainstream Protestant churches in Nairobi and strengthening sustained youth engagement within church structures.

The context of Nairobi was an important part of the investigation into youth involvement in the church. Mainstream Protestant churches in Nairobi are large, organized congregations with formalized youth programs and structures for youth leadership. The study targeted the Anglican Church of Kenya (ACK), the Presbyterian Church of East Africa (PCEA), and the Methodist Church due to their long history in the country, large youth membership, and difficulties in engaging youth in church activities. Other churches were excluded from the study due to differences in organizational structures and youth programs that may affect analysis of leadership variables. The study was conducted in this context to examine the role of discipleship, mentorship, group development, and empowerment in mainstream Protestant churches in youth participation in an urban East African context.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

Mainstream Protestant churches in Nairobi face declining youth engagement despite Christianity's strong presence in Kenya, where 60.8% of the population identify as Protestant (2019 census). Kahenya (2017) found that many young people perceive these churches as irrelevant to their needs, prompting some to join emerging congregations they see as more responsive.

While disengagement in mainstream Protestant churches in Nairobi can result from factors such as shifting cultural values, urban lifestyles, and competing commitments, many youths perceive these churches as irrelevant to their needs, prompting some to join more responsive congregations (Faria, 2021). Some have argued that unethical conduct and falsification among clergy have significantly weakened African churches' capacity to evangelize and sustain membership (Shaasha et al., 2024). Such failings erode trust and undermine intergenerational connection, both of which are essential for long-term retention. This points directly to leadership practices as a critical driver, not just cultural or social trends.

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Existing research has not adequately addressed this issue in Nairobi's mainstream Protestant context. Ragira et al. (2023) report that nearly 90% of students raised in the church remain attached, with over 70% never leaving. This suggests that youth retention in mainstream Protestant churches in Nairobi may be relatively strong, though this interpretation is an inference rather than a verified claim. Other studies highlight the role of structured programs and leadership practices in shaping youth engagement, including mentorship, discipleship, empowerment, and group development (Muriithi, 2018; Gathuma, 2020). Together, these findings indicate that while youth often remain affiliated, the specific leadership strategies and programmatic interventions that influence active participation require careful examination. By situating this discussion within Nairobi's urban Protestant context, the study emphasizes the interplay between leadership practices and youth engagement, providing a foundation for understanding how structured programs and leadership approaches affect sustained involvement in church activities.

This lack of targeted inquiry is more than a research gap; it is a risk to institutional sustainability. Without locally grounded evidence on which leadership behaviours foster or hinder youth engagement, interventions are likely to remain reactive and ineffective. Leadership failure is not a side issue but directly determines whether the church attracts, retains, and develops the next generation of leaders. Therefore, the study examined leadership practices influencing youth participation in Nairobi's mainstream Protestant churches to generate evidence to inform practical and sustainable reforms.

1.4 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate how leadership practices influence youth participation in church activities within mainstream Protestant churches in Nairobi, Kenya.

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1.4 1 Specific Research Objectives

The specific objectives of this study were to:

i. Determine the influence of leaders' discipleship guidance on youth participation in church activities within mainstream protestant churches in Nairobi, Kenya
ii. Assess the influence of leaders' mentorship initiatives on youth participation in church activities within mainstream protestant churches in Nairobi, Kenya.
iii. Evaluate the influence of leaders' group facilitation skills on youth participation in church activities within mainstream protestant churches in Nairobi, Kenya.
iv. Examine the influence of leaders' empowerment strategies on youth participation in church activities within mainstream protestant churches in Nairobi, Kenya.
v. Assess the moderating role of socio-cultural factors on the relationship between leadership practices and youth participation in church activities within mainstream protestant churches in Nairobi, Kenya.

1.4.2 Research Questions

(i) What is the influence of leaders' discipleship guidance on youth participation in church activities within mainstream Protestant churches in Nairobi, Kenya?
(ii) What is the influence of leaders' mentorship initiatives on youth participation in church activities within mainstream Protestant churches in Nairobi, Kenya?
(iii) In what ways do leaders' group facilitation skills relate to youth participation in church activities within mainstream Protestant churches in Nairobi, Kenya?
(iv) What is the influence of leaders' empowerment strategies on youth participation in church activities within mainstream Protestant churches in Nairobi, Kenya?
(v) What is the moderating role of socio-cultural factors on the relationship between leadership practices and youth participation in church activities within mainstream Protestant churches in Nairobi, Kenya?

1.5 Scope of the Study

This study deliberately narrowed its focus to mainstream Protestant churches in Nairobi County, Kenya, because Nairobi is the country's capital and has a complex, diverse urban population. Nairobi's youth face distinct socio-economic and cultural challenges not necessarily representative of rural or other urban areas, making it critical to study this

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demographic in its own right. Focusing on mainstream Protestant churches reflects their substantial representation in Kenya's Christian population and the documented decline in youth engagement within this group, which is less explored than in emerging churches.

The target population included youth from these mainstream churches, alongside ministers and senior leaders from dioceses, synods, and presbyteries within Nairobi County. Using a mixed-methods design, the study combined quantitative surveys to reveal broad patterns with qualitative interviews and focus groups to capture deeper insights into stakeholder perceptions. This approach aimed to provide a context-specific, holistic understanding of factors shaping youth participation in church development programs, offering findings that can be more reliably applied within Nairobi's social and institutional environment.

1.6 Justification of the Study

Youth engagement in church development programs is increasingly recognized as critical for both institutional sustainability and broader societal transformation. The study focuses on mainstream Protestant churches in Nairobi, where a diverse and dynamic youth population interacts with a high concentration of church programs, making it an analytically rich and representative context. Despite young people's potential to contribute meaningfully to church activities, leadership roles, and community initiatives, their participation remains limited. This study examined how leadership practices within mainstream Protestant churches in Nairobi influence youth participation in church activities, with particular attention to mechanisms such as discipleship, mentorship, youth development, and empowerment. By systematically exploring these dimensions, the study aimed to provide evidence-based insights that can strengthen church initiatives and enhance youth representation in decision-making processes.

The leadership style of mainstream Protestant churches in Nairobi is seen as having a significant impact on youth involvement in church activities. This is supported by the current study, which indicates that a structured approach, such as discipleship, mentorship, youth development, and empowerment, is seen to have a direct influence on youth involvement. These programs have generally helped youth recognize their strengths, gain confidence, and develop skills to take on active roles within the church community.

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The way church leaders lead directly affects the church's ability to create and maintain programs that actively involve and develop youth members. By connecting the idea of being mentored and being a disciple with aiding youth to develop and become empowered, this research identifies ways in which these leadership strategies become tangible experiences for youth instead of mere theoretical benefits - thus providing evidence for the conclusion that such actions are practical and beneficial for the youth across different ethnic groups. Leadership practices in Nairobi have been shaped by their respective cultures, their social structures, and their economies. These factors have shaped how youth programs are received and carried out. Within the mainline denominations surveyed, it was found that leaders must adjust both their strategies and their definitions of success according to the specific communities in which they work to maximize the potential of youth participation by engaging with youth on an individual level and developing strategies that will foster personal growth among youth.

The research fills a theoretical gap in the literature by drawing on Transformational Leadership Theory, Social Learning Theory, and Social Capital Theory. The research demonstrates the role of church leaders' practices in influencing youth participation empirically. The research provides implications for church leaders and other organizations seeking to promote inclusion, empowerment, and development of young church members.

1.7 Significance of the Study

The study holds significant theoretical value by advancing the understanding of youth participation in church development within mainstream Protestant churches in Nairobi County. By drawing on Transformational Leadership, Social Learning, and Social Capital theories, it demonstrates how leadership practices, mentorship structures, group dynamics, and empowerment initiatives collectively shape youth engagement. The research results contribute to academic discussions by closing existing research voids by examining how church leadership and formalized programs increase youth participation. The study demonstrates how discipleship and mentorship programs, together with youth development methods, create pathways for active participation, providing a foundation for further research in urban and religious organizational contexts.

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From a practical perspective, the study provides actionable insights for church leaders and administrators seeking to enhance youth involvement. It identifies successful strategies for mentorship, guidance, and role modeling, while also highlighting barriers such as limited mentor availability, unclear role definitions, and structural constraints. The findings equip church leaders with evidence-based approaches to foster skill development, social integration, and sustained engagement, enabling youth to move beyond passive participation to active contribution in church programs. This practical orientation ensures church programs are more responsive, inclusive, and better able to nurture leadership potential among young congregants.

The research also highlights the importance of structured group engagement in promoting social cohesion, peer learning, and collaborative participation. Organized youth groups within the church context provide spaces for shared decision-making, problem-solving, and leadership development. Participation in these groups enhances self-confidence, interpersonal competence, and a sense of belonging, reinforcing the value of collective engagement. The study highlights how carefully designed group activities not only support individual growth but also strengthen community bonds, demonstrating that youth participation can serve as a vehicle for both personal development and church-wide organizational effectiveness.

Additionally, the study underscores the critical role of empowerment in fostering proactive involvement and leadership among young congregants. Initiatives that build confidence, decision-making skills, and agency enable youth to identify opportunities, take initiative in program planning, and influence church development activities. The research illustrates how empowerment initiatives translate into tangible outcomes, equipping young people with skills and experiences that extend beyond the church into broader societal and civic contexts. This insight guides the design of interventions that build youth capacity, strengthen leadership potential, and foster a culture of accountability and initiative within the church community.

Finally, the study carries broader societal and policy relevance by highlighting how youth participation in church programs contributes to community cohesion, leadership development, and social responsibility. It offers evidence for policymakers, governmental

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agencies, and non-governmental organizations on structural and socio-cultural factors that influence youth engagement. By informing policy and program design, the study promotes equitable access to leadership opportunities and encourages sustainable development initiatives driven by youth participation. Overall, the research demonstrates that effective leadership, mentorship, group engagement, and empowerment strategies collectively enhance youth involvement, strengthen social networks, and cultivate a generation of capable leaders who contribute meaningfully to both church and society in Nairobi County.

1.8 Assumptions of the Study

Understanding the development methodologies and youth participation in Mainstream Protestant churches' programs in Nairobi County is assumed to be important and helpful for the growth and sustainability of these churches, as well as their impact on the youth community. The study also assumed that youth play an important role in the church community and that their participation in church programs is critical to instilling a sense of ownership, engagement, and continuity. The study assumed that mainstream Protestant churches in Nairobi employ a range of approaches to youth participation, spanning traditional practices to more adaptive and innovative strategies. It also considered that youth engagement in church programs encounters challenges linked to generational differences, cultural shifts, or resistance to change. These difficulties could stem from generational differences, cultural upheavals, or resistance to change. The major assumptions of this study were the respondents chosen are genuine representatives of mainstream church members in Nairobi County, and that they will be sincere in offering acceptable and trustworthy responses.

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1.9 Limitations of the Study

The study faced several limitations, mainly related to sample size, representativeness, and data reliability, which were addressed through careful research design and methodological approaches. One key concern was the possibility that the sample might not adequately capture the diversity of youth participation patterns across mainstream Protestant churches in Nairobi County. Recognizing this risk, the researcher used purposive sampling to select churches that met predefined criteria for mainstream Protestant churches, including registered denominations with established governance structures, recognized doctrinal

frameworks, and active youth programs, while ensuring variation in size and socio-economic context. This strategy ensured representation of both large and small congregations, including churches with historically high and low youth engagement levels. By choosing participants according to certain predetermined sampling criteria, such as the classification of parishes under mainstream Protestant churches, as well as the varying sizes, denominations, and socio-economic characteristics, the study ensured that participants were selected systematically and not randomly, thus promoting the representation of youth participation.

Furthermore, including both youth members and church leaders provided multiple perspectives on participation, deepening insight while countering potential bias from a single respondent group. While the study's geographical focus remained Nairobi County, this purposive sampling approach strengthened internal validity by capturing a cross-section of experiences and minimizing the risk of drawing conclusions solely from unusually active or unusually disengaged congregations.

Another limitation the study actively mitigated was its reliance on self-reported data from youth participants and church leaders. Self-reports are often vulnerable to social desirability bias, where respondents present themselves in a more favorable light, or to subjective misinterpretations of their experiences. To address this, the study triangulated data sources. The study cross-checked information from youth participants against the perspectives of church leaders and supplemented it with focus group discussions, which encouraged collective reflection and reduced individual bias. The study also used structured interview guides to ensure consistent questioning and limit ambiguity, helping respondents provide more accurate and comparable answers. Additionally, the study emphasized confidentiality and anonymity, which likely reduced the pressure on respondents to conform to perceived expectations. These mitigation strategies enhanced the reliability of the data collected and ensured that findings reflected actual trends in youth participation rather than distorted perceptions. Although observational or behavioral measures were not employed, the implemented methodological safeguards addressed the most significant concerns related to self-reported data, demonstrating a proactive approach to maintaining data integrity.

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The third limitation that was meaningfully addressed relates to selection bias. Voluntary participation and the choice of particular churches could have skewed the sample toward more engaged congregations or participants already inclined to participate in research. The researcher mitigated this by intentionally including churches and youth groups with varied participation histories, including those known to experience lower levels of youth engagement. By doing so, the study captured both ends of the participation spectrum and avoided over-representing highly active or enthusiastic youth. The study also considered demographic diversity, recruiting youth participants across different age brackets, genders, and socio-economic backgrounds. Although the study did not include every Protestant church in Nairobi, careful sampling and purposive inclusion of varied contexts reduced selection bias, strengthened internal consistency, and allowed for more nuanced conclusions about the socio-cultural moderators of youth participation. By explicitly acknowledging and managing these limitations, the study maintained methodological rigor and produced valid findings on the relationship between discipleship, mentorship, youth development, and empowerment in shaping youth participation in church programs. These mitigation strategies, focused on intentional sampling, data triangulation, and structured collection methods, show that the study maintained reliability and credibility despite the inherent constraints of qualitative research in a localized urban context.

1.10 Definition of Significant Terms

Youth: The Constitution of Kenya (2010, Article 260) and the Kenya Youth Development Policy define youth as individuals aged 18 to 35 years. This age range frames the study's population focus.

Mainstream Protestant Churches: In Kenya, mainstream Protestant churches are denominations with a significant historical presence and wide followings that adhere to core Protestant doctrines such as biblical authority and salvation through faith in Jesus Christ. Examples include the Anglican Church of Kenya, the Presbyterian Church of East Africa (PCEA), the Methodist Church in Kenya, and the African Inland Church (AIC). These churches are characterized by denominational diversity, established governance structures, ecumenical relationships, and traditional worship practices.

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Church Activities: Within this study, church activities refer to the organized events and programs in Nairobi's mainstream Protestant churches that serve spiritual, social, and developmental roles. These include worship services, prayer meetings, Bible studies, youth groups, outreach efforts, community service projects, educational workshops, leadership training, and social gatherings.

Church Mentorship Programs: These are formal initiatives pairing experienced church members (mentors) with less experienced individuals (mentees) to provide guidance, foster spiritual growth, and build community bonds. Mentorship programs support faith development, relationship building, and a sense of belonging within the church.

Discipleship: This denotes the structured process through which youth are guided in Christian education, moral teaching, and spiritual formation within the church. It involves nurturing commitment to Christian values and practices through formal programs that promote learning, ethical development, and active participation in service and ministry.

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CHAPTER TWO
LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter examines relevant literature to the study. This chapter also delves into the study's relevant theories. Finally, the chapter describes the study's conceptual framework.

2.1 Theoretical Literature Review

The study was grounded in three key theoretical frameworks: Transformational Leadership Theory (Burns, 1978), Social Learning Theory, and Social Capital Theory. These theories provide a comprehensive lens for understanding and analyzing youth participation in church activities within mainstream Protestant churches in Nairobi, Kenya.

2.1.1 Transformational Leadership Theory

Transformational Leadership Theory (TLT) provides a framework to understand leadership practices that foster growth, engagement, and innovation within organizations. James V. Downton first introduced the theory (1970), coining the term "transformational leadership" to describe leadership that goes beyond transactional management and instead inspires followers to pursue higher levels of moral, cognitive, and social development. Downton emphasized that effective leaders transcend personal interests, mobilizing followers through vision, ideals, and shared purpose. James MacGregor Burns (1978) further developed this framework, conceptualizing transformational leadership as a reciprocal process in which leaders and followers elevate each other, both morally and motivationally. In Burns' view, transformational leadership is not a one-sided exercise of authority but a collaborative process in which followers become proactive moral actors capable of guiding organizational change. This foundational premise establishes TLT as a useful lens for exploring youth participation in church activities, where leaders must balance organizational goals with the spiritual and personal growth of young congregants.

At its core, transformational leadership involves four interrelated components: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration (Bass, 1999). Idealized influence emphasizes leaders serving as role models who embody values, ethics, and behaviors followers can emulate. Inspirational motivation entails articulating a compelling vision that generates commitment and enthusiasm among followers. Intellectual stimulation challenges followers to think critically, innovate, and approach problems creatively. Individualized consideration requires leaders to attend to

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each follower's unique needs, strengths, and aspirations, providing tailored mentorship and support. Within the context of Nairobi's mainstream Protestant churches, these dimensions help explain how church leaders can cultivate youth engagement by combining spiritual guidance with practical developmental strategies, thereby fostering meaningful participation in church-led initiatives.

Over the past decades, TLT has evolved to incorporate contemporary concepts such as authenticity, emotional intelligence, inclusivity, resilience, servant leadership, and sustainability. Authentic transformational leadership emphasizes transparency, honesty, and alignment between actions and professed values (Gardner et al., 2018). Leaders who demonstrate authenticity build trust and credibility, particularly among youth navigating identity formation, social pressures, and moral development. In church settings, authentic leaders model integrity in both spiritual and organizational practices, showing how faith-based principles can guide decision-making, mentoring, and community engagement. Authenticity also enhances relational trust, encouraging youth to participate actively without fear of exploitation, favoritism, or hypocrisy.

Emotional intelligence complements these qualities by equipping leaders to recognize, understand, and manage their own emotions as well as those of followers (Mazur et al., 2020). Leaders with high emotional intelligence can respond sensitively to youth concerns, mediate conflicts, and provide supportive guidance that strengthens individual confidence and group cohesion. In Nairobi churches, where youth may face varying social, economic, and cultural challenges, emotionally intelligent leadership enables mentors to adapt their approach to meet the needs of diverse participants. By fostering empathy and understanding, leaders create an environment in which youth feel valued, empowered, and motivated to contribute meaningfully to church programs.

Inclusivity is another critical dimension of contemporary transformational leadership. Inclusive leaders actively cultivate a culture of respect, trust, and belonging for all followers, irrespective of socio-economic status, ethnicity, or prior experience (Banks et al., 2021). Nairobi's Protestant churches host youth from diverse backgrounds, making inclusive leadership essential for equitable engagement. By removing barriers, offering equal opportunities, and promoting representation in decision-making, leaders ensure that all youth feel their contributions are valued. Inclusive transformational leadership

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enhances collaboration, strengthens team cohesion, and creates an environment conducive to sustained participation in church development activities.

Digital transformation has further reshaped how transformational leadership is applied, particularly in youth engagement. Digital transformational leaders leverage social media, online platforms, and technology to communicate, coordinate activities, and facilitate learning while maintaining a human-centered approach (Carli et al., 2021). In Nairobi, where youth are highly connected through digital platforms, these leadership strategies extend engagement beyond physical church spaces by providing access to mentorship, learning materials, and community initiatives. Digital tools complement traditional face-to-face leadership, allowing leaders to expand participation, track involvement, and adapt programming to meet contemporary youth needs.

Resilience and servant leadership also constitute vital aspects of transformational leadership in practice. Resilient leaders maintain their vision, commitment, and effectiveness despite challenges such as limited resources, organizational conflicts, or cultural resistance (Jaiswal et al., 2021). Servant leadership, by contrast, emphasizes prioritizing followers' needs, empowering them to reach their potential, and fostering a culture of trust, respect, and shared responsibility (Sekaran et al., 2020). In Nairobi churches, leaders who integrate resilience and servant leadership provide consistent mentorship and guidance, creating safe spaces for youth to grow spiritually, socially, and personally. This combination ensures that leadership is both adaptive and ethical, oriented toward achieving collective objectives while nurturing individual development.

Sustainability has emerged as an essential component of transformational leadership in modern organizational contexts. Sustainable transformational leadership balances organizational objectives with social, environmental, and ethical responsibilities (Klewitz et al., 2020). Within church programs, this entails designing initiatives that not only engage youth but also contribute positively to community development and social cohesion. By instilling values of social responsibility and ethical engagement, sustainable leadership prepares youth to participate meaningfully in initiatives that extend beyond the church, fostering societal impact and long-term community development. This perspective aligns closely with Nairobi churches' role as agents of social transformation, giving youth opportunities to contribute to broader societal goals.

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Applying transformational leadership in the study context provides a practical lens for analyzing youth participation in mentorship, discipleship, empowerment, and group development initiatives. Leaders influence youth by exemplifying commitment to spiritual and organizational goals, offering mentorship that guides personal growth, and creating structures that encourage collaboration and shared ownership of church programs. Through empowerment, leaders cultivate initiative, responsibility, and active engagement among youth. In addition, by fostering group cohesion, transformational leadership promotes collective action, enabling youth to contribute meaningfully to both church-led projects and broader community development initiatives.

While the theory provides rich insights, certain limitations must be acknowledged. Its emphasis on visionary and charismatic leadership may not align fully with local cultural norms, which often value humility, consensus-building, and communal decision-making. Additionally, the theory was initially developed in secular organizational contexts, raising questions about its direct applicability to religious institutions where spiritual authority, doctrinal adherence, and faith-driven motivation play central roles. Nonetheless, when adapted to the specific socio-cultural and spiritual context of Nairobi's mainstream Protestant churches, TLT remains highly relevant as a framework for understanding leadership practices that influence youth participation and engagement.

In conclusion, Transformational Leadership Theory provides a comprehensive and adaptable framework for understanding leadership in youth engagement within Nairobi's mainstream Protestant churches. By integrating authenticity, emotional intelligence, inclusivity, resilience, servant leadership, and sustainability, the theory addresses both individual and collective dimensions of participation. Transformational leaders serve as mentors, role models, and facilitators, motivating youth to embrace personal development while contributing to church objectives and community initiatives. In this study, TLT offers a robust lens for examining the factors that influence youth participation, providing actionable insights for church leaders seeking to optimize programs, enhance leadership development, and foster active, empowered, and socially responsible young congregants.

2.1.2 Social Learning Theory

Social Learning Theory (SLT), developed by Albert Bandura, posits that learning occurs through observation, imitation, and modeling, extending beyond direct experience to

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include social and environmental influences (Rumjaun & Narod, 2020). Bandura emphasized that individuals acquire knowledge, behaviors, and skills by observing others and evaluating the consequences of their actions. This process involves four key mechanisms: attention, retention, reproduction, and motivation (Bandura, 1969). Individuals selectively focus on others' behaviors, encode and retain these patterns, reproduce them through practice, and are motivated to continue them by perceived outcomes or social reinforcement. Within the context of youth engagement in church activities, these mechanisms explain how young people learn socially valued behaviors, such as volunteering, mentoring peers, attending services, or leading initiatives, by observing church leaders, mentors, and peers who exemplify commitment and accountability. This inclusion emphasizes practical examples of SLT mechanisms in church contexts.

A fundamental concept within SLT is reciprocal determinism, which asserts that personal factors, behaviors, and environmental influences continuously interact to shape learning outcomes (Bandura, 1969). Youth participation in church programs reflects the dynamic interplay between cognitive traits, personal motivations, and the church's environmental structures. The church setting provides observable norms, guidance models, and structured programs that encourage disciplined engagement, while youth bring prior experiences, intrinsic beliefs, and emotional readiness that influence how they interpret and adopt observed behaviors. This framework explains why consistent exposure to structured mentorship and modeling can shape youth engagement over time, as repeated observation reinforces socially desirable behaviors.

Mentorship plays a central role in putting SLT into practice within church contexts. Mentors act as behavioral exemplars, demonstrating attitudes, skills, and ethical practices that youth can emulate. Observing mentors navigate responsibilities, organize programs, and maintain personal integrity reinforces behaviors such as active participation, collaboration, and problem-solving. Positive reinforcement, including recognition, feedback, and social approval, increases the likelihood that youth will replicate these behaviors consistently. For instance, witnessing a peer or mentor successfully lead a youth group initiative provides a model that young congregants can internalize and replicate, increasing their confidence, competence, and willingness to engage. Negative modeling, or

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observing undesirable consequences of poor behavior, also serves as a learning mechanism by discouraging non-contributory actions.

Intrinsic motivation, personal faith, and spiritual experiences interact with observational learning to shape engagement in church activities. While SLT emphasizes observable behaviors, internal cognitive and emotional processes influence whether youth adopt or resist modeled behaviors. For example, a young person may observe a mentor's dedication but only participate actively if the behavior aligns with personal beliefs, perceived self-efficacy, or spiritual values. Self-efficacy, a concept later developed by Bandura, underscores the importance of belief in one's capability to perform specific tasks successfully. In church contexts, guidance, skill-building, and mentorship that enhance youth self-efficacy amplify the impact of observational learning and reinforce sustained participation.

SLT also accounts for peer influence and group dynamics, which are particularly relevant in Nairobi's diverse Protestant church settings. Youth are influenced not only by formal mentors but also by their peers' behaviors, attitudes, and recognition. Observing peers' involvement in church activities can create a sense of social expectation, belonging, and accountability, fostering collective engagement. Social modeling, therefore, operates at multiple levels, encompassing mentor-youth interactions, peer-peer influence, and leader-driven organizational guidance, creating a robust environment for behavioral learning.

To extend its explanatory power, this study integrates SLT with Social Capital Theory (SCT), which emphasizes relational networks, trust, and access to communal resources (Coleman, 1988). While SLT explains how youth learn behaviors through observation, SCT clarifies how social structures, mentorship networks, and peer connections enable them to express and sustain those behaviors. For instance, youth who observe effective mentorship and are embedded within supportive social networks are more likely to translate learned behaviors into active participation in church initiatives. Integrating SLT and SCT provides a dual lens, capturing both individual learning mechanisms and the structural, relational factors that facilitate youth engagement, mentorship uptake, and group cohesion.

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In conclusion, Social Learning Theory provides a comprehensive framework for understanding how observational learning, modeling, reinforcement, and reciprocal interactions shape youth engagement in church activities. Its application in Nairobi's mainstream Protestant churches clarifies how mentors, leaders, and peers influence behavior, while personal cognitive and spiritual factors shape participation quality and consistency. By combining SLT with Social Capital Theory, the study situates individual learning within the broader social and relational context, highlighting how networks, trust, and communal resources enhance or constrain engagement. This integrated approach strengthens the analysis of mentorship, group development, and empowerment strategies, offering actionable insights for enhancing youth participation, leadership development, and sustained involvement in church programs.

2.1.3 Social Capital Theory

Social Capital Theory (SCT) provides a critical lens for understanding how networks, relationships, and communal trust facilitate access to resources, opportunities, and support within social systems. In the context of Nairobi's mainstream Protestant churches, SCT offers valuable insights into how youth participation is shaped by their social connections within the church community, including relationships with leaders, peers, and mentors.

Social Capital Theory has its roots in the works of Pierre Bourdieu, Robert Putnam, and James Coleman, each offering distinct perspectives on the concept of social capital. Bourdieu (1986) defined social capital as the aggregate of actual or potential resources linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition. He emphasized that social capital is primarily an individual asset, accrued through relationships, positions of prestige, and recognition within social hierarchies. According to Bourdieu, social capital enables individuals to mobilize influence over others and access resources otherwise unavailable, with accumulation depending on effort, status, and the cultivation of goodwill. Importantly, he noted that social capital is not equally accessible, as it reflects social stratification, power differentials, and institutionalized networks.

Robert Putnam (1995) expanded the concept by emphasizing the communal and cooperative dimensions of social capital, highlighting how shared norms, trust, and

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networks enable collective action for mutual benefit. Putnam distinguished between two forms of social capital: bonding social capital, which refers to the relationships within close-knit groups, and bridging social capital, which connects individuals across diverse social groups. He argued that both forms are essential for fostering community engagement and civic participation. James Coleman approached social capital from a rational-choice perspective, viewing it as a resource embedded in the social structure of relationships among people (Bebbington & Foo, 2024). He emphasized that social capital facilitates the creation of human capital by providing individuals with access to information, support, and opportunities through their social networks. Coleman highlighted the importance of trust and norms of reciprocity in enabling individuals to achieve their objectives and contribute to collective outcomes.

In the context of Nairobi's mainstream Protestant churches, SCT offers a robust framework for examining how discipleship, mentorship, group development, and empowerment shape youth engagement. Discipleship relationships create pathways for acquiring social capital by fostering trust, reciprocity, and normative expectations for active participation. Through structured guidance, discipleship gives youth access to mentors' knowledge, experience, and social influence, which can increase motivation and reinforce desirable behaviors. Mentorship, as an extension of social capital, allows young people to tap into established networks, acquire guidance on leadership roles, and gain exposure to opportunities within the church, such as leading youth programs or participating in service projects. Mentors' relational investments thus bridge individual skill acquisition and collective engagement.

Group development further illustrates SCT in action. Youth groups, committees, and peer networks within the church form structural nodes through which social capital flows. By participating in these groups, youth build relational ties, trust, and a sense of belonging. These networks facilitate information exchange, problem-solving, and mobilization for church initiatives. For instance, youth observing peers successfully organize events gain both confidence and social legitimacy, reinforcing behavioral norms and motivating further involvement. Empowerment initiatives complement SCT by strengthening youth agency and social resources. As young people gain confidence, leadership skills, and organizational capacity, they become better positioned to leverage their social connections

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for active participation. Empowered youth are more likely to seek mentorship, collaborate with peers, and engage in community-building activities, thereby reinforcing the circulation of social capital within the church.

Despite its explanatory power, SCT has limitations that are important to consider in this study. The theory may reinforce inequalities by privileging youth with existing access to influential mentors or social networks, leaving marginalized or less-connected individuals at a disadvantage. Furthermore, social capital can serve self-serving objectives, reinforcing exclusivity or gatekeeping within church hierarchies (Ott, 2024). These limitations highlight the need to analyze not only the presence of social networks but also their inclusivity, accessibility, and alignment with broader church values and developmental goals.

Critics have also noted that SCT lacks a clear, consistent definition, making it difficult to measure and apply across contexts. The concept's ambiguity and variability have led some scholars to question its utility as a theoretical framework (Claridge, 2018). Additionally, SCT's focus on networks and relationships may overlook other factors influencing youth engagement, such as individual motivations, spiritual convictions, and institutional structures. Integrating SCT with Social Learning Theory (SLT) enhances the understanding of youth participation by linking individual learning processes with social networks. SLT posits that individuals acquire behaviors through observation, imitation, and modeling, emphasizing the role of cognitive, behavioral, and environmental factors (Li et al., 2023). By combining these theories, researchers can examine how youth learn behaviors through social interactions and how social networks reinforce them.

For example, in Nairobi's Protestant churches, youth may observe mentors and peers engaging in church activities, leading them to adopt behaviors such as volunteering, attending services, and taking leadership roles. These behaviors are then reinforced through positive feedback, recognition, and support within their social networks, facilitating sustained participation. This integrated approach provides a comprehensive framework for understanding the dynamic interplay between individual learning and social structures in shaping youth engagement.

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Understanding the dynamics of social capital and its integration with social learning processes has practical implications for church leaders and youth coordinators. By fostering environments that promote trust, reciprocity, and shared norms, churches can enhance the social capital within their communities, leading to increased youth participation. Implementing mentorship programs, facilitating group development activities, and empowering youth through leadership opportunities can strengthen social networks and give youth avenues to acquire and mobilize social capital.

Additionally, addressing SCT's limitations by ensuring social networks are inclusive and accessible, reducing inequalities and promoting equitable participation among all youth members. By integrating SCT with SLT, church leaders can design programs that not only teach desirable behaviors but also create supportive environments that reinforce these behaviors, leading to sustained youth engagement and development.

Overall, Social Capital Theory provides a valuable framework for understanding how social networks, relationships, and communal trust influence youth participation in Nairobi's mainstream Protestant churches. By examining the roles of discipleship, mentorship, group development, and empowerment, SCT highlights the mechanisms through which youth acquire and mobilize resources for engagement. Integrating SCT with Social Learning Theory offers a comprehensive perspective on the dynamic interplay between individual learning and social structures in shaping youth behavior. Despite its limitations, SCT remains a critical tool for analyzing and enhancing youth participation in church activities, offering insights for church leaders and youth coordinators seeking to foster vibrant and inclusive communities.

Building on this, the theoretical framework integrates Transformational Leadership Theory, Social Learning Theory, and Social Capital Theory to provide a holistic understanding of youth engagement. Transformational Leadership Theory emphasizes how leaders inspire, motivate, and empower youth through vision, mentorship, and individualized consideration. Social Learning Theory explains how youth internalize and replicate behaviors through observation, modeling, and reinforcement from mentors, peers, and church leaders. SCT further emphasizes the role of relational and structural networks, trust, and collective resources in enabling access to support and opportunities. Together, these theories capture both individual and structural determinants of participation,

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illustrating how leadership quality, role modeling, mentorship, peer interactions, and social connectivity collectively shape youth engagement. While this framework addresses key motivational, behavioral, and relational dimensions, contextual factors such as socioeconomic conditions and church size may also influence participation, highlighting the limits of its explanatory scope.

2.2 Empirical Literature Review

This section is characterized by a critical review of extant literature in order to explore previous research while identifying gaps that present room for extending the study. The presentation of the empirical review of literature is aligned with specific objectives. It revolves around studies on the influences of discipleship, mentorship, group development, and the influence of empowerment on youth participation in church development programs.

2.2.1 Discipleship and Youth Participation in Church activities

Discipleship is widely understood as the process through which individuals are guided in spiritual growth, moral formation, and active engagement within the church. Across the literature, a persistent assertion is that discipleship positively influences youth participation in church activities. Structured programs, mentoring, small groups, Bible study, and relational engagement repeatedly appear as central mechanisms through which discipleship is believed to operate. On the surface, the literature presents a consistent pattern: youth involved in structured discipleship programs tend to report higher levels of participation and engagement. Studies such as those by Nguyen (2021), Hickman (2020), and Kauffman (2019) support this association. Nguyen's cross-sectional survey of 142 respondents across three congregations found that youth attending weekly small groups demonstrated higher engagement in church activities. Hickman, drawing on interviews with 24 participants within a single ministry context, observed similar patterns, noting that structured engagement reinforced a sense of belonging and responsibility. Kauffman, analyzing 86 participants across four ministries, reported that structured programming correlated with lower youth dropout rates. Despite this apparent convergence, these studies share significant methodological limitations that constrain the strength of their conclusions. Cross-sectional designs, reliance on self-reported outcomes, small sample sizes, and

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absence of longitudinal follow-up prevent causal interpretation. While the studies point to a pattern, the evidence remains suggestive rather than definitive.

The methodological weaknesses are particularly pronounced in measurement approaches. Nguyen (2021), Hickman (2020), and Walters (2021) relied primarily on participants' perceptions of attendance, engagement, and spiritual growth rather than on objective behavioral measures. Participants reported their own involvement and moral development, leaving results susceptible to response bias. Youth may overstate participation or moral alignment to meet perceived expectations. Moreover, the studies draw exclusively from already active church members, introducing selection bias. This approach excludes disengaged youth, who arguably represent the population most at risk of low participation. Consequently, the observed relationship between discipleship and engagement may reflect pre-existing motivation rather than the effect of structured programs. The literature often treats this correlation as evidence of causation, but the reliance on self-selected, already engaged participants undermines this inference. In effect, the studies are measuring reinforcement of existing engagement rather than the transformative impact of discipleship on broader youth populations.

Program-level studies reinforce the perceived importance of structured engagement but do not resolve these methodological challenges. Kauffman (2019), Nyaga et al. (2023), and DeVries et al. (2020) consistently highlight that program structure, including mentoring, small group involvement, and service placement, is associated with greater youth engagement. Nyaga et al. (2023), surveying 173 respondents across six Kenyan churches, found that moral instruction alone did not influence participation unless coupled with active involvement in small groups or community service roles. Similarly, using a cohort of 60 participants, DeVries et al. (2020) observed increased engagement following structured program involvement. While these findings align with the notion that structured participation matters, they do not provide effect-size estimates or evidence of durability over time. Furthermore, none of these studies controlled adequately for confounding variables such as peer influence, school obligations, family support, or prior engagement, all of which can substantially shape participation. Kauffman's reliance on retrospective reports from ministry leaders introduces additional bias, as leaders' recollections may not accurately reflect youth behavior. Thus, while program structure emerges as a consistent

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theme, the literature offers little guidance on how much structure matters, which program elements are most effective, or whether the effects persist longitudinally.

A second theme in the literature emphasizes character formation as a mechanism linking discipleship to youth participation. Evidence seems to point to the fact that moral and relational traits such as integrity, service, responsibility, and empathy foster sustained engagement in church activities. Walters (2021), through a survey of 110 respondents, developed composite indices for character and participation and found a positive association. For instance, Chaney and colleagues, in their research with a sample of 120 participants, similarly connected mentoring and relational belonging to higher participation in church roles (Chaney et al., 2021). On the other hand, Hickman (2020) provided qualitative support, illustrating how relational guidance encouraged commitment and accountability. While these findings appear consistent, methodological weaknesses compromise their robustness. Constructs of "character" varied across studies and were neither standardized nor validated. This inconsistency undermines comparability and leaves the conceptual basis unclear. Furthermore, reliance on self-reported measures prevents confirmation that observed character development translated into actual behavioral changes. The literature also treats character inconsistently: it is presented both as a driver of participation and, implicitly, as an outcome shaped by engagement. Without longitudinal data, it is impossible to determine the directionality of this relationship. Participation may reinforce character as much as character motivates participation, creating a conceptual ambiguity that the studies do not resolve.

The African context introduces further complexity, highlighting structural and cultural constraints that limit youth participation. Researchers argue that hierarchical leadership structures, restricted decision-making authority, and program models imported from Western contexts constrain meaningful youth engagement. For instance, Hughes and Naidoo (2022), using interviews and observational data from 30 participants in South African congregations, reported tensions between formal discipleship programs and local communal practices, resulting in superficial rather than substantive engagement. Alicia (2020) and Levin (2020), each working with small qualitative samples, observed similar dynamics in Kenyan congregations, where youth roles were often symbolic and adult-led decision-making limited opportunities for genuine participation. These studies underscore

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a key contradiction in the literature: Western models prioritize structured programmatic engagement and individual moral development, whereas African contexts highlight the influence of power relations, collective identity, and cultural alignment. The significance of these contextual factors remains largely descriptive, as studies do not quantify how leadership hierarchies or institutional practices constrain participation. This leaves an important gap between rich qualitative insight and measurable, actionable evidence.

Leadership skill development emerges as a third theme linking discipleship and participation. Studies reviewed report positive associations between leadership competencies, communication, decision-making, teamwork, and youth engagement. Shi (2020) used a quasi-experimental design, comparing a treatment group of 38 with a comparison group of 34, and observed short-term improvements in leadership skills following training. Njoroge (2019), analyzing survey data from 258 participants in the Presbyterian Church of East Africa, found a positive association between leadership development and participation. Walters (2021) reinforced these trends using cross-sectional data. Despite consistency across studies, significant methodological limitations remain. Shi's lack of random assignment introduces selection bias, and the 12-week follow-up period is insufficient to assess long-term skill retention or sustained impact on engagement. Njoroge's reliance on descriptive statistics and chi-square tests fails to control for confounding variables such as prior engagement, family support, or educational attainment, leaving uncertainty about the true effect of leadership development. Additionally, the literature often treats leadership skills as both an outcome of discipleship and a driver of participation, creating circular reasoning that further complicates interpretation.

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A fourth theme focuses on purpose and role alignment. Chaney et al. (2021), DeVries et al. (2020), and Hickman (2020) suggest that youth who understand their roles and perceive meaningful purpose are more likely to engage in church activities. Mentoring increases relational belonging, and structured guidance clarifies expectations. DeVries reports higher engagement among youth following structured role assignments, while Chaney observes greater perceived purpose among mentored youth. Hickman's qualitative work aligns with these findings. Yet these studies remain limited by short-term designs, self-reported outcomes, and lack of subgroup analysis by age, gender, or prior engagement. While the

literature highlights role clarity as important, it fails to identify which specific aspects of role alignment are most effective or for which groups of youth, reducing practical applicability.

Regional and local studies reinforce the importance of relational aspects of discipleship while also emphasizing methodological gaps. Fransman (2020), Ewoh (2020), and Njoroge (2019) highlight trust, mentorship, and community support as critical factors in sustaining youth participation. Fransman's (2020) ethnographic study with 18 participants provides rich qualitative insight into how relational mentoring operates within a community. Ewoh(2020), with 35 participants in a Nigerian context, and Njoroge(2019), with 258 Kenyan respondents, report similar patterns. While these studies provide depth and context-specific understanding, their small or purposive samples, lack of control groups, and absence of longitudinal designs limit generalizability and prevent causal inference. These studies illustrate processes that facilitate participation, yet they leave unanswered questions about the scale, magnitude, and durability of observed effects.

Synthesizing the literature reveals several consistent patterns, contradictions, and gaps. Structured, active discipleship appears consistently correlated with higher youth participation, and relational elements such as mentoring, belonging, and role clarity further support engagement. Passive instruction alone rarely sustains involvement. However, these patterns rest on weak methodological foundations: cross-sectional designs, reliance on self-report, small or selective samples, and limited control of confounding factors dominate the evidence base. Contradictions arise in the treatment of constructs such as character and leadership, which are variously presented as both causes and outcomes. Western models emphasizing structure conflict conceptually with African studies highlighting cultural and institutional constraints. Moreover, most studies provide little insight into effect size, subgroup variation, or longitudinal durability, leaving the field with broad assumptions rather than empirically verified guidance.

The present study addresses these gaps through a comprehensive, methodologically rigorous approach. It employs a longitudinal design that tracks youth participation over time, allowing measurement of actual change rather than simple association. Baseline and follow-up data establish starting points and enable assessment of program impact. The

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study measures participation outcomes objectively using attendance records and role involvement logs, reducing reliance on self-report and minimizing response bias. The study includes both active and less active youth, reducing selection bias and capturing variability in engagement levels. The study clearly defines and measures constructs such as discipleship practices, character development, leadership skills, and participation outcomes separately, avoiding the conceptual circularity observed in prior literature. Confounding variables, including age, gender, education, prior engagement, and peer influence, are systematically controlled to provide more reliable estimates of program effects. The analysis explicitly integrates contextual factors, including leadership structures, decision-making authority, and program cultural alignment. A mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative measurement with qualitative explanation, bridges the gap between depth and scale.

In conclusion, the literature establishes a directionally consistent relationship between discipleship and youth participation, highlighting the importance of structured engagement, relational mentoring, leadership skill development, and role clarity. Nevertheless, the evidence is largely correlational, methodologically weak, and marked by conceptual contradictions. African studies (Ewoh, 2020; Njoroge, 2019) underscore the relevance of context, yet they remain largely descriptive and non-quantitative. Constructs such as character and leadership are inconsistently operationalized, and studies rarely assess the durability of effects. The present study addresses these deficiencies through longitudinal tracking, objective measurement, broader sampling, and careful operationalization of constructs, providing a more rigorous examination of the mechanisms and outcomes of youth discipleship. While it cannot entirely eliminate limitations inherent in this type of research, it offers a meaningful step toward translating theoretical claims into empirical understanding, bridging qualitative insight with quantitative evidence, and producing findings that are both contextually informed and methodologically robust.

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2.2.2 Mentorship and Youth Participation in Church Activities

Mentorship has consistently been highlighted as a core mechanism for enhancing youth participation within church contexts, yet critical examination of the literature reveals important nuances and gaps in understanding. Across studies, five interrelated themes emerge: relational integration, development of spiritual practices, leadership skill acquisition, role modeling and moral development, and networked participation. These themes intersect closely with the present study's conceptual dimensions of mentorship, particularly program structure, types of mentorship, and mentee relationship quality, providing a lens for understanding both the pathways through which mentorship operates and the conditions under which it is effective. However, while the literature collectively emphasizes mentorship as a positive driver of engagement, closer inspection exposes inconsistencies, methodological limitations, and cultural specificity that constrain the generalizability of findings.

Relational integration is arguably the most frequently cited pathway linking mentorship to participation. Studies indicate that youth who engage consistently with mentors develop a sense of belonging and feel embedded within church communities, which in turn motivates engagement in leadership roles, committee membership, and service activities (Chaney et al., 2021; DeVries et al., 2020; Fransman, 2020). Yet, a critical reading suggests that these studies often assume that mere interaction with mentors produces relational integration, without fully interrogating the quality, depth, or reciprocity of these relationships. While Ewoh (2020) and Hendershot et al. (2021) argue that mentorship mitigates alienation in hierarchical church structures, evidence remains limited on how mentorship operates in contexts with high cultural diversity or competing social pressures, such as urban African churches. This raises questions about the universal applicability of relational integration as a pathway: relational bonds may not automatically translate into active participation if structural, cultural, or peer-related barriers exist. Program structure, therefore, is not merely an administrative concern; structured programs with predictable interaction schedules appear essential for fostering meaningful relational bonds, whereas ad hoc or informal mentorship may leave relational outcomes uneven or highly context-dependent (Fransman, 2020; Scott Jr. & Deutsch, 2021). Similarly, the type of mentorship—one-on-

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one, peer-based, or group-focused- shapes relational dynamics differently, but empirical comparisons of their relative effectiveness remain scarce. High-quality mentor-mentee relationships, characterized by trust, responsiveness, and mutual respect, clearly enhance integration, but the literature often neglects the processes through which such relationships are built, maintained, or eroded.

The development of spiritual practices is another critical theme, yet the literature rests on a striking assumption: that structured guidance alone ensures meaningful engagement with faith-based routines. Studies report that mentorship facilitates consistent participation in prayer, Bible study, and devotional activities (DeVries et al., 2020; McEntire et al., 2020; Chaney et al., 2021), but the evidence is largely descriptive and context-bound. Fransman (2020) and Scott Jr. & Deutsch (2021) show that informal mentorship can promote internalized spiritual habits, yet such outcomes are highly variable and often contingent on familial, peer, or community networks. Critically, the literature rarely examines whether these spiritual practices reflect genuine internalization or merely compliance with mentor expectations. Structured mentorship programs provide regular exposure and accountability, potentially enhancing engagement, but may also risk prioritizing adherence over personal meaning, a tension rarely addressed in existing studies. The type of mentorship again mediates outcomes, as one-on-one mentoring offers personalized instruction, whereas group mentorship fosters shared practices and peer reinforcement. The quality of the mentor-mentee relationship remains central: without trust, credibility, and perceived support, guidance may have limited influence, a nuance largely underexplored in prior research. This gap suggests that future studies should differentiate between superficial participation and authentic, internalized engagement when evaluating spiritual outcomes.

Leadership skill acquisition is consistently highlighted as a third theme, reflecting the practical competencies youth develop under mentorship, including ministry coordination, pastoral care, and decision-making (McEntire et al., 2020; Hendershot et al., 2021; DeVries et al., 2020). While structured programs clearly embed opportunities for skill practice and feedback, the literature often assumes that skill exposure automatically translates into competence or ongoing participation. In reality, mentorship quality and the alignment of tasks with youth interests and capacities moderate leadership development.

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Informal mentorship offers fewer predictable opportunities and may privilege mentees with prior access or existing social capital, potentially reproducing inequality within church structures (Fransman, 2020; Ewoh, 2020). Similarly, the type of mentorship shapes skill acquisition: peer mentorship encourages collaborative problem-solving, one-on-one mentorship allows focused coaching, and group mentorship exposes youth to complex, team-based challenges. Yet comparative evidence showing which modalities best promote sustained leadership engagement remains limited, particularly in African church contexts. The literature also underrepresents the role of relational quality, as high-quality interactions appear necessary for mentees to embrace responsibility, experiment with new tasks, and translate guidance into observable performance. Absent such quality, structured opportunities may yield superficial engagement, highlighting a critical tension between program design and relational processes that has not been systematically addressed.

Role modeling and moral development form a fourth theme, with mentors serving as tangible examples of values, behaviors, and decision-making strategies expected in church leadership (Hendershot et al., 2021; McEntire et al., 2020; Chaney et al., 2021). Critical examination reveals that the literature often treats role modeling as an inherent byproduct of mentorship, neglecting the mechanisms through which youth internalize observed behaviors or the conditions under which modeling fails. Ewoh (2020) and Fransman (2020) note that observing mentors navigate institutional and relational dynamics is essential for ethical learning, but insight into how cultural, generational, or gender dynamics shape interpretation of observed behaviors remains limited. Informal mentorship may expose youth to inconsistent or contextually biased role models, producing selective or uneven moral development. Structured programs can mitigate these inconsistencies, but only if mentor selection, training, and oversight ensure alignment with desired ethical and spiritual standards. Mentorship type interacts with these processes: adult-youth mentorship primarily guides moral reasoning, while peer mentorship emphasizes collaborative ethics and shared accountability. The quality of the mentor-mentee relationship is decisive, as credibility, trust, and relational warmth determine whether role modeling translates into meaningful ethical and participatory outcomes.

Mentorship as a mechanism for networked participation is a fifth theme that has received comparatively less critical attention. Literature suggests that mentors connect youth to

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wider institutional, peer, and ministry networks, creating opportunities for visibility, collaboration, and experiential learning (Chaney et al., 2021; Fransman, 2020). Structured mentorship programs embedding mentees in committees or ministry teams optimize these networking benefits, yet few studies critically examine whether access to networks translates into genuine engagement or is constrained by hierarchy, nepotism, or informal social barriers. The type of mentorship mediates these effects, as group and peer mentorship provide horizontal networking among youth, whereas one-on-one mentorship often facilitates vertical access to authority or resources. Relationship quality again moderates outcomes: youth in supportive, high-trust relationships are better able to navigate networks, whereas superficial interactions limit both opportunities and influence. Notably, existing research rarely disaggregates network effects by socio-demographic factors, such as gender, age, or socio-economic status, potentially masking inequities in access and influence.

Across these thematic dimensions, mentorship is multidimensional, and its effectiveness depends on interactions among program structure, mentorship type, and relational quality. Structured programs provide scaffolding and consistency, but without high-quality relationships, their impact is likely limited. Diverse mentorship types expand opportunities for relational, spiritual, and skill-based growth, yet their benefits are unevenly realized without intentional program design. Mentorship quality consistently emerges as a critical determinant, mediating the degree to which relational, spiritual, leadership, ethical, and networked outcomes are achieved. Critically, the literature often assumes a linear or uniform impact of mentorship on participation, underestimating the complex interplay of socio-cultural, institutional, and individual factors that can facilitate or inhibit engagement. Weaknesses in any of these dimensions, irregular program delivery, limited mentorship modalities, or superficial mentor-mentee relationships can produce uneven or superficial participation, undermining the purported benefits of mentorship.

Finally, a critical gap in the literature is the overreliance on descriptive or context-bound studies. Many insights are drawn from single churches, youth-led organizations, or corporate analogs that may not translate to the varied social, cultural, and institutional landscapes of urban African churches (Fransman, 2020; Scott Jr. & Deutsch, 2021; Ewoh, 2020). Few studies systematically evaluate the interactions among mentorship structure,

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type, and relationship quality, limiting our understanding of which mechanisms are most effective under specific conditions. Moreover, assumptions that informal mentorship or relational observation naturally produces desired outcomes remain largely untested, leaving the field with descriptive generalizations rather than evidence-based guidance.

Mentorship has consistently been recognized as a multidimensional driver of youth participation in church contexts, operating through relational, spiritual, skill-based, moral, and networked pathways. Across the literature, three dimensions emerge as particularly salient: mentorship program structure, types of mentorships, and the quality of the mentor-mentee relationship. Program structure refers to the degree of formalization, including whether mentorship is deliberately organized with defined objectives, timelines, and roles, or whether it occurs informally within relational networks. Types of mentorships encompass natural, peer-to-peer, and hierarchical models, each with distinct mechanisms of influence. Finally, mentee relationship quality captures trust, relational closeness, communication frequency, and perceived support, which collectively mediate the effectiveness of any mentoring intervention. While these dimensions are broadly acknowledged, prior research reveals significant assumptions, gaps, and inconsistencies. Many studies implicitly assume that mentorship automatically translates into active engagement, neglecting the influence of socio-cultural factors, contextual constraints, or individual differences in motivation and receptivity. Moreover, operational definitions of mentorship vary widely, creating challenges for cross-study synthesis. These limitations underscore the need to examine mentorship through an integrated lens that considers program design, mentorship modality, and relationship quality in tandem, a perspective that informs the focus of the present study.

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In line with this integrated approach, qualitative methodologies dominate the literature, particularly in studies conducted in the United States. Stole (2020), Scott Jr. and Deutsch (2021), and Chaney et al. (2021) exemplify the use of interviews, focus groups, and case studies to explore mentorship dynamics in church settings. Stole used interviews with pastors, church leaders, and youth focus groups to examine how mentorship is operationalized within ministry programs, offering nuanced insights into the relational and practical mechanisms that promote engagement. Scott Jr. and Deutsch conducted an intensive case study of a single youth participant to differentiate between natural, informal

mentorship and deliberate, structured mentorship, offering conceptual clarity on how different forms of guidance impact participation. Chaney et al. bridged qualitative depth with quantitative assessment by combining interviews and surveys, capturing both relational integration and spiritual development outcomes. These studies collectively highlight how mentorship functions as a socializing and empowering force. However, despite the richness of qualitative insights, these investigations are constrained by small, context-specific samples, raising questions about external validity and limiting generalization across broader church populations and diverse socio-cultural contexts.

International perspectives provide complementary evidence, while also highlighting the variability of mentorship practices across institutional and cultural settings. Afandi (2021) explored mentorship within a construction company in Indonesia, using qualitative interviews to examine skill development and problem-solving. Although the organizational context differs substantially from church-based programs, the study reinforces mentorship as a capacity-building mechanism that fosters competence, confidence, and engagement, suggesting potential transferability of underlying principles. Within Africa, Fransman (2020) and Ewoh (2020) conducted semi-structured interviews and focus groups in Christian communities, revealing context-specific nuances in mentorship. Fransman focused on informal relational mentorship among children aged six to twelve, emphasizing trust, familial integration, and community networks as critical mediators of engagement. In contrast, Ewoh investigated structured mentoring for young adults aged 18–39, highlighting the role of deliberate program design, goal-setting, and monitoring in facilitating participation. Njoroge (2019), working in Kenya with 258 youth from Kajiado Presbytery, used a quantitative survey to identify determinants of participation and found that lack of mentorship significantly hindered engagement. While the larger sample offers some generalizability, the study provides limited insight into relational, motivational, and contextual mechanisms, leaving unanswered questions about how mentorship translates into sustained involvement.

Methodological patterns across these studies reveal both convergence and persistent limitations. Self-reported measures are widely used (Fransman, 2020; Ewoh, 2020; Njoroge, 2019), introducing potential response bias and social desirability effects. Cross-sectional designs dominate (Stole, 2020; Scott Jr. & Deutsch, 2021; McEntire et al., 2020),

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limiting the ability to observe longitudinal effects or how mentor-mentee relationships evolve over time. Sample sizes are often small and non-representative, particularly in African contexts, constraining external validity. Moreover, researchers operationalize mentorship inconsistently. Studies differ in how they define formal versus informal mentorship, the relational versus functional dimensions of guidance, and the age targeting of participants (Chaney et al., 2021; Fransman, 2020; DeVries et al., 2020). This lack of standardization complicates synthesis and leaves substantial gaps in understanding which mentorship characteristics most reliably drive youth participation. Research also pays limited attention to contextual moderators, such as socio-cultural norms, family expectations, peer influence, and institutional practices, which shape how mentorship is received and enacted. These gaps underscore the need for research that captures both quantitative indicators of participation and qualitative insights into relational and motivational dynamics, ensuring that the influence of program structure, mentorship type, and relationship quality is assessed in a nuanced, contextually sensitive manner.

Critically, while the literature broadly supports mentorship's positive role in promoting youth engagement, it also exposes untested assumptions. For example, many studies imply a linear relationship between mentor presence and participation, without interrogating the quality, intensity, or relational depth required to produce meaningful engagement. Informal mentorship, particularly in African contexts, is often assumed to provide sufficient guidance, yet the evidence remains largely descriptive, leaving questions about replicability and scalability. Structured programs in Western settings, while theoretically rigorous, may fail to account for culturally specific forms of relational integration or spiritual socialization. Moreover, the literature tends to underexplore how mentee characteristics—such as agency, prior religious experience, or socio-economic status—interact with mentorship to influence outcomes. Without explicitly addressing these moderating factors, the field risks overgeneralizing findings and oversimplifying complex relational processes.

Finally, the international and cross-cultural body of research highlights the interplay between mentorship program structure, type, and relationship quality. Formal program structures, as observed in structured adult-led mentorship (Ewoh, 2020; Stole, 2020), often provide clear pathways for skill development, accountability, and role acquisition. Natural

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mentorship and peer-based relationships, as Fransman (2020) and Scott Jr. & Deutsch (2021) emphasize, facilitate relational integration, belonging, and internalization of spiritual norms. Meanwhile, the quality of the mentor-mentee relationship, encompassing trust, communication, and perceived support, emerges as a critical moderator of participation outcomes, potentially amplifying or attenuating the influence of structural or programmatic elements. Taken together, these themes justify a research focus that does not treat mentorship as a monolithic construct but rather disentangles the contributions of structure, type, and relational quality, thereby addressing both conceptual and empirical gaps identified across the literature.

Findings across multiple studies converge on the significant role of mentorship in promoting youth participation in church activities, yet the mechanisms and conditions under which this influence occurs remain underexplored. Relational integration consistently emerges as a central pathway through which mentorship fosters engagement. Chaney et al. (2021), DeVries et al. (2020), and Fransman (2020) highlight that consistent mentor-mentee interactions build belonging, social support, and confidence, helping youth navigate hierarchical and adult-dominated church structures. Mentorship strengthens social connectedness, which in turn motivates participation in leadership roles, volunteer programs, and committee work.

However, much of the evidence relies on self-reported perceptions of belonging and engagement, leaving open the question of how relational integration translates into sustained, observable behavior over time. Furthermore, the literature often assumes that relational closeness is inherently positive, without interrogating the quality, intensity, or potential dependency dynamics that may arise in mentor-mentee relationships. For instance, overly hierarchical or unidirectional mentoring relationships might constrain youth agency or stifle independent decision-making, an issue existing studies rarely address. Despite these gaps, the relational dimension remains a critical lens for understanding participation, particularly when considering how mentorship program structure and relational quality interact to shape engagement outcomes.

Closely intertwined with relational integration is mentorship's role in fostering spiritual development, which appears both as an outcome and as a mechanism driving participation. DeVries et al. (2020), McEntire et al. (2020), and Ewoh (2020) consistently demonstrate

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that youth guided by mentors are more engaged in Bible study, devotional practices, and ministry leadership. Mentorship provides both guidance and accountability, enabling youth to internalize doctrinal teachings and translate them into daily practice. Nevertheless, the literature often conflates participation with spiritual growth, assuming that attendance and involvement in religious activities reflect genuine internalization of values. This assumption neglects nuanced differences in individual motivation, prior religious exposure, and personal reflection, which may mediate the impact of mentorship. Furthermore, studies frequently overlook the contextual embeddedness of spiritual guidance. Fransman (2020) notes that in African settings, mentorship often occurs through informal kinship or community networks, suggesting that culturally embedded practices may reinforce or even supplant formal mentoring programs. These observations underscore the need to critically examine how program structure and relational quality facilitate spiritual engagement, rather than assuming uniform efficacy across diverse cultural and institutional contexts.

Mentorship also functions as a mechanism for leadership skill acquisition, linking guidance with practical application in ministry and service roles. Research by McEntire et al. (2020), Hendershot et al. (2021), and Stole (2020) shows that mentorship provides structured opportunities for youth to practice teaching, counseling, community outreach, and event coordination. Both formal programs and informal relational networks contribute to skill development, though the pathways differ. Formal programs often emphasize goal-oriented tasks and accountability, while natural mentorship relies more on observational learning, modeling, and iterative feedback. Despite consistent recognition of these benefits, the literature rarely disaggregates which aspects of leadership skill acquisition depend more on programmatic design versus relational quality. Moreover, there is little attention to potential negative outcomes, such as overreliance on mentor guidance, reinforcement of existing hierarchies, or differential access to opportunities based on gender, socio-economic status, or prior involvement. These gaps highlight the importance of examining mentorship outcomes not merely as aggregate skill acquisition but through the interplay of program structure, type of mentorship, and the quality of mentor-mentee relationships, particularly because these factors may differentially influence youth's ability to assume leadership positions within the church.

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Finally, mentorship's role in moral development and role modeling complements its relational, spiritual, and skill-based functions. Hendershot et al. (2021), Chaney et al. (2021), and McEntire et al. (2020) emphasize that observing mentors engage in ethical, service-oriented behaviors strengthens decision-making, reinforces adherence to church values, and motivates active participation. Similarly, Fransman (2020) and Ewoh (2020) demonstrate that culturally embedded mentorship practices, especially in African contexts, provide informal yet powerful models for youth, with observational learning reinforcing values internalization alongside structured programmatic guidance. Njoroge (2019) further corroborates these findings in Kenya, showing that mentorship predicts not only participation and retention but also confidence in leadership roles, highlighting its multidimensional influence. Nevertheless, the literature tends to present these pathways as linear and uniformly positive, without considering potential contextual contingencies. Mentor characteristics, cultural alignment, or the quality of relational interaction may mediate or even negate expected outcomes. Moreover, the relative contribution of moral and role-modeling components versus relational or skill-based mechanisms remains unclear. This complexity underscores the importance of operationalizing mentorship outcomes across relational, functional, and spiritual dimensions, while critically accounting for contextual moderators such as family influence, peer networks, and institutional culture. By doing so, studies can move beyond descriptive assertions to a more nuanced understanding of how mentorship structures, program types, and relationship quality jointly influence youth participation in church activities.

Synthesizing the literature reveals recurring patterns in how mentorship shapes youth participation, yet these patterns also expose critical assumptions and limitations. First, mentorship consistently strengthens relational integration, helping youth feel connected, supported, and embedded in the church community (Chaney et al., 2021; DeVries et al., 2020; Fransman, 2020). These relational bonds facilitate engagement in leadership roles, service projects, and committee activities by providing social scaffolding and confidence. However, the literature often assumes that relational closeness is uniformly beneficial, without interrogating potential risks such as dependency on mentors, unequal access to relational support, or mentor biases that may privilege some youth over others. The quality, intensity, and reciprocity of mentor-mentee relationships remain underexplored,

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leaving important gaps in understanding how relational integration translates into sustained, meaningful participation.

Research indicates that mentorship supports the development and maintenance of spiritual practices, ensuring that engagement is grounded in faith-based learning (McEntire et al., 2020; Ewoh, 2020; Chaney et al., 2021). Youth guided by mentors demonstrate higher participation in Bible study, devotional routines, and ministry activities. Yet, much of the evidence conflates mere attendance or activity completion with genuine spiritual internalization, neglecting individual differences in motivation, prior religious exposure, and personal reflection. Assuming structured programs alone drive spiritual growth oversimplifies the role of informal, culturally embedded mentorship, particularly in African contexts where family and community networks can reinforce or substitute for formal guidance (Fransman, 2020).

Another issue is that mentorship develops leadership skills through both structured programming and incidental relational learning (Hendershot et al., 2021; Stole, 2020; McEntire et al., 2020). Youth gain practical competencies in teaching, counseling, and ministry coordination, but studies rarely distinguish the relative impact of programmatic structure from mentor-mentee relationship quality. Leadership outcomes may vary according to the accessibility, inclusivity, and consistency of mentoring opportunities, yet these moderating factors are seldom examined.

Finally, mentorship provides role modeling and moral guidance, enabling youth to internalize institutional norms and emulate ethical behaviors (Hendershot et al., 2021; Fransman, 2020; Ewoh, 2020). While role modeling is consistently linked to engagement, the literature largely assumes positive outcomes and overlooks how mentor values, cultural alignment, and behavioral inconsistencies may affect youth differently. These patterns highlight mentorship as a multidimensional driver of youth participation, but also reveal critical gaps in understanding relational quality, contextual contingencies, and differential access to opportunities, pointing to the need for more nuanced, empirically grounded inquiry.

Examining these patterns more closely, the literature presents two contrasting yet complementary approaches to mentorship that must be considered together. Research from

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the United States emphasizes structured mentoring programs as the dominant formal system (Chaney et al., 2021; DeVries et al., 2020; Fransman, 2020), whereas studies in African contexts highlight informal relational mentoring as the primary method ((Ewoh, 2020; Njoroge, 2019). The effectiveness of each approach appears highly context-dependent. Structured programs provide standardization, accountability, and measurable skill outcomes, supporting objective evaluation of participation and leadership development. In contrast, informal mentorship leverages cultural connections, social networks, and relational trust, allowing youth to learn in ways that align with local norms and social realities. Understanding these contrasting modalities underscores the need to evaluate mentorship not only by its structure but also by the relational and cultural dynamics that shape its impact.

The different mentoring methods show that their effectiveness depends on the specific context which needs to be assessed. Structured programs create standardization and accountability, generating measurable skill outcomes, while informal mentorship methods enable people to learn through cultural connections and social relationships. Different age ranges and focus groups create challenges because they require analysis across multiple studies. The research also highlights the need for developmentally appropriate interventions: some studies focus on children (Fransman, 2020), others examine adolescents (Chaney et al., 2021), and some investigate young adults (Ewoh, 2020; Njoroge, 2019). The research studies show different levels of methodological rigor because the studies use self-reporting methods and cross-sectional research designs with limited participant groups, which reduces their reliability and generalizability, according to Fransman (2020), Ewoh (2020), and McEntire et al. 2020. Research studies use different operational definitions of mentorship because they show different ways to define formal and informal mentoring relationships, their operational functions, and their target age groups (Chaney et al., 2021; Stole, 2020; DeVries et al., 2020).

The implications of these observations are profound. From a theoretical perspective, they highlight that mentorship cannot be treated as a monolithic construct; understanding its effects requires attention to context, relational dynamics, and developmental stage. Practically, they underscore the risk of poorly designed mentorship programs that do not account for cultural norms, age-specific needs, or relational expectations. Programs that

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emphasize formal structure in settings that rely heavily on relational learning may fail to engage youth, while informal approaches in contexts that demand accountability and skill mastery may produce inconsistent outcomes. These contradictions necessitate methodologically rigorous research that clarifies the mechanisms, contexts, and conditions under which mentorship is most effective, ensuring that interventions are both empirically informed and contextually appropriate.

Methodological limitations are seen in the following areas: lack of longitudinal studies; use of small and non-representative groups; inconsistent definitions of mentorship and measurement of outcomes related to mentorship; and limited investigations of moderating variables (e.g., peer influence, family expectation, and mobilization strategies) (Fransman, 2020; Ewoh, 2020; Njoroge, 2019). Studies typically do not incorporate mixed methodologies, limiting their ability to evaluate both quantitative and qualitative/exploratory data (Chaney et al., 2021; Stole, 2020; McEntire et al., 2020). This leads to limited ability to interpret and apply mentorship intervention studies; therefore, it is unclear what types of mentorship interventions work best, with what sub-groups of individuals, and in which contexts.

The present study addresses these gaps through a robust mixed-methods design involving 450 church members, including both lay individuals and clergy. By combining longitudinal tracking, quantitative measures of participation, and qualitative interviews, the study captures both relational and functional outcomes of mentorship. Operational definitions distinguish formal and informal mentorship, clarify relational and functional dimensions, and explicitly link mentorship to specific church activities. The study systematically examines moderating factors such as peer networks, family expectations, institutional structures, and mobilization strategies to disentangle mentorship effects from confounding variables. Contextualization within Kenyan Protestant churches ensures cultural relevance, accounting for social norms, institutional hierarchies, and communal dynamics. This approach addresses prior limitations, generating empirically grounded, theoretically informed, and practically relevant evidence on mentorship's role in enhancing youth participation.

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In conclusion, mentoring is identified as an important factor that enables youth to participate in church activities through various relationships, including relational integration, leadership development, spiritual development, and modeling by others. Several consistent themes indicate that both formal mentorship and informal mentoring through relationships foster youth engagement, although the degree of effectiveness may depend on contextual variables such as culture, age, and organizational structure. Inconsistencies between formal and informal mentoring stem from different levels of formalization, cultural differences between youth and mentors, and differing methodologies used to assess mentorship's impact. The lack of longitudinal follow-up, limited sample size, and inconsistent definitions of mentorship justify the need for the current research. By using both qualitative and quantitative methods to operationalize mentorship systematically, and by examining possible moderating variables, this research addresses limitations in previous studies and will provide practical recommendations for increasing youth engagement in churches in Kenya. The research outcomes will provide theoretical connections and practical applications to support ongoing, meaningful participation of young people in church activities.

2.2.2 Group's development and Youth Participation in Church Activities

Group development, within church contexts, refers to the structured and evolving interactions among youth through small groups, ministries, peer networks, and leadership systems that shape how they engage with church life. It is not a single variable but a cluster of processes, including cohesion, communication, mentorship, and shared identity. The literature consistently links these processes to youth participation, but participation itself is defined and measured unevenly. In this synthesis, participation is treated across four dimensions: active involvement, number of youths engaged, time spent in programs, and leadership roles assumed. This framing exposes a core issue in the literature. Many studies claim that group dynamics "increase participation," yet fail to specify which dimension they mean or how they measure it (Corley, 2018; Perry, 2023). As a result, the relationship between group development and youth participation remains conceptually broad but empirically thin, requiring closer interrogation of how specific group processes translate into observable participation outcomes.

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A dominant theme across the literature is group cohesion, often described through constructs such as belonging, friendliness, and relational bonding. Studies show that cohesive groups tend to retain youth and sustain engagement over time, particularly by increasing the time youths spend in church programs and their likelihood of repeated attendance (Corley, 2018; Nalugya et al., 2023). In Uganda, Nalugya et al. (2023) demonstrate that structured peer support enhances inclusion and participation, especially among marginalized groups, suggesting that cohesion operates as a mechanism of social integration. Similarly, Corley (2018) identifies relational warmth and assimilation practices as central to sustaining congregational involvement. However, these findings largely rely on qualitative accounts and self-reported experiences, which capture perceived belonging but do not directly measure behavioral outcomes such as participation frequency or leadership uptake. This creates a gap between what youth feel and what they actually do. The literature assumes that cohesion leads to active involvement, but this causal pathway is rarely tested using objective indicators.

Peer influence emerges as a closely related mechanism that reinforces group cohesion while shaping participation patterns. Youth embedded in supportive peer networks tend to show higher levels of active involvement and spend more time in church activities, as social expectations normalize participation (Perry, 2023; Saint Louis, 2020). Perry's (2023) study highlights how small groups function as spaces for shared learning and mutual accountability, which can deepen engagement. However, the evidence remains largely interpretive, relying on narratives rather than measurable changes in participation levels. Haskell's study, as cited in Saint Louis (2020), suggests that peer interaction supports retention, but the reliance on secondary data and lack of operational definitions weaken the strength of this claim. The literature does not clearly distinguish between peer presence and peer influence. Not all peer networks likely produce positive participation outcomes, especially where group norms are weak or inconsistent, but this remains underexplored because existing studies lack analytical depth.

Mentorship within groups is another recurring theme, often positioned as a bridge between passive attendance and active involvement. Studies suggest that mentorship enhances confidence, spiritual growth, and commitment, which may translate into increased participation and leadership uptake (Pranoto, 2021; Perry, 2023). Pranoto (2021) identifies

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"empowering responsibility" as a key factor in Gen Z involvement, indicating that when youth are trusted with roles, their engagement deepens. This aligns with broader claims that mentorship structures create pathways into leadership. However, the literature does not isolate mentorship effects from other group variables such as cohesion or institutional support. Most studies treat mentorship as part of a broader "supportive environment," making it difficult to determine whether mentorship independently increases leadership participation or simply coexists with other enabling factors. The absence of comparative or longitudinal designs further limits the ability to establish whether mentorship leads to sustained increases in leadership roles or only short-term engagement.

Leadership structures within groups also strongly associate with participation, particularly in shaping the number of youths holding leadership positions. Studies indicate that when churches create structured opportunities for youth leadership, participation expands beyond attendance to active contribution (Pranoto, 2021; Erickson et al., 2020). Erickson et al. (2020), though based in sports contexts, demonstrate that group-based leadership experiences foster skill development and sustained engagement. This suggests that leadership is not only an outcome of participation but also a driver of deeper involvement. However, the transferability of these findings to church settings remains uncertain. The literature often assumes leadership opportunities exist uniformly across contexts, which empirical evidence does not support. In many church settings, leadership roles remain limited or controlled by adult hierarchies, restricting youth access. This structural constraint is rarely addressed directly, creating a disconnect between theoretical claims about leadership and practical realities within church institutions.

Communication patterns and inclusivity further shape how group development influences participation. Effective communication within groups, including open dialogue and shared learning, is linked to increased active involvement and longer time spent in programs (Perry, 2023; Corley, 2018). Inclusivity, particularly in accommodating diverse youth backgrounds, appears to influence how many youths join and remain in church activities (Nalugya et al., 2023; Pranoto, 2021). However, these constructs are often vaguely defined. Terms such as "supportive environment" and "inclusive group" lack operational clarity, making it difficult to measure their direct impact on participation dimensions. Inclusivity may affect recruitment and retention more strongly than leadership

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development, but the literature does not explicitly test this distinction. Without clear definitions and measurement frameworks, these themes remain conceptually appealing but empirically weak.

Methodologically, the literature shows a consistent but limiting pattern. Most studies rely on qualitative designs, small samples, and self-reported data, which shape both the strengths and weaknesses of the evidence produced. Studies such as Perry (2023) and Pranoto (2021) draw on interviews and observations to capture lived experiences within church groups. These approaches provide depth by revealing how youth interpret belonging, mentorship, and engagement. However, they fall short on generalizability and measurement precision. Self-reported data introduces bias, especially where constructs such as "engagement" and "participation" are not clearly defined. To address these limitations, the present study moved beyond perception-based accounts by integrating quantitative measures of participation with qualitative insights. The study operationalized participation across four dimensions: active involvement, number of youths engaged, time spent in programs, and leadership roles. This allowed the study to move from subjective interpretations to observable and comparable indicators of youth participation (Perry, 2023; Pranoto, 2021).

The dominance of descriptive and correlational designs in prior studies further weakens the ability to explain relationships between group development and participation. Corley (2018) and Haskell's study, as cited in Saint Louis (2020), identify associations between group cohesion and engagement but do not test causality or control for alternative explanations. This creates a directionality problem. It remains unclear whether group dynamics drive participation or whether already engaged youth self-select into cohesive groups. The present study addressed this gap by incorporating quantitative analysis with statistical controls, allowing for clearer examination of relationships between group development variables and participation outcomes. It also compared variations across groups rather than treating all group experiences as uniform. This approach provided a more structured basis for assessing how specific aspects of group development relate to each participation dimension, rather than relying on broad, untested associations (Corley, 2018; Saint Louis, 2020).

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Another critical limitation in existing studies is the lack of longitudinal and comparative perspectives. Most research captures a single point in time, which restricts understanding of how participation evolves. Although the present study did not adopt a fully longitudinal design, it addressed this limitation by collecting data across multiple churches and youth groups, enabling cross-sectional comparisons across different group contexts. This allowed identification of patterns across varying levels of cohesion, mentorship, and leadership structures. In addition, the study incorporated both qualitative and quantitative data, enabling triangulation of findings. This strengthened the validity of conclusions by linking reported experiences with measurable participation outcomes. By addressing weaknesses in measurement, sampling, and analytical design, the present study provides a more robust and contextually grounded account of how group development shapes youth participation in church activities than what is currently available in the literature.

Despite these limitations, several consistent findings emerge across studies. Group cohesion, peer interaction, and structured support systems are repeatedly associated with increased active involvement and longer time spent in church programs (Corley, 2018; Nalugya et al., 2023). Leadership opportunities are linked to greater responsibility and deeper engagement, particularly among older youth (Pranoto, 2021; Erickson et al., 2020). Additionally, inclusive group environments appear to attract and retain more youth, suggesting a link between group openness and participation rates (Perry, 2023; Nalugya et al., 2023). These patterns indicate that group development operates as a reinforcing system, where relational and structural factors interact to shape multiple dimensions of participation simultaneously.

However, the literature also presents clear contradictions. Strong group cohesion does not always lead to leadership development, as many studies report high levels of participation without corresponding increases in youth leadership roles (Corley, 2018; Perry, 2023). Similarly, high attendance or time spent in programs does not necessarily reflect active involvement, as youth may participate passively without meaningful engagement. Haskell's study (Saint Louis, 2020) further complicates this picture by suggesting that the social environment influences retention, yet it does not show how this translates into deeper participation outcomes. These contradictions highlight a key issue. Participation is often treated as a single construct, masking differences between presence, engagement,

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and leadership. Without disaggregating these dimensions, studies risk overstating the impact of group development.

Significant gaps remain in the literature. Longitudinal designs to track how group development influences participation over time remain underused (Perry, 2023; Pranoto, 2021). Key variables such as socio-economic status, cultural context, and institutional structures are often excluded, reducing the explanatory power of findings (Saint Louis, 2020; Nalugya et al., 2023). The lack of standardized measures for participation and group development further weakens comparability across studies. Most critically, theoretical frameworks are either absent or underdeveloped, leaving the mechanisms linking group processes to participation outcomes poorly specified. This suggests that current research prioritizes descriptive insights over explanatory depth, limiting its ability to inform practical interventions.

A critical reading of the literature shows that many conclusions rest on weak empirical foundations. Studies frequently equate attendance with participation, ignoring the qualitative differences between passive presence and active engagement (Corley, 2018; Perry, 2023). The heavy reliance on self-reported data introduces bias, as participants may overstate their involvement or interpret engagement subjectively. The absence of control variables means that observed relationships may be confounded by external factors such as family influence or institutional policies. In some cases, studies generalize findings from highly specific contexts, such as megachurches in Indonesia or disability-focused interventions in Uganda, without sufficient justification for broader application (Pranoto, 2021; Nalugya et al., 2023). These weaknesses limit the reliability and applicability of existing evidence.

Overall, the literature establishes that group development plays a significant role in shaping youth participation, but it does so in a fragmented and methodologically constrained manner. Cohesion, peer influence, mentorship, leadership structures, communication, and inclusivity all appear to contribute to participation, yet their individual and combined effects remain unclear. The evidence points to strong associations but weak explanations, consistent patterns but unresolved contradictions. This creates a clear need for more rigorous, context-sensitive research.

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The present study responds directly to these limitations by adopting a mixed-methods approach that integrates quantitative measurement with qualitative insights. It operationalizes participation across four dimensions: active involvement, number of youths, time spent, and leadership roles, addressing the conceptual ambiguity identified in prior research. By collecting primary data from mainstream Protestant churches in Nairobi, the study accounts for socio-cultural context and institutional variation, improving external validity. It also incorporates moderating variables such as peer influence and family expectations, which are largely absent in existing studies (Perry, 2023; Saint Louis, 2020). Through this approach, the study moves beyond descriptive accounts to provide a more precise and empirically grounded understanding of how group development shapes youth participation in church activities.

2.2.3 Empowerment and Youth Participation in Church Activities

Empowerment has emerged as a central mechanism influencing youth participation in structured activities across diverse social, organizational, and institutional contexts. Across the reviewed literature, several thematic dimensions of empowerment recur consistently, though they are operationalized in markedly different ways. Psychological empowerment, encompassing self-efficacy, perceived control, confidence, and intrinsic motivation, is one of the most consistently identified factors enabling youth engagement (Batista, Johnson, & Friedmann, 2018; Fong & Snape, 2015; Onyango et al., 2019). Psychological empowerment allows youth to perceive themselves as capable actors within their environments, able to make decisions, influence group outcomes, and exercise agency in structured programs. Despite this, a critical limitation across these studies is the reliance on self-reported measures to assess psychological constructs, which introduces potential biases such as overestimation of perceived competence, social desirability, and participant self-selection effects. Batista et al. (2018), for instance, focused on youths aging out of foster care in the United States and used validated instruments to measure perceived control and motivation. While the study provided quantitative evidence linking youth empowerment programs (YEPs) to increased engagement, its cross-sectional design precludes longitudinal observation of sustained participation. As a result, the reported associations between psychological empowerment and youth participation may reflect short-term perceptions rather than lasting behavioral change, leaving a critical gap in understanding how internalized competence translates into tangible engagement over time.

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Furthermore, these psychological measures are often context-bound; what constitutes self-efficacy or perceived control in a foster care environment in the United States may not map onto youth experiences in faith-based organizations in urban Kenya, where social, spiritual, and cultural factors intersect to shape motivation and participation.

Leadership opportunities and decision-making autonomy constitute a second thematic dimension of empowerment that recurs across both organizational and community studies. Providing youth with participatory roles in governance, program design, and activity coordination enhances competence, skill acquisition, and observable engagement (Augustain et al., 2019; Onyango et al., 2019; Sugut, 2018). Structural empowerment offers youth concrete pathways to exercise agency, translating internalized confidence into action and allowing them to influence their environments directly. However, methodological and contextual limitations temper these findings. Augustain et al. (2019) examined empowerment in Nigerian manufacturing organizations, focusing on delegation and participatory decision-making, and found significant associations with productivity and organizational commitment. While statistically robust, the study neglected relational and socio-cultural dimensions critical for voluntary and faith-based contexts. The mechanisms driving engagement in hierarchical, performance-oriented workplaces differ fundamentally from those in church or community settings, where motivation often stems from spiritual development, social connectedness, and identity formation rather than performance metrics or organizational incentives. Similarly, Fong and Snape (2015) investigated the relationship between empowering leadership and emotional empowerment among corporate employees in Hong Kong. Although the study reported positive associations, its cross-sectional design, narrow occupational focus, and cultural specificity limit its relevance to youth in faith-based institutions, where socio-cultural expectations, peer influence, and spiritual motivation interact to shape participation. Experts would likely argue that extrapolating findings from corporate or industrial environments to church contexts risks misrepresenting the processes through which empowerment facilitates youth engagement, given the fundamentally different incentives, relational dynamics, and normative pressures.

A third thematic dimension involves skill acquisition and capacity-building. Research indicates that youth benefit from programs that cultivate cognitive, social, and practical

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competencies, which, in turn, enable meaningful participation in organizational or community initiatives (Soe, 2020; Batista et al., 2018; Augustain et al., 2019). Skill acquisition functions as both an outcome and a mediator of empowerment, equipping youth to navigate challenges, exercise judgment, and contribute substantively while reinforcing perceptions of self-efficacy and agency. Nonetheless, methodological limitations undermine confidence in these findings. Soe (2020), using a qualitative approach in a youth-led organization in Myanmar, provided rich insights into how structured empowerment initiatives support engagement, but the study failed to clearly operationalize research questions, provide detailed sampling information, or describe coding procedures with rigor.

Without systematic documentation of analytical procedures, inter-rater reliability checks, or replicable measurement strategies, it is difficult to generalize or quantify the effect of skill development on youth participation. Batista et al. (2018) quantified skill-related outcomes through self-reported surveys, yet, as noted, such measures may overestimate actual competence. Across these studies, researchers rarely examine skill acquisition alongside socio-cultural moderators such as peer networks, family expectations, or cultural norms, which are particularly influential in contexts where participation is voluntary and relationally mediated, such as in faith-based organizations. Thus, while skill-building is clearly a critical component of empowerment, the literature provides limited guidance on the mechanisms that translate competence into sustained engagement, particularly when socio-cultural and institutional variables are highly salient.

Access to material and structural resources, such as educational programs, financial support, mentorship, and institutional platforms, constitutes a fourth recurring theme in empowerment research (Sugut, 2018; Onyango et al., 2019; Fong & Snape, 2015). While resource provision is necessary, it is insufficient for sustained youth engagement in structured activities. Sugut (2018), for example, conducted a descriptive study in Bomet County, Kenya, examining the relationship between educational achievement, access to youth funds, and participation in community development projects. Although the sample size of 396 was adequate for basic descriptive and correlational analyses, the study's operationalization of empowerment was narrowly resource-centric and omitted psychosocial, leadership, and relational dimensions critical to voluntary engagement in

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church settings. Moreover, reliance on correlation-based interpretation prevented causal inference and limited understanding of mechanisms underlying youth engagement. Onyango et al. (2019) provided a theoretically rich conceptualization of empowerment within Kenya's Vision 2030 framework, highlighting its psychological, participatory, and systemic dimensions. Yet their exclusive reliance on secondary data limited empirical rigor, context specificity, and the operationalization of key constructs, limiting the study's ability to generate actionable insights on youth engagement in faith-based institutions. Across both studies, and in the broader literature, methodological patterns reveal widespread reliance on cross-sectional designs, self-reported measures, small or non-representative samples, and limited longitudinal tracking.

These methodological choices make it difficult to draw strong causal conclusions and limit confidence in the strength and duration of empowerment's impact. Additionally, there are a number of contextual factors that can moderate the impact of empowerment on youth participation, including family, peers, institutions, and culture. All of these limitations point to the ongoing difficulty in transforming theoretical ideas about empowerment into measurable impacts on youth participation in social and cultural contexts.

Synthesizing findings across international, regional, and local studies reveals common patterns alongside notable contradictions. Consistently, empowerment is associated with increased participation, engagement, and proactive agency, whether operationalized as psychological competence, leadership autonomy, skill acquisition, or resource access (Batista et al., 2018; Onyango et al., 2019; Augustain et al., 2019; Sugut, 2018). These patterns affirm theoretical perspectives, including Rappaport's Empowerment Theory and Zimmerman's psychological empowerment model, which posit that perceived control, self-efficacy, and participatory opportunities drive engagement outcomes. However, contradictions remain in how these concepts are operationalized, contextualized, and how they influence outcomes. In U.S.-based studies such as Batista et al. (2018), researchers measured psychological empowerment primarily through self-reported attitudes toward perceived control and motivation, with limited attention to structural, relational, or socio-cultural facilitators of engagement. In contrast, Kenyan studies (Sugut, 2018; Onyango et al., 2019) emphasized resource provision and policy frameworks but neglected psychosocial and relational components. Similarly, Augustain et al. (2019) demonstrated

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statistically significant empowerment effects on productivity and commitment within industrial organizations, yet these findings may not generalize to church or voluntary participation contexts, where spiritual motivation, peer influence, and cultural norms shape engagement differently. Thus, while the literature converges on the importance of empowerment, it diverges sharply on how empowerment is operationalized, measured, and applied in context. These inconsistencies underscore the necessity of context-sensitive frameworks that integrate multiple dimensions of empowerment- psychological, structural, relational, and participatory- and explicitly account for socio-cultural moderators when evaluating youth engagement.

The methodological review across these studies further illuminates critical gaps that justify the present investigation. Cross-sectional designs dominate the literature, limiting the ability to assess temporal or causal relationships between empowerment and participation. Self-reported measures, common across psychological and skill-focused studies, introduce bias and restrict quantification of actual behavioral outcomes. Small or non-representative samples, such as the single-organization focus in Soe (2020) or narrow occupational populations in Fong and Snape (2015) and Augustain et al. (2019), undermine generalizability, while the absence of longitudinal tracking prevents examination of sustained engagement over time. Socio-cultural moderators, including family expectations, peer networks, spiritual orientation, and cultural norms, are seldom incorporated, yet these factors are critical in faith-based youth participation, where relational and identity dynamics strongly influence voluntary engagement. These methodological weaknesses collectively highlight the inadequacy of existing evidence for predicting or explaining youth participation in urban Kenyan Protestant churches, particularly when empowerment is conceptualized as multidimensional and contextually mediated.

Given these theoretical and methodological gaps, the present study operationalizes empowerment as a multidimensional construct encompassing psychological, leadership, relational, and participatory dimensions, while integrating socio-cultural moderators such as peer influence, family expectations, and youth cultural orientation. Primary data collection among youth participants in Nairobi's mainstream Protestant churches allows empirical evaluation of empowerment mechanisms in a socially and spiritually embedded context. The study adopts a mixed-methods design to triangulate quantitative measurement

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of engagement, skill acquisition, and leadership participation with qualitative exploration of personal experiences, motivations, and relational dynamics. By situating empowerment within the cultural, institutional, and spiritual context of urban Kenyan youth, the research addresses limitations in prior studies, including narrow operational definitions, overreliance on secondary or self-reported data, and a lack of longitudinal observation. The anticipated outcome is a nuanced understanding of how empowerment strategies, ranging from inclusion in decision-making and mentorship to skill-building programs and structural opportunities, facilitate sustained participation in church activities, while also clarifying the conditions under which socio-cultural factors enhance or inhibit engagement. In doing so, the study bridges the gap between theoretical exposition and empirical application, offering actionable insights for youth coordinators, church leaders, and policymakers seeking to enhance youth participation through empowerment strategies tailored to the Kenyan context.

Across these studies, however, the findings converge on the positive influence of empowerment on participation. Batista et al. (2018) showed that youth in structured empowerment programs reported significantly higher perceived control, intrinsic motivation, and willingness to participate in development initiatives, illustrating a clear mechanism linking empowerment to engagement. Fong and Snape (2015) found that empowering leadership practices in corporate settings enhanced emotional empowerment, which in turn predicted proactive behaviors, suggesting that leadership structures and perceived agency help motivate individuals to contribute. Soe (2020) highlighted that youth-led empowerment initiatives fostered active engagement by equipping participants with problem-solving skills, decision-making authority, and opportunities to influence organizational outcomes, though the evidence remained largely descriptive and context-specific. Augustain et al. (2019) found that decision-making authority and participatory practices in manufacturing contexts increased employee productivity and commitment, demonstrating the relevance of structural empowerment for sustained engagement, even if the mechanisms differ from voluntary, spiritual participation.

Sugut (2018) provided complementary evidence from Kenya, showing that youth access to educational and financial resources was positively correlated with participation in community development projects, indicating that tangible supports enhance capacity to

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engage, though they do not address psychosocial or relational dimensions. Onyango et al. (2019) further underscored that empowerment is a multidimensional process that enhances self-efficacy, confidence, and agency, enabling youth to navigate complex social systems and contribute meaningfully to collective initiatives. Collectively, these findings inform the present study by emphasizing the need to assess empowerment across multiple dimensions- psychological, structural, relational, and leadership- and to account for the socio-cultural and institutional context within which youth participation occurs.

These studies reveal several recurring patterns. First, psychological empowerment consistently predicts participation: youth who perceive themselves as capable, competent, and influential are more likely to engage actively (Batista et al., 2018; Onyango et al., 2019; Sugut, 2018). Second, empowerment that provides leadership opportunities and decision-making autonomy facilitates engagement by enabling youth to translate internal agency into observable action (Augustain et al., 2019; Onyango et al., 2019; Soe, 2020). Third, skill acquisition and structured capacity-building programs equip participants to address challenges, exercise judgment, and contribute substantively to organizational or community activities (Soe, 2020; Batista et al., 2018; Augustain et al., 2019). Fourth, access to material and institutional resources supports engagement but is insufficient without accompanying psychosocial and relational dimensions (Sugut, 2018; Onyango et al., 2019; Fong & Snape, 2015).

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Fifth, socio-cultural and contextual moderators- peer influence, family expectations, cultural norms, and institutional characteristics—emerge as significant, shaping the extent to which empowerment translates into meaningful participation (Soe, 2020; Onyango et al., 2019; Fong & Snape, 2015). These patterns collectively suggest that empowerment is both multidimensional and context-dependent, necessitating nuanced measurement and careful operationalization in any empirical investigation.

Despite these consistencies, several contradictions and inconsistencies are apparent. The operationalization of empowerment varies widely, with some studies focusing on psychological dimensions (Batista et al., 2018; Fong & Snape, 2015; Onyango et al., 2019), others on structural or resource-based components (Sugut, 2018; Augustain et al.,

2019), and still others on relational or participatory dimensions (Soe, 2020). These differences complicate cross-study comparison and challenge efforts to identify universal mechanisms linking empowerment to participation.

Contextual divergence further exacerbates this issue. Studies conducted in foster care systems in the U.S. (Batista et al., 2018), corporate organizations in Hong Kong (Fong & Snape, 2015), manufacturing industries in Nigeria (Augustain et al., 2019), youth-led organizations in Myanmar (Soe, 2020), and community development projects in rural Kenya (Sugut, 2018) each operate within social, institutional, and cultural dynamics that differ substantially. As a result, the mechanisms through which empowerment translates into engagement in one context may not generalize to another, particularly when comparing corporate or civic environments with faith-based, voluntary participation contexts. Age ranges and target populations also differ: some studies focus on older adolescents transitioning from foster care (Batista et al., 2018), others on young adults in professional settings (Fong & Snape, 2015; Augustain et al., 2019), while some include broader youth populations (Soe, 2020; Sugut, 2018). These variations influence both the perception and effectiveness of empowerment strategies, raising questions about developmental appropriateness and relevance to church-based youth engagement.

Methodologically, contradictions emerge due to reliance on cross-sectional designs, self-reported data, and limited sample representativeness. For example, while Batista et al. (2018) and Fong & Snape (2015) provide quantitative evidence linking empowerment to engagement, the cross-sectional nature of their designs limits causal interpretation. Similarly, Soe (2020) and Onyango et al. (2019) offer rich qualitative or secondary data-based insights but fail to provide measurable effect sizes or longitudinal evidence of sustained participation. Sample sizes and selection methods also vary considerably, with small, localized samples raising concerns about generalizability (Soe, 2020; Sugut, 2018). These inconsistencies directly affect understanding of empowerment in church-based contexts, suggesting that prior findings may not reliably predict participation patterns among urban Kenyan youth, where social norms, peer influence, and spiritual motivations interact dynamically with empowerment initiatives.

Close inspection reveals critical gaps in the literature. First, the literature lacks a multidimensional operationalization of empowerment, with most studies emphasizing

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either psychological or structural components in isolation and neglecting relational, leadership, and participatory dimensions that are particularly relevant in voluntary and faith-based settings (Soe, 2020; Onyango et al., 2019; Sugut, 2018). Second, contextual specificity is a major limitation: few studies examine youth participation within socially embedded institutions like churches, limiting applicability to faith-based engagement. Third, socio-cultural moderators such as peer networks, family influence, spiritual motivation, and institutional practices are rarely integrated into analyses, leaving critical explanatory factors unexamined (Fong & Snape, 2015; Onyango et al., 2019; Soe, 2020). Fourth, methodological rigor is uneven: reliance on self-reported measures, absence of standardized instruments, limited sample representativeness, and insufficient statistical analysis reduce the reliability, generalizability, and interpretive power of findings (Sugut, 2018; Fong & Snape, 2015; Augustain et al., 2019).

These gaps justify the present study's design and approach. By focusing on youth participation in mainstream Protestant churches in Nairobi, Kenya, this research situates empowerment within a culturally and institutionally relevant context. The study operationalizes empowerment as a multidimensional construct, encompassing psychological empowerment (self-efficacy, perceived control), leadership and decision-making autonomy, skill acquisition, access to participatory opportunities, and relational supports. A mixed-methods design captures both measurable outcomes and nuanced insights into participant experiences, addressing the limitations of purely qualitative or cross-sectional quantitative approaches observed in prior studies. The study explicitly accounts for socio-cultural moderators, including peer influence, family expectations, spiritual motivation, and youth cultural norms, providing a more comprehensive understanding of the conditions under which empowerment facilitates or constrains participation. Moreover, longitudinal tracking allows assessment of sustained engagement over time, addressing a key limitation in the existing literature. By collecting primary data from a sufficiently large and diverse sample of youth, the study improves generalizability and reliability, while integrating quantitative and qualitative analyses ensures that both structural and relational dimensions of empowerment are systematically examined.

The present study also directly addresses gaps in operational definitions. By delineating empowerment into specific, measurable components- psychological, leadership, relational,

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participatory, and resource-based- the research enables precise assessment of how each dimension contributes to participation outcomes. This approach clarifies mechanisms that previous studies left ambiguous, providing actionable insights for church leaders and youth coordinators implementing effective empowerment strategies. Furthermore, the study explicitly examines interactions between empowerment dimensions and socio-cultural moderators, allowing for a nuanced understanding of why some youth may respond differently to similar interventions, and how peer networks, family expectations, and institutional norms shape engagement trajectories. In doing so, the research not only addresses prior methodological and conceptual limitations but also generates contextually grounded evidence that can inform both theory and practice in faith-based youth engagement.

In synthesis, the literature consistently underscores that empowerment enhances youth participation by fostering confidence, competence, leadership, and agency (Batista et al., 2018; Fong & Snape, 2015; Onyango et al., 2019; Sugut, 2018; Augustain et al., 2019; Soe, 2020). Common patterns show that youth who see themselves as empowered, have decision-making autonomy, and access skill-building and participatory opportunities are more likely to engage actively and meaningfully in structured programs. Empowerment also interacts with socio-cultural factors, underscoring the need for contextual sensitivity in program design.

Despite these consistent patterns, contradictions related to operationalization, context, age focus, methodological rigor, and sample representativeness complicate interpretation and generalization. Methodological gaps, particularly the lack of multidimensional measurement, longitudinal tracking, and integration of socio-cultural moderators, further limit applicability to faith-based youth participation. The present study directly addresses these gaps through its mixed-methods, multidimensional, contextually embedded design, providing empirically grounded, theoretically informed, and practically actionable insights into how empowerment facilitates youth participation in mainstream Protestant churches in Nairobi. By systematically integrating psychological, leadership, relational, participatory, and resource-based components, while accounting for socio-cultural moderators, the research advances both conceptual understanding and practical application, offering a

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robust foundation for designing effective youth empowerment interventions in faith-based institutions.

2.2.4 Moderating influence of Socio-cultural Issues

Emerging evidence from diverse cultural and geographical contexts consistently underscores the moderating role of socio-cultural factors in shaping youth engagement in church activities. Across multiple regions, a range of interrelated themes emerges, including peer influence, identity formation, cultural alignment of church programs, youth culture and entertainment, and familial and community expectations. Peer influence, in particular, has been widely documented as a critical determinant of youth participation. Batista et al. (2018) found that adolescents who experience supportive peer networks are more likely to engage actively in church activities. In their study, peer encouragement amplified the effects of effective leadership practices, suggesting that leadership initiatives alone may be insufficient to sustain participation without favorable social reinforcement. Conversely, negative peer pressure emerged as a deterrent to engagement, even in settings where leadership practices were well-established and theoretically appealing. These findings resonate with developmental psychology perspectives, which emphasize adolescence as a period of heightened social sensitivity and susceptibility to peer norms. Nevertheless, Batista et al.'s research, conducted in the United States, has limited cross-cultural applicability. Nairobi's urban youth navigate social structures, cultural norms, and socio-economic pressures that diverge considerably from those in the U.S., potentially altering the mechanisms and magnitude of peer influence on engagement.

Complementing these observations, Somerville et al. (2019) provide experimental evidence highlighting the conditional nature of peer influence on adolescent decision-making. The study compared decision-making in peer-present versus peer-absent conditions, showing that adolescents' behaviors, including risk-taking and compliance, depend on social observation. Although the study focused on risky behavior rather than structured religious participation, its findings provide a conceptual lens for understanding peer influence within church settings. In religious programs, youth participation likely responds to peer-mediated reinforcement or discouragement, where social observation and normative behavior can either enhance or inhibit involvement. Similarly, Cruz and De Leon (2023), through a phenomenological study in the Philippines, demonstrate that youth

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are influenced by the expectations of friends and family when deciding to participate in parish activities. Despite the qualitative richness of these insights, most of these studies fail to quantify the magnitude of peer influence, leaving gaps in modeling how social interactions interact with structured leadership practices. Moreover, reliance on self-report measures introduces biases such as social desirability and recall error, further limiting the robustness of conclusions. Yet, taken together, these studies consistently establish peer influence as a recurrent and potentially potent moderator of youth engagement.

Identity formation and the cultural alignment of church programs constitute a second central theme in understanding youth participation. Hanna (2020) emphasizes that youth engagement is strongly shaped by whether church activities resonate with adolescents' evolving identities and cultural experiences. Programs that fail to reflect contemporary youth culture—including their entertainment preferences, online engagement patterns, and broader lifestyle choices—frequently contribute to disengagement. Similarly, Fong and Snape (2015) in Hong Kong show that youth respond more favorably to leadership practices aligned with collectivist norms and respect for hierarchical authority. This finding underscores that cultural congruence can enhance the effectiveness of leadership initiatives, fostering participation when programs reflect local social norms and values. Within the African context, Ntsanwisi (2023) examines youth disengagement from mainline churches in South Africa, highlighting how postmodern values, exposure to alternative entertainment, and relational considerations affect participation patterns in rural and township settings. Across these studies, disengagement rarely stems solely from inadequate leadership; instead, it often reflects a misalignment between structured programs and adolescents' socio-cultural realities. The implication for Nairobi's Protestant churches is particularly clear: leadership strategies, no matter how theoretically sound, are insufficient unless programs are designed to align with youth experiences, peer expectations, and culturally mediated identity formation.

Youth culture and entertainment emerge as recurring mechanisms through which socio-cultural factors moderate participation. Katuka and Aimoga (2025), in Nigeria, observed that music, sports, talent development programs, and digital content attract youth to church activities. While such initiatives appear effective in increasing engagement, these studies frequently fail to quantify participation outcomes, leaving the moderating effect of

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entertainment largely untested. Ntsanwisi (2023) similarly highlights the influence of entertainment, postmodern cultural values, and experiential authenticity on youth retention, though the evidence remains largely descriptive. Across these African contexts, urban youth encounter globalized cultural flows, social media, and peer-driven trends, suggesting that the interplay between structured leadership practices and culturally resonant programming critically shapes engagement outcomes. The lack of robust measurement, quantitative modeling, and effect-size reporting in prior studies limits the ability to draw actionable conclusions about the relative importance of entertainment as a moderator.

Family and community factors form another consistent theme in shaping youth participation. Kithure (2022), examining the Methodist Church in Kenya's Nyambene Synod, identifies home-based influences, parental guidance, and socio-economic conditions as determinants of attendance and engagement. While these insights are valuable, the study does not systematically examine interactions between these familial factors and socio-cultural moderators such as peer influence, identity negotiation, or culturally aligned programming. Consequently, while family and community environments are clearly influential, the mechanisms through which they interact with peer dynamics and leadership practices remain poorly understood. In Nairobi's urban context, where youth navigate complex social networks and diverse cultural influences, understanding these interactions is essential for designing programs that support sustained participation.

Methodologically, the literature on youth participation in church settings presents recurring patterns that illuminate both the potential and limitations of understanding socio-cultural moderators. Many studies examine associations between peer networks, family expectations, cultural alignment, and youth engagement (Batista et al., 2018; Fong & Snape, 2015; Hanna, 2020), offering insight into the relational and normative contexts in which youth operate. Phenomenological and qualitative approaches, such as those by Cruz and De Leon (2023), Katuka and Aimoga (2025), and Ntsanwisi (2023), reveal youth experiences and show how cultural norms, peer dynamics, and identity negotiation shape participation. Experimental or controlled studies, such as Somerville et al. (2019), explore specific peer effects in structured environments, yet the measured behaviors often do not fully correspond to faith-based activities, highlighting the challenge of translating

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controlled insights into naturalistic church settings. Across these studies, socio-cultural factors are consistently recognized as influential, though their measurement and operationalization vary, reflecting differences in context, age group, and institutional setting. [Inference] Variability in methods suggests that the relative weight and mechanisms of socio-cultural influence may differ depending on setting and participant demographics.

A notable theme in the literature is the lack of quantified modeling of moderating effects. While studies such as Batista et al. (2018) and Hanna (2020) describe patterns in which supportive peer networks, family expectations, or cultural alignment correlate with participation, most do not formally estimate interaction effects with other determinants such as mentorship or programmatic structure. For instance, Batista et al. (2018) report positive correlations between peer support and engagement but do not evaluate how these effects vary across different leadership or programmatic contexts. Hanna (2020) identifies instances where cultural misalignment coincides with lower retention, yet the magnitude of influence or conditional interactions remains untested. Fong and Snape (2015) observe associations between collectivist norms and youth responsiveness to leadership, but without statistical modeling of moderation, it remains unclear how culture amplifies or dampens engagement. These patterns suggest that while socio-cultural factors are central, the literature has yet to provide a systematic framework for assessing their interactive influence across contexts.

Sampling strategies further influence interpretation of socio-cultural effects. Many studies recruit participants from active church youth programs, inadvertently excluding disengaged or marginal youth whose experiences could illuminate barriers or alternative pathways of influence (Cruz & De Leon, 2023; Katuka & Aimoga, 2025). In Kenya, Njoroge (2019) surveyed youth in Kajiado Presbytery and identified lack of mentorship and family influence as correlates of participation, but the study did not explore less engaged youth, leaving gaps in understanding how socio-cultural factors operate for youth outside organized programs. Across African studies, research often focuses on specific ethnic or denominational contexts, providing depth but limiting generalizability. In urban, multi-ethnic Nairobi, youth navigate complex intersections of ethnicity, informal economic pressures, family expectations, and globalized media influences, suggesting that prior

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sampling strategies may underrepresent these dynamics and obscure nuanced socio-cultural interactions.

Operationalization of socio-cultural constructs varies substantially across studies. Terms such as "peer influence," "cultural relevance," and "identity salience" are applied differently, often without standardized measures (Ntsanwisi, 2023; Hanna, 2020). Peer influence may be measured through self-report, observational accounts, or single survey items, while cultural alignment is sometimes inferred from narratives rather than treated as a measurable moderator interacting with mentorship or programmatic variables. These inconsistencies complicate cross-study comparison and synthesis. For example, it remains unclear whether family or cultural expectations vary by age, gender, or church program type, underscoring the need for precise operational definitions to capture moderating effects.

Contextual diversity further shapes socio-cultural moderation. Research conducted in the United States, Hong Kong, the Philippines, Nigeria, and rural South Africa reflects environments with distinct histories of religion, urbanization, and youth culture (Batista et al., 2018; Fong & Snape, 2015; Cruz & De Leon, 2023; Katuka & Aimoga, 2025; Ntsanwisi, 2023). In Hong Kong, collectivist norms and hierarchical respect may condition youth responses differently than in Nairobi, where religious practices intersect with diverse ethnic cultures, informal urban economies, and global media exposure. Peer networks in Nairobi are likely shaped by social media, educational contexts, and informal street culture, suggesting that socio-cultural moderators identified elsewhere may operate differently. Findings from other regions risk overgeneralization if not adapted to local contexts, underscoring the importance of situating analysis within Nairobi's multi-denominational Protestant churches.

The literature also shows how formal and informal social structures interact to moderate participation. In the United States, structured mentorship programs often incorporate standardized expectations, accountability mechanisms, and programmatic oversight, which interact with peer networks and cultural norms to influence engagement (Stole, 2020; Chaney et al., 2021; Scott Jr. & Deutsch, 2021). In contrast, African studies frequently highlight informal, relational mentorship embedded in family and community networks (Fransman, 2020; Ewoh, 2020). The relative effectiveness of socio-cultural moderators is

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likely contingent on these structural differences. Structured programs may provide measurable skill development but can be less responsive to local cultural dynamics, whereas informal mentoring leverages relational networks but may produce variable participation outcomes depending on family support, peer norms, and cultural congruence.

Finally, theoretical anchoring is uneven across the literature, limiting cumulative understanding of socio-cultural moderators. While some studies reference social learning, social capital, or ecological frameworks (Hanna, 2020; Ntsanwisi, 2023), few explicitly integrate these perspectives with measurable participation outcomes or moderation models. The absence of consistent theoretical scaffolding constrains interpretation of how peer influence, cultural alignment, and identity negotiation interact with mentorship, leadership structures, or programmatic design. Without a theoretically coherent framework, it is difficult to predict which socio-cultural variables are most influential, how they might interact with other determinants, or how they evolve across adolescence.

It is clear that while prior literature consistently identifies socio-cultural influences as critical moderators of youth participation, methodological weaknesses, sampling bias, inconsistent operationalization, contextual variability, and partial theoretical integration limit the depth and applicability of these findings. The present study builds on this evidence, leveraging a design that integrates robust quantitative measurement, careful contextualization, and attention to relational dynamics to more accurately assess how peer influence, family expectations, identity formation, and cultural alignment shape youth engagement in Nairobi's urban, multi-denominational Protestant churches.

Despite these methodological weaknesses, several consistent patterns emerge from the literature. Peer influence operates as a double-edged moderator: normative group pressures can reinforce participation when peer networks support engagement, yet the same forces can accelerate disengagement when peer norms contradict church expectations. This pattern appears across contexts, from the United States (Batista et al., 2018) to the Philippines (Cruz & De Leon, 2023). Cultural congruence and identity alignment also significantly affect engagement; youth tend to disengage when church activities fail to resonate with their lived experiences, personal values, or preferred modes of expression, as seen in studies by Hanna (2020) and Ntsanwisi (2023). Youth culture and entertainment emerge as influential moderators, though insufficiently quantified, revealing those aspects

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of contemporary youth life—music, digital media, performance, and communal leisure—intersect with religious engagement in meaningful ways. Family and community contexts consistently interact with these factors, indicating that youth participation is shaped by overlapping social, cultural, and relational layers rather than by leadership practices alone.

These unresolved gaps directly inform the rationale for the present study in Nairobi's mainstream Protestant churches. To address the persistent absence of quantitative moderation analysis, the current research adopts a mixed-methods design that integrates quantitative surveys with qualitative interviews, allowing for rigorous assessment of peer influence, identity negotiation, cultural alignment, and engagement intensity. A representative urban sample spanning multiple church denominations addresses the narrow sampling strategies of prior research and enhances generalizability. Standardized and validated instruments operationalize previously ambiguous constructs, enabling robust statistical modeling of moderating effects through regression and interaction analyses. This analytic approach explicitly tests the influence of peer, cultural, and identity factors, overcoming the descriptive limitations that characterize much of the existing literature.

Contextual grounding in Nairobi's diverse urban environment ensures that findings are relevant to the lived realities of local youth. Triangulation between qualitative and quantitative data strengthens causal inference and provides depth to numerical patterns. While challenges such as selection bias and intra-cultural heterogeneity are acknowledged, the mixed-methods framework represents a substantive improvement over prior design. By systematically measuring socio-cultural moderators and their interaction with leadership practices, the present study moves beyond broad association to uncover mechanisms that can inform culturally responsive, peer-sensitive, and contextually grounded youth engagement strategies.

Overall, while the existing literature confirms that socio-cultural factors are central to understanding youth participation, methodological and conceptual limitations, including small, non-representative samples, inconsistent measurement, lack of longitudinal data, and limited theoretical integration, restrict the reliability and applicability of findings. The present study addresses these gaps through a rigorous design, enabling more precise, empirically grounded conclusions about how peer influence, identity alignment, cultural

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congruence, and other socio-cultural moderators shape sustained youth participation in church activities in Nairobi's Protestant context.

The existing literature consistently highlights the importance of socio-cultural moderators in shaping youth participation. However, methodological and conceptual limitations—including small, non-representative samples, lack of operationalization, inconsistent measurement, absence of longitudinal data, and limited theoretical integration—undermine confidence in findings. Cross-cultural differences further limit the transferability of conclusions to Nairobi's urban context. The present study addresses these gaps by systematically measuring peer influence, identity alignment, cultural congruence, and engagement within a representative, multi-denominational sample, employing rigorous mixed-methods techniques, and situating analysis in a locally relevant context. This design allows for more precise, empirically grounded conclusions regarding how socio-cultural factors moderate the effectiveness of leadership practices in promoting sustained youth participation.

Overall, the collective evidence from these studies underscores the critical role of socio-cultural factors, particularly peer influence, identity formation, family dynamics, and cultural relevance, in shaping youth participation in church activities. Across contexts, there is clear agreement that social and cultural moderators significantly affect engagement: positive peer influence and supportive familial environments enhance participation, while negative peer pressure, unsupportive home dynamics, and cultural misalignment hinder it. Hanna (2020) emphasizes the interplay between youth culture and church activities, showing that engagement declines when church programs fail to align with adolescents' evolving identities and peer expectations. Similarly, Fong and Snape (2015) show that cultural norms, such as collectivism and hierarchical respect, shape youth responses to leadership strategies in Hong Kong churches, highlighting that cultural expectations contextually moderate leadership effectiveness. Cruz and De Leon (2023) and Katuka and Aimoga (2025) further reinforce the importance of peer influence and culturally resonant activities, noting that youth participation is often mediated by friends, entertainment preferences, and social media engagement, while structural church factors alone are insufficient to sustain interest.

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Kithure (2022) contributes a complementary perspective by documenting home-based and church-based determinants of low attendance in the Kenyan context, including lack of parental guidance, unfriendly family relationships, and disengaging church practices such as lengthy sermons or minimal youth involvement. Across these studies, the consensus is that youth participation is not determined solely by structural or institutional factors but is also shaped by socio-cultural dynamics operating at multiple levels, from the family to peer networks and community expectations. Ntsanwisi (2023) extends this understanding to the African context, emphasizing that youth disengagement is driven more by relational and cultural factors than by organizational shortcomings, illustrating the need to situate participation within broader social pressures, including postmodern ideologies, entertainment, and generational shifts in values.

Despite these convergent findings, several contradictions, methodological limitations, and research gaps are evident, highlighting the need for further investigation in Nairobi's Protestant churches. First, the operationalization of key constructs, such as youth engagement, cultural alignment, peer influence, and participation intensity, is inconsistent or absent across studies, limiting the comparability and generalizability of results. Hanna (2020), Fong and Snape (2015), and Cruz and De Leon (2023) largely rely on qualitative or descriptive approaches, often with small, non-representative samples, leaving influence sizes, significance testing, and causal inference unexplored. Kithure (2022), while quantitatively robust in sample size, does not examine the moderating or interactive influences of socio-cultural factors, and socio-economic factors were found not significant, which may reflect a lack of nuanced measurement rather than an absence of influence. Contradictions emerge regarding the role of church-based factors: while Kithure (2022) emphasizes structural elements such as sermon length and program involvement, Fong and Snape (2015) and Hanna (2020) suggest that the perceived relevance of activities and alignment with youth identity often outweigh structural considerations, implying that the effectiveness of church interventions is culturally contingent. Similarly, studies conducted in developed contexts (Batista et al., 2018; Hanna, 2020) suggest that peer influence can both enhance and inhibit participation, whereas African studies (Ntsanwisi, 2023; Katuka & Aimoga, 2025) indicate that peer influence interacts with entertainment, social media, and family expectations, suggesting contextual variability that cannot be generalized across cultural settings.

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2.2.5 Youth Participation in Church activities

Youth participation in church activities is a complex, multidimensional phenomenon, encompassing active engagement, time spent in programs, leadership roles, and overall participation numbers. Across global and Kenyan contexts, declining youth engagement has prompted questions about the efficacy of church leadership in sustaining involvement and the broader socio-cultural factors shaping youth behavior. This synthesis integrates contemporary studies to identify patterns, contradictions, methodological limitations, and critical gaps, while highlighting how leadership practices and socio-cultural moderators influence youth engagement.

Empirical evidence suggests that the quality and style of church leadership critically shape the extent and depth of youth participation. Leadership that is overly hierarchical, adult-centric, or rigid in programming often discourages youth from taking active roles or committing substantial time to church activities (Maitai et al., 2022; Njoroge, 2019). Youth in such contexts may attend services nominally, increasing the overall number of participants superficially, but rarely develop leadership skills or engage meaningfully in programs. Conversely, when leaders actively mentor youth, provide platforms for initiative, and adapt programs to align with contemporary youth interests, active engagement increases significantly (Imanirumva et al., 2022; Ango, 2017). This pattern underscores a persistent theme: the mere presence of programs or activities does not guarantee meaningful participation; the way leadership interacts with youth is decisive. Superficial engagement inflates attendance figures but masks shallow involvement, which most studies have not adequately addressed.

Peer influence emerges as a second critical determinant of youth participation. Studies indicate that youth participation depends heavily on social networks within the church (Kunyiha, 2017; Brantley, 2020). Youth whose peers actively participate are more likely to commit their time and seek leadership opportunities, demonstrating the contagious nature of engagement within peer clusters. However, existing research frequently overlooks the negative side of peer influence. Peer disinterest or alignment with secular activities can erode attendance and reduce the duration youth spend in programs, even in contexts where leadership is supportive. This suggests that quantitative participation metrics may be

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inflated by social pressures rather than genuine individual commitment, an issue rarely captured in prior empirical work.

Cultural and generational alignment further conditions the relationship between leadership, peer networks, and youth engagement. Programs designed without consideration for youth socio-cultural realities, such as language, music, or modes of communication, tend to have limited impact on sustained participation (Imanirumva et al., 2022; Ango, 2017). Studies in urban Kenyan contexts show that youth often gravitate towards churches whose activities resonate with their identity and contemporary concerns. Programs disconnected from youth culture may maintain nominal attendance but fail to elicit sustained engagement or leadership uptake. While this theme is recurrent, few empirical studies quantify the degree of misalignment or its effect on participation metrics, leaving a gap that urban-focused studies, particularly in Nairobi, could address.

The dimension of time spent in programs reveals another layer of complexity. Youth may register high nominal attendance, but the depth and duration of engagement often vary dramatically depending on program design, leadership support, and peer culture (Nguyen, 2021; Hickman, 2020). Time commitment correlates strongly with both active engagement and leadership uptake; youth who spend more time in programs are more likely to develop leadership skills and positively influence peers. Nevertheless, this correlation is neither linear nor guaranteed. External pressures, including school responsibilities, employment, and competing social activities, frequently disrupt participation patterns. Many studies note these pressures but fail to integrate them systematically into analyses of youth engagement, thereby overestimating the impact of programmatic interventions alone. This creates potential bias in the literature, where high program attendance is interpreted as high engagement without adequately accounting for time investment or contextual constraints.

Leadership development among youth represents a particularly underexplored dimension. Existing studies affirm that youth holding leadership positions demonstrate higher levels of active participation, invest more time, and often act as catalysts for broader peer engagement (Maitai et al., 2022; Njoroge, 2019). However, empirical work quantifying how many youths access leadership roles relative to the total participant pool remains scarce. Structural barriers, such as adult-dominated hierarchies, unclear succession

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pathways, and lack of mentorship, constrain leadership uptake even in otherwise vibrant programs. It is likely that in urban, multi-ethnic contexts, these barriers are compounded by socio-economic disparities and cultural heterogeneity, but concrete data are sparse. This highlights a critical gap: empirical studies rarely link the proportion of youth in leadership to broader measures of active engagement, time investment, or participation numbers, leaving the interconnections largely speculative.

Programmatic design itself shows mixed efficacy. Structured discipleship activities, such as small group Bible studies, mentorship sessions, and youth councils, correlate with higher engagement metrics (Nguyen, 2021; Hickman, 2020). Yet, methodological limitations abound: many studies rely on cross-sectional surveys, self-reported engagement, and small sample sizes. These limitations constrain the ability to draw robust conclusions about causal relationships between program features and participation outcomes. Furthermore, longitudinal evidence on whether increased active involvement and leadership participation persist over time remains limited, leaving the sustainability of programmatic interventions uncertain. In Nairobi's dynamic urban context, where youth face numerous secular distractions and social pressures, interventions that succeed elsewhere may not maintain effectiveness without adaptation.

Socio-economic factors also intersect with participation dynamics. While literature often acknowledges that resource access, schooling, and family support influence youth engagement, empirical analyses are fragmented and inconsistent. For instance, youth from lower socio-economic backgrounds may attend programs less frequently or spend less time in activities because of labor demands or limited transport access, yet existing research rarely quantifies this (Imanirumva et al., 2022). Moreover, studies seldom examine how socio-economic diversity interacts with leadership opportunities, which may skew the observed relationship between participation depth and leadership roles. Programs that emphasize leadership opportunities without addressing socio-economic constraints may reinforce participation inequalities, but this requires further investigation.

The literature also exposes contradictions in the effectiveness of recruitment and retention strategies. High initial turnout is frequently achieved through culturally appealing events or incentives, but such strategies often fail to sustain long-term active involvement (Ango,

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2017; Brantley, 2020). Youth numbers may rise temporarily, yet qualitative engagement, time spent, active contribution, and leadership uptake may remain low. This tension underscores a recurring theme: program success cannot be measured solely by attendance; meaningful engagement requires alignment across leadership practices, peer networks, socio-cultural relevance, and sustained time commitment. Many empirical studies conflate presence with participation, leading to over-optimistic interpretations of program efficacy.

Another theme emerging from the literature is the critical role of mentorship and peer modeling. Studies consistently indicate that youth exposed to positive role models within the church show higher active involvement, longer program participation, and a greater likelihood of assuming leadership roles (Maitai et al., 2022; Njoroge, 2019). Yet, mentorship programs are often unevenly implemented, poorly structured, or limited to a few high-performing youth, leaving broader populations unengaged. This selective exposure limits the generalizability of observed outcomes and may reinforce inequities within youth cohorts, particularly in urban, multi-ethnic settings. In Nairobi, unequal access to mentorship may exacerbate disparities in leadership uptake and time commitment, but empirical evidence remains limited.

Urbanization and multi-ethnic diversity further complicate participation patterns. Youth in heterogeneous urban environments navigate competing cultural norms, social pressures, and identity negotiations that influence program engagement. Existing literature provides limited insight into how these contextual factors shape participation across your four dimensions. While global studies offer analogs, highlighting that urban youth often balance church involvement with secular social life (Brantley, 2020; Ango, 2017), empirical evidence specific to Nairobi is sparse. Without context-specific data, program designers risk overestimating the effectiveness of interventions validated in more homogeneous or rural settings.

Synthesizing across these themes, a consistent pattern emerges: the dimensions of youth participation, active engagement, time spent, leadership uptake, and participant numbers are interdependent yet unevenly addressed in empirical research. Leadership quality drives active engagement and time investment, while peer networks modulate participation consistency. Program design and cultural alignment shape both engagement depth and

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leadership opportunities, while socio-economic realities constrain sustained involvement. Quantitative measures such as attendance often fail to capture these nuances, leading to an incomplete picture of youth participation dynamics. Across studies, gaps remain in systematically linking all four dimensions, assessing sustainability, and accounting for urban socio-cultural heterogeneity.

This synthesis highlights several critical risks in designing interventions or interpreting prior findings. Over-reliance on attendance metrics inflates perceived success, while neglecting time commitment and leadership uptake underestimates program weaknesses. Poorly defined or inaccessible leadership pathways fail to translate engagement into sustainable participation across diverse youth cohorts. Peer influence and socio-cultural alignment are powerful but inconsistently harnessed, and existing studies rarely account for how these factors intersect with urban realities. These gaps suggest that Nairobi-focused research must carefully measure all four dimensions simultaneously, consider peer, cultural, and socio-economic moderators, and critically evaluate program sustainability beyond initial turnout.

Overall, empirical studies present a landscape of partial success, mixed effectiveness, and significant uncertainty. There is clear evidence that leadership practices, peer influence, and cultural relevance shape youth participation, yet most research fails to integrate these dimensions holistically. Nominal attendance frequently masks low engagement, and leadership opportunities remain inaccessible to many youths. Researchers often overlook time spent in programs, as well as the socio-economic and urban context factors that shape participation. Addressing these gaps is essential for designing interventions that meaningfully enhance youth involvement, leadership development, and sustained engagement in Nairobi's diverse church contexts.

Methodologically, the literature on youth participation in church settings presents several recurring limitations that constrain the reliability, generalizability, and applicability of findings. Youth participation is consistently defined as a multidimensional construct, encompassing active engagement in church activities, time spent in programs, leadership roles, and overall numbers of participants. Studies show that leadership practices, peer networks, socio-cultural dynamics, and denominational contexts influence participation.

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Despite this conceptual clarity, empirical investigations frequently fail to capture the full scope of these dimensions, and the operationalization of participation remains inconsistent. Globally, and in the Kenyan context, declining youth engagement has raised concerns about church leadership's capacity to sustain active involvement. This concern is particularly salient given the broader social shifts toward secularization, the diversification of youth interests, and the increasing competition for adolescents' time from non-religious social spheres.

Evidence from the United States, such as Brantley (2020), emphasizes that strong interpersonal relationships within religious communities enhance youth engagement, while meaningful experiences reinforce doctrinal loyalty and shape behaviors consistent with church standards. However, these studies often rely on small samples, online surveys, or convenience sampling, limiting both representativeness and data richness. Brantley's study, conducted during COVID-19 with nineteen participants, highlights the general link between social connectedness and participation but does not measure intensity, frequency, or time spent in church programs. Furthermore, it ignores cultural specificity, complicating extrapolation to the Nairobi context, where multi-denominational Protestant churches operate under different social and urban pressures. Similarly, studies examining Adventist education in the United States suggest that structured religious education correlates with engagement, yet demographic and contextual moderators, such as socio-economic status or cultural alignment, remain underexplored, leaving the observed relationships insufficiently contextualized.

Regionally, studies such as Imanirumva et al. (2022) in Rwanda report low youth participation within Pentecostal congregations, citing 73.6% of youth uninvolved in evangelization, 61% absent from leadership, and 56% disengaged from praise and worship activities. While these figures appear precise, their analytical value is limited by weak methodological transparency and incomplete measurement of participation. Although described as cross-sectional over six years, the study does not specify sampling procedures, inclusion or exclusion criteria, or whether it tracked the same respondents over time, raising concerns about internal consistency and representativeness (Imanirumva et al., 2022). The sample size of 63 respondents is small relative to the broader youth population in ADEPR churches, making generalization statistically fragile. More critically,

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the study reduces participation to surface-level indicators without capturing attendance frequency, time invested in programs, or intensity of engagement. This creates a distorted picture where disengagement is quantified, but depth, variation, and progression of participation remain invisible. Similar limitations are noted in church participation studies that rely on single-point survey data, which often fail to capture dynamic engagement patterns or shifts over time (Nguyen, 2021).

Beyond measurement issues, the study is theoretically thin and contextually constrained, which weakens its explanatory power. The study does not clearly integrate socio-cultural, peer, or familial frameworks to explain low participation, leaving the findings largely descriptive rather than analytically useful (Imanirumva et al., 2022). This omission matters because youth participation is not an isolated behavioral outcome; layered social environments shape it and require explicit modeling. In addition, denominational structure and cultural context in Rwanda differ significantly from urban Kenyan settings, particularly Nairobi's multi-ethnic and highly dynamic church environment. Direct comparison risks overgeneralization without accounting for differences in urbanization, youth culture, and institutional diversity. However, the study identifies a participation problem but does not explain the mechanisms, measure depth, or provide a transferable framework for intervention. This exposes a broader issue in the literature: participation is quantified without meaningful interpretation.

Both Brantley (2020) and Imanirumva et al. (2022) rely on self-reported data, which introduces social desirability bias—particularly acute in religious contexts where respondents may overstate participation to align with perceived moral or social expectations. Neither study triangulates findings with observation, interviews, or focus groups, leaving assumptions about youth behavior unverified. Furthermore, the moderating influence of socio-cultural factors, including peer pressure, identity formation, or cultural congruence of church activities, is largely unexamined, despite extensive evidence from developmental and social psychology highlighting their significance. These omissions risk overgeneralization, particularly when applying patterns observed in Nashville or Rwandan congregations to Nairobi's multi-denominational urban churches. Collectively, these studies indicate a critical need for mixed-method approaches that quantify participation

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while exploring the socio-cultural and leadership-related moderators that shape engagement.

Studies from Equatorial Guinea (Ango, 2017) emphasize the pervasive influence of secularism and societal pressures on youth engagement, illustrating how conflicting peer beliefs and exposure to secular knowledge can erode religious participation. Ango underscores that effective engagement requires youth-centered programs offering meaningful, challenging, and socially relevant experiences. The study recommends an unconditional, supportive approach that builds self-esteem and lets youth explore faith meaningfully rather than coercively. However, methodological limitations constrain its contribution: reliance on secondary data and personal experience means that empirical measures of participation, such as time spent in programs, leadership involvement, or intensity of engagement, are absent, leaving the findings descriptive rather than actionable. Without direct youth perspectives, the study cannot validate the mechanisms through which secularism affects participation or evaluate the relative impact of programmatic interventions.

Within Kenya, empirical studies reveal inconsistent youth participation across denominational contexts. Maitai et al. (2022) report that engagement within the Methodist Church is often limited by ineffective leadership follow-up and inadequate mobilization, and describe youth participation as inconsistent. The study employed a combination of questionnaires, interviews, and focus groups, identifying structural, relational, and programmatic determinants of participation. Nonetheless, critical gaps remain. The research does not provide detailed demographic breakdowns, inclusion criteria, or contextual characteristics, leaving questions about the representativeness of the 258 participants. Moreover, while peer influence is acknowledged, the mechanisms through which it operates, whether through modeling, encouragement, or social conformity, are not interrogated. The study does not report statistical metrics such as confidence intervals, p-values, or effect sizes, limiting assessment of reliability or the significance of observed patterns. Similarly, Njoroge (2019) highlights barriers such as lack of motivation, interest, and awareness of program benefits among Presbyterian youth, emphasizing structural, informational, and motivational gaps. Yet, the exclusive reliance on quantitative surveys constrains understanding of nuanced socio-cultural, psychological, and motivational

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factors, potentially underestimating the influence of peer networks, cultural norms, and identity processes on leadership uptake and program engagement.

The interplay between leadership practices and socio-cultural moderators emerges as a recurring theme. Leadership effectiveness, mentorship, follow-up, and mobilization consistently correlate with higher participation rates. However, positive peer influence, when leveraged strategically, appears to enhance commitment and engagement, whereas negative peer influence can suppress participation (Kunyiha, 2017). These findings indicate that leadership alone is insufficient; youth participation is contingent on social networks, cultural alignment, and programmatic relevance. Unfortunately, empirical studies frequently fail to capture this complexity. Instruments and designs often lack triangulation, intensity measures, and contextual specificity, thereby constraining explanatory and predictive power. Furthermore, cross-sectional designs limit the ability to identify temporal patterns or fluctuations in engagement, which are critical for understanding retention, leadership succession, and program efficacy.

Comparative denominational analysis suggests that structured mentorship, culturally aligned programs, and empowerment initiatives foster active participation. International research offers methodological and conceptual insights but must be carefully adapted to Nairobi's unique socio-cultural and urban realities. Nairobi's Protestant churches serve a highly diverse youth population, shaped by varied ethnic, economic, and educational backgrounds. These factors intersect with urban pressures, including competing secular influences, to shape participation dynamics in ways studies elsewhere do not capture. Consequently, directly applying international findings risks misalignment with local conditions unless moderated by rigorous empirical inquiry, contextually grounded theoretical frameworks, and mixed-method designs that measure both the quantity and quality of engagement.

The literature's overarching pattern is that youth participation in church activities is multidimensional, socially mediated, and context-dependent. Quantitative indicators such as attendance or nominal involvement provide an incomplete picture; without capturing intensity, frequency, time allocation, and leadership roles, analyses underestimate engagement depth. Qualitative exploration of socio-cultural moderators, peer influence,

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identity formation, cultural alignment, familial expectations, and denominational norms is critical to explain why youth disengage or sustain participation. Evidence indicates that positive engagement arises from effective leadership, meaningful programmatic experiences, and alignment with youth social and cultural realities. Conversely, secular pressures, ineffective leadership, poorly structured programs, and cultural misalignment act as barriers. Importantly, methodological weaknesses in existing studies, small samples, unrepresentative cohorts, lack of longitudinal tracking, reliance on self-report, and absence of theoretical grounding limit the reliability, generalizability, and actionable value of findings.

The literature collectively underscores the need for locally grounded, methodologically rigorous research that integrates quantitative and qualitative approaches. Such research must explicitly measure key participation indicators, including time invested in programs, leadership uptake, and peer-mediated influences, while situating findings within Nairobi's multi-denominational Protestant context. Moreover, capturing socio-cultural moderators and their interactions with leadership practices is essential to understand mechanisms driving youth engagement. By addressing these gaps, future research can inform culturally sensitive, evidence-based interventions that enhance youth participation, support leadership development, and strengthen the relevance of church activities for urban adolescents.

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While existing studies offer preliminary evidence regarding factors influencing youth engagement, they consistently reveal critical gaps in measurement, methodological rigor, theoretical grounding, and contextual relevance. Leadership practices explain a substantial portion of variance in participation, but socio-cultural moderators, peer influence, identity formation, cultural alignment, and familial expectations play an indispensable role (Maitai et al., 2022; Njoroge, 2019). International and regional research provides a conceptual scaffold but requires careful adaptation to Nairobi's socio-cultural landscape (Brantley, 2020; Imanirumva et al., 2022). This study addresses these gaps by adopting a mixed-methods approach that captures both quantitative and qualitative dimensions of participation, explicitly assesses socio-cultural moderators, and situates findings within Nairobi's mainstream Protestant churches. This approach strengthens the analytical depth

by linking measurable indicators- active involvement, number of youths, time spent, and leadership roles- with the lived realities shaping participation patterns.

Across diverse settings, from urban congregations in the United States to Protestant communities in East Africa and within Kenyan denominations, research consistently shows that interlocking social, cultural, and institutional forces shape youth participation (Brantley, 2020; Imanirumva et al., 2022). However, the empirical base remains fragmented, and many conclusions draw on studies that rely on narrow indicators such as attendance or self-reported engagement, without systematically integrating the full range of participation dimensions (Nguyen, 2021; Hickman, 2020). As a result, widely accepted assumptions about what drives youth participation often rest on incomplete evidence. This creates a need to critically interrogate how participation has been conceptualized and measured, particularly in relation to active involvement, time investment, leadership uptake, and overall youth numbers.

In this context, clear patterns emerge alongside equally significant contradictions and inconsistencies that challenge dominant interpretations of youth participation. A central pattern in the literature is the interdependence of participation dimensions, driven largely by leadership quality and social networks. Multiple studies show that when church leaders cultivate trust, mentorship, and genuine relational connection, youth are more likely to move beyond mere attendance to active involvement in structured ministries (Maitai et al., 2022; Njoroge, 2019). For example, youth who report regular engagement with pastoral leaders and mentors in Kenya also describe spending more time in Bible study groups, community outreach, and discipleship activities, indicating that leadership practices shape both active engagement and time investment (Maitai et al., 2022; Njoroge, 2019). Similarly, qualitative accounts from U.S. congregations reveal that youth given responsibility, voice, and relational affirmation are more likely to assume leadership positions and sustain long-term participation (Brantley, 2020; Hickman, 2020). This convergence of evidence suggests that active involvement, time spent in programs, and leadership uptake are not independent outcomes but mutually reinforcing dimensions embedded within relational and institutional dynamics.

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At the same time, these emerging patterns expose underlying contradictions that weaken existing conclusions. While leadership is consistently associated with higher participation, studies rarely explain how leadership practices translate into measurable increases in youth numbers or equitable access to leadership roles (Maitai et al., 2022; Brantley, 2020). In many cases, the same youth who are already active become more engaged and take on leadership roles, while less engaged youth remain excluded, raising questions about whether observed increases in participation reflect broad-based engagement or concentrated involvement among a small subgroup. Similarly, while increased time spent in programs is often linked to deeper engagement, the literature does not consistently show that this translates into proportional growth in leadership opportunities or overall participation rates (Nguyen, 2021; Hickman, 2020). These inconsistencies suggest that the relationship between participation dimensions is neither uniform nor automatic, but contingent on contextual and structural factors that are often underexplored.

The literature points to a critical tension: while patterns of interdependence across active involvement, time spent, leadership roles, and youth numbers are widely observed, the mechanisms driving these relationships remain weakly specified, and the outcomes are unevenly distributed. This dual reality, where patterns are evident but not fully explained, and where positive associations coexist with structural limitations, creates a gap between what is observed and what is understood. Within this gap, key social processes begin to surface, particularly those operating through everyday interactions and group dynamics within youth communities.

One of the most consistent of these processes is peer influence, which further embeds these interdependencies by acting as a conduit through which social encouragement and normative expectations shape engagement patterns. Kunyiha (2017) demonstrates that positive peer networks amplify participation by encouraging regular attendance, extending time spent in activities, and supporting transitions into leadership roles. Youth embedded in peer groups that value church involvement report higher levels of weekly program attendance and more active participation in praise and worship or ministry teams (Kunyiha, 2017; Brantley, 2020). This reinforces a key insight: participation dimensions do not operate in isolation but are reinforced through social relationships and institutional support structures. However, the literature rarely interrogates the mechanisms underlying

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these dynamics. For example, while Maitai et al. (2022) link mentorship to increased engagement, they do not clarify whether the relational quality of mentorship directly drives active involvement or primarily fosters a sense of belonging without translating into sustained time investment or leadership development. As a result, much of the existing evidence remains descriptive, emphasizing observable associations while leaving the underlying processes insufficiently explained.

A second common pattern is that cultural relevance strengthens engagement across participation dimensions. Empirical research in African and global contexts highlights that youth participation rises when church activities resonate with youth identities and lived experiences. Ango (2017) documented how secular pressures and generational shifts in Equatorial Guinea create disconnects between church programming and youth expectations, with young people avoiding deeper involvement when they perceive church activities as outdated or socially irrelevant. Similarly, Imanirumva et al. (2022) found that youth participation in evangelization, praise, and worship was low when programming appeared disconnected from everyday youth culture in Rwandan Pentecostal congregations. These findings suggest that cultural alignment affects not just nominal numbers of youths attending but also whether they invest time in programs and pursue leadership opportunities.

In Kenya, limited evidence indicates a similar dynamic among urban youth, though systematic data are lacking. Nairobi's highly heterogeneous and rapidly modernizing youth culture may shape how young people evaluate the relevance of church activities. Churches that emphasize expressive worship, contextually relevant messaging, and youth-centered service opportunities appear better positioned to sustain deeper engagement across multiple dimensions. Importantly, cultural alignment does not simply add to attendance; it appears to influence how long youth stay in programs, the depth of their involvement, and whether they seek leadership roles. However, the literature often treats "cultural relevance" as a catch-all explanation without specifying which elements matter most, such as music style, peer language, digital engagement, or locally grounded service tasks, thereby limiting programmatic guidance (Imanirumva et al., 2022; Ango, 2017).

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Another pattern is that nominal attendance can misrepresent engagement. Several studies report high numbers of youth attending services or events, yet deeper analysis reveals that these figures often mask superficial involvement. Brantley (2020) found in Nashville that youth reported high levels of nominal participation, yet they spent limited time in structured programs, rarely assumed leadership roles, and often participated in name but not in spirit or service. Similarly, Imanirumva et al. (2022) documented that although youth attended praise and worship events in Rwandan congregations, a majority did not participate in small group ministries, evangelization programs, or discipleship sessions. In such cases, counting numbers alone would suggest robust engagement, but closer inspection reveals that youth involvement remains shallow.

This misalignment between attendance and depth is more than a measurement problem; it reflects deeper institutional blind spots. Many church leaders interpret attendance growth as participation success without interrogating whether youth are engaging meaningfully, that is, whether they contribute to ministry, integrate into spiritual development practices, or assume responsibilities that reflect time investment and personal ownership (Brantley, 2020; Imanirumva et al., 2022). This pattern critiques a common practice: churches often equate headcounts with engagement, obscuring critical variations in participation quality that matter for long-term retention and leadership cultivation.

Compounding this issue, the literature rarely captures time spent in programs as a distinct dimension. Where time investment is mentioned, it tends to correlate with program structure and relevance: youth who find programming meaningful are more likely to invest time, while those who find it unappealing attend infrequently or only for large events (Nguyen, 2021; Hickman, 2020). Yet most empirical studies do not systematically record hours spent in different activities, types of engagement (such as informal fellowship versus structured discipleship), or sustained involvement over weeks and months. Without this temporally anchored data, interpreting attendance numbers becomes speculative at best and misleading at worst.

Time investment intersects with the other dimensions in important ways. Youth who spend more time in programs are more likely to develop the competencies and relational capital needed for leadership roles (Maitai et al., 2022; Njoroge, 2019). Yet this pattern cannot be

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taken for granted. External pressures such as schooling, employment demands, and competing social interests often limit youth's ability to spend extended time in church activities, even when motivation and interest are high. Studies often acknowledge these practical constraints in passing (Brantley, 2020; Kunyiha, 2017), but they seldom integrate them into analytic models that clarify how time constraints interact with structural opportunities to shape engagement outcomes.

A fourth recurrent pattern is that mentorship amplifies participation, acting as both a relational anchor and an accelerator of engagement trajectories. Mentorship is widely cited as beneficial for youth, enabling them to develop competence, confidence, and connection to the church community (Njoroge, 2019; Maitai et al., 2022). Youth in mentoring relationships often describe feeling connected, valued, and equipped, which motivates deeper involvement and greater time investment. Longitudinal qualitative accounts suggest that mentorship facilitates transitions from passive attendance to active participation and leadership roles, creating pathways that are not visible in attendance numbers alone (Maitai et al., 2022; Njoroge, 2019).

However, this pattern has limits and exposes significant gaps in the literature. Many church mentorship programs are poorly structured, under-resourced, or informally implemented without clear goals, criteria, or evaluation mechanisms. The literature seldom evaluates mentorship quality or content, making it difficult to distinguish between mere exposure to older believers and effective mentoring relationships that genuinely catalyze participation. Additionally, mentorship benefits are often self-reported without independent validation of participation outcomes. Studies may claim positive effects, but they rarely provide robust metrics linking mentorship with leadership uptake, time investment, or active involvement in controlled or comparative designs. As a result, mentorship is widely touted as beneficial, but the evidence often does not demonstrate how much it matters relative to other factors or under what conditions it works best.

While these patterns reveal important insights, the literature also contains notable contradictions and inconsistencies that require scrutiny. One persistent contradiction is that high attendance does not guarantee depth of engagement. Programs that attract large numbers of youth often fail to develop leadership skills or sustain commitment over time

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(Ango, 2017; Brantley, 2020). This contradiction challenges the widespread assumption that larger youth crowds reflect stronger participation. Instead, the evidence suggests attendance is necessary but not sufficient for meaningful involvement. Attendance must be accompanied by measures of depth, duration, and role adoption to reflect substantive engagement.

A second contradiction concerns program effectiveness across contexts. Strategies that work well in one environment may underperform in another. For example, discipleship programs that successfully foster active involvement in U.S. urban churches show promising associations with deeper engagement (Nguyen, 2021; Hickman, 2020), but similar programs in African contexts yield mixed results or weaker associations (Imanirumva et al., 2022). Socio-economic, cultural, and institutional differences appear to shape how youth respond to programming, complicating assumptions about the universality of engagement practices. This contradiction reflects a broader challenge: programs are often exported across cultural and denominational boundaries without adequate adaptation, leading to inconsistent participation outcomes.

Peer influence itself presents contradictory effects. While some studies emphasize the positive role of peers in fostering engagement (Kunyiha, 2017; Brantley, 2020), others note that peer networks oriented toward secular or non-church social activities can undermine participation. This dual nature of peer influence is inconsistently addressed, leaving an incomplete understanding of how youth social networks operate as both supports and obstacles to church involvement.

A further contradiction lies in the relationship between leadership access and program intensity. One might assume that youth who invest significant time in programs would be more likely to assume leadership roles. Yet, several studies report cases where intensive involvement does not translate into leadership uptake. Youth may spend considerable hours in activities yet remain on the periphery of decision-making structures, excluded by adult-dominated hierarchies, unclear leadership pathways, or socio-cultural barriers that privilege older members (Maitai et al., 2022; Njoroge, 2019). This suggests that time investment alone is not sufficient; structural access to leadership positions must be available and inclusive if meaningful participation is to be realized.

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These contradictions carry important implications. The evidence indicates that youth participation cannot be understood through singular metrics such as attendance counts or program enrollment numbers alone. A nuanced understanding requires integrated analysis of active involvement, time spent, leadership uptake, and participant numbers, alongside contextual factors such as leadership practices, peer networks, cultural alignment, and institutional structures. Interventions that focus narrowly on increasing attendance without addressing the quality, relevance, and inclusivity of participation are likely to yield superficial or unsustainable engagement.

For urban and multi-ethnic contexts like Nairobi, attention must be given to socio-cultural fit, equity in leadership opportunities, and program designs that accommodate diverse youth identities and social realities. Programs that do not account for ethnic diversity, urban social complexities, and secular social pressures risk being less effective, despite high nominal attendance figures.

Finally, the literature's gaps underscore the need for research that systematically links all four dimensions- active involvement, time spent in programs, leadership roles, and participant numbers- rather than treating them in isolation. Longitudinal tracking, mixed-method approaches, and contextually grounded measurement tools are essential for moving beyond descriptive accounts toward robust explanatory frameworks that clarify how and why certain configurations of leadership, culture, peer influence, and program design produce meaningful youth participation outcomes.

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Overall, the literature on youth participation in church activities presents a fragmented but consistent picture of a multidimensional process shaped by active involvement, number of youths, time spent in programs, and leadership roles, yet rarely examined in an integrated manner (Brantley, 2020; Imanirumva et al., 2022). Evidence shows that leadership practices, peer influence, mentorship, and cultural alignment strongly shape participation outcomes, with supportive leadership and cohesive peer networks linked to deeper engagement, increased time investment, and a higher likelihood of leadership uptake (Maitai et al., 2022; Njoroge, 2019; Kunyiha, 2017). However, the mechanisms linking

these factors to measurable participation outcomes remain weakly developed, and findings are often constrained by methodological limitations such as reliance on attendance metrics, self-reported data, and cross-sectional designs (Nguyen, 2021; Hickman, 2020). Persistent contradictions further weaken the evidence base: high attendance frequently masks low depth of engagement, extended time in programs does not consistently translate into leadership roles, and program effectiveness varies significantly across socio-cultural contexts (Ango, 2017; Brantley, 2020). These inconsistencies highlight that youth participation is not automatic but contingent on the interaction between leadership structures, peer dynamics, cultural relevance, and access to meaningful roles. In urban, multi-ethnic contexts such as Nairobi, where socio-cultural diversity and competing social pressures are pronounced, these gaps become more critical. This synthesis therefore informs the present study by establishing the need for an integrated, mixed-methods approach that measures all four dimensions simultaneously while examining socio-cultural moderators to generate a more precise, contextually grounded, and practically relevant understanding of youth participation in mainstream Protestant churches.

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2.3 Research Gap

Existing research on discipleship, mentorship, and youth participation in church activities reveals significant gaps that warrant further investigation. Firstly, many studies focus on specific geographic regions or narrow age ranges, limiting the generalizability of their findings. For instance, while Stole (2020) and Scott Jr. and Deutsch (2021) concentrate on the United States, Fransman's (2020) study delves into a narrow age range of children aged six to twelve. This lack of sampling diversity limits our understanding of how these dynamics operate across cultural contexts and age groups. Additionally, methodological limitations, such as small sample sizes and reliance on either qualitative or quantitative approaches, hinder the comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon. Without a holistic view encompassing diverse demographics and robust methodologies, the causal relationships between variables like mentorship and youth involvement in church activities remain unclear.

Table 2.1Research Gaps

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Author (S)	Focus of the Study	Key Findings	Research Gaps
Fransman's (2020)	The study delves into a narrow age range of children aged six to twelve.	Children aged 6–12 are in a critical stage of cognitive, emotional, and social development. Fransman found that interventions or experiences during this time disproportionately influence future outcomes.	This lack of diversity in sampling hampers our understanding of how these dynamics operate across various cultural contexts and age groups. Additionally, methodological limitations, such as small sample sizes and reliance on either qualitative or quantitative approaches, hinder the comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon. Without a holistic view encompassing diverse demographics and robust methodologies, the causal relationships between variables like mentorship and youth involvement in church activities remain unclear.
Corley (2018) and Perry (2023)	Studies exploring the impact of group dynamics on youth participation in church activities also reveal notable gaps.	Their findings revealed a significant increase in online hotel bookings, prompting the hotel industry to invest in technological expertise and solutions to meet the growing demand.	Underscoring the significance of group dynamics, the applicability of their findings across different cultural contexts remains uncertain. This uncertainty is further exemplified by Haskell's historical study in Mexico, which may not fully

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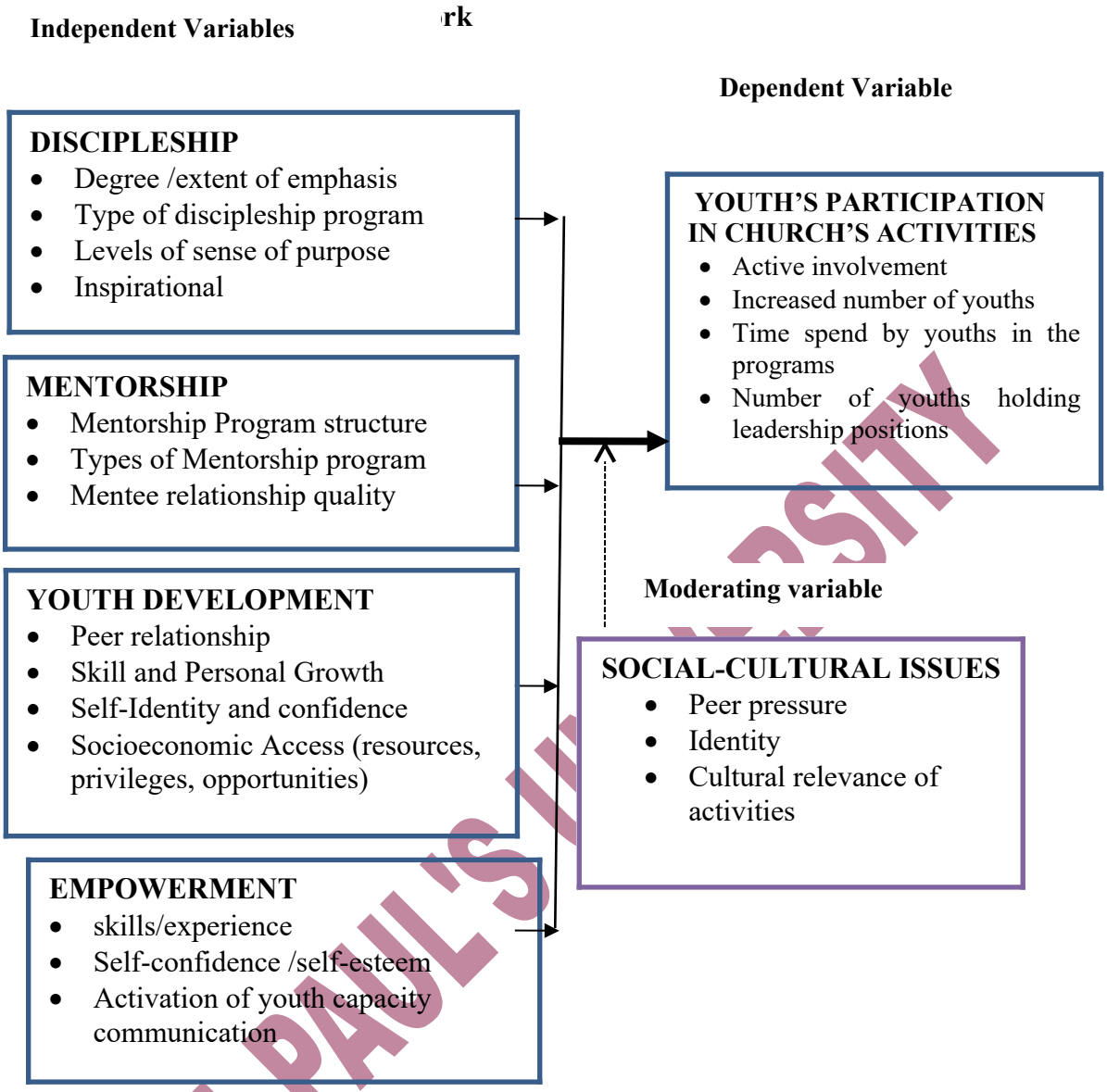
			capture contemporary dynamics.
Erickson et al. (2020), Nalugya et al. (2023)	Focus on children with disabilities are valuable, their direct relevance to the church setting is not established.	Found that positive adult-youth relationships in sports enhance confidence, teamwork, and resilience.	The lack of research exploring the specific mechanisms through which group dynamics influence youth engagement in church activities highlights a critical gap in the literature.
Batista, Johnson, and Friedmann's (2018)	Role of empowerment in fostering youth participation in church activities	Demonstrate the positive influences of empowerment programs	The causal relationship between empowerment and participation requires further empirical investigation
Hong Kong (Fong and Snape, 2015), Myanmar (Soe, 2020), and Nigeria (Augustain et al., 2019)	Influence and contribution of cultural festivals on tourism growth in Thessaloniki.	Church communities	The lack of research directly addressing the unique sociocultural dynamics of church environments limits the ability to develop effective interventions to enhance youth engagement.

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2.4 Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework illustrates the relationship between independent and dependent variables in the context of youth participation in church development programs within mainstream Protestant churches in Nairobi, Kenya. Figure 2.1 succinctly encapsulates this conceptual framework, providing a visual representation of the interconnected elements that contribute to understanding the dynamics of youth involvement in church activities within the specified context.

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As illustrated in Figure 2.1, this study examines four independent variables, discipleship, mentorship, group development, and empowerment, affecting youth participation in church development activities within mainstream Protestant churches in Nairobi, Kenya. The dependent variable is youth participation, while the independent variables represent leadership practices expected to influence and shape youth engagement levels.

The study recognizes that social-cultural factors, such as peer pressure, personal identity, and cultural norms, can moderate the relationship between leadership practices and youth participation. Positive peer influences can reinforce leadership strategies like mentorship and discipleship, encouraging engagement, whereas negative peer pressure may reduce

participation despite supportive leadership. Youth with strong personal or religious identities may respond more positively to leadership initiatives, while conflicting identities can limit involvement. Cultural norms affect how leadership practices are interpreted and implemented, shaping youth expectations and responses to church programs.

In addition, the study integrates Youth Development as a framework to understand how leadership practices influence participation. Youth Development is conceptualized through four measurable indicators: Peer Relationships (quality of friendships, peer support, and acceptance in social groups), Skill and Personal Growth (participation in skill-building or learning activities), Self-Identity and Confidence (clarity of personal identity and confidence in self-expression), and Socioeconomic Access (resources, privileges, and opportunities available to youth). These indicators focus on developmental, relational, and contextual factors that affect youth engagement, distinct from measures of participation itself.

Empirical studies support the link between these leadership practices and youth participation. Structured discipleship programs foster spiritual growth and relational bonds among youth (Journal of Religious Studies and Theology, 2021). Mentorship enhances commitment and helps youth navigate personal and spiritual challenges (Keles et al., 2020; Ritchie, 2020). Group development initiatives build community, leadership skills, and active involvement (Wambui, 2020). Collectively, these strategies create a supportive environment that nurtures spiritual growth, leadership capacity, and a sense of belonging, while the Youth Development indicators capture individual and contextual factors that further shape engagement. This conceptual framework provides a basis for examining how leadership practices influence youth participation, considering both moderating socio-cultural factors and youth developmental capacities.

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CHAPTER THREE
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter details the study's methodology and the research approach used. The chapter discusses the selection and justification of a descriptive research design, the target population, stratified random sampling, data collection using questionnaires, including validity and reliability tests, and the use of descriptive and inferential statistics to analyze data and present the study findings.

3.2 Research Philosophy

This study adopted a pragmatic research philosophy to guide its mixed-methods design, reflecting the need to address complex and context-specific factors influencing youth participation in mainstream Protestant churches in Nairobi. Pragmatism was selected because it allows the integration of quantitative and qualitative approaches to examine multiple interrelated constructs, such as discipleship, mentorship, group development, empowerment, and socio-cultural influences, without privileging one form of knowledge over another (Creswell, 2021). The pragmatic orientation emphasizes the practical consequences of research, prioritizing actionable insights that can inform church leadership, policy development, and program design. This focus on utility makes pragmatism particularly appropriate for applied research in organizational and community settings, such as youth engagement within churches.

Drawing on the philosophical foundations of Charles Peirce, William James, and John Dewey, pragmatism views knowledge as evolving through experience and inquiry, with truth assessed by its practical implications and observable outcomes (Dobuzinskis, 2022). In this study, pragmatism facilitated the examination of leadership behaviors, mentorship practices, group dynamics, and empowerment initiatives not only as abstract concepts but as observable factors affecting youth participation. By allowing methodological flexibility, pragmatism enabled the study to combine survey data capturing measurable patterns with qualitative interviews and focus group discussions that provided deeper insights into the lived experiences, motivations, and socio-cultural constraints of youth participants. This methodological openness was essential for capturing the multifaceted nature of

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engagement within Nairobi churches, where leadership practices, peer influence, and social networks intersect in complex ways.

Pragmatism also informed the integration of the theoretical framework, linking Transformational Leadership, Social Learning, and Social Capital theories to both data collection and interpretation. It supported examining how leadership behaviors motivate youth, how observational learning reinforces participation, and how social networks facilitate resource mobilization. Pragmatism encouraged interpreting findings in terms of practical significance, highlighting actionable strategies to enhance youth involvement rather than focusing solely on theoretical generalizations.

To ensure rigor within a pragmatic approach, the study used multiple validity strategies, including triangulating data sources, transparently reporting procedures, and systematically cross-verifying quantitative and qualitative findings. These measures addressed potential biases and strengthened the credibility and trustworthiness of the results. By aligning philosophical stance, methodology, and theoretical underpinnings, pragmatism provided a coherent and flexible foundation for understanding youth participation in church development programs while generating findings directly relevant to practitioners and policymakers.

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3.3 Research Design

This study employed a mixed method research design. This design was valuable for studying church development approaches and youth leadership transitions in Protestant churches in Nairobi, Kenya. A mixed-methods research design allows for a comprehensive understanding of the topic by combining both quantitative and qualitative data. Quantitative methods such as surveys and statistical analysis provided numerical data used to identify trends, patterns, and relationships between variables. Qualitative methods such as interviews and focus groups can provide in-depth insights into the experiences, perceptions, and attitudes of different stakeholders, including youth leaders, pastors, and church members (Mishra & Alok, 2022).

Furthermore, according to Fellows and Liu (2021), mixed-methods design allows for both qualitative and quantitative data analysis. The quantitative research technique was chosen

because logical reasoning was used to develop the research questions. A research design is a general blueprint for how researchers respond to research issues (Sileyew, 2019). According to Bukwe (2019), it is a plan that shows how to organize a research project to answer research questions.

3.4 Study Area

This research was conducted within Nairobi City County, Kenya's most populous region, with approximately 4,397,073 residents according to the 2019 population census (KNBS, 2019). Known for its high population density, diverse cultural landscape, and dynamic demographics, Nairobi is a melting pot of cultures, races, and backgrounds. The county remains a vibrant urban setting. The study aimed to better understand youth participation in mainstream Protestant churches within this complex environment.

The choice of Nairobi as a research site is because it serves as Kenya's capital city and thus has many different types of people from all walks of life, including ethnicities and socio-economic groups, in close proximity to one another, which creates a multitude of different experiences among people of different backgrounds engaging in church activities there. In addition, Nairobi is home to a very high concentration of mainline Protestant churches (both denominationally varying in types of services/programming/youth ministry), which would allow for a more detailed comparison of group dynamics and patterns of participation between these congregations than would be found in smaller cities with fewer or no congregations that have high and low degrees of organisation/interviewees participating in each congregation.

Furthermore, the city offers access to a wide range of youth sub-groups such as students, young professionals, and youth engaged in the informal sector, enabling the study to assess variations in engagement motivations, commitment to church activities, and leadership involvement. The high density of churches in the city also enables the researcher to access the key stakeholders within a geographically defined area, such as church officials, youth coordinators, and church activity facilitators. These factors are likely to make the study more feasible and effective in depth and rigor, with the findings reflecting the diversity of church activities and the complex socio-cultural realities that shape youth engagement in church activities. Therefore, Nairobi is not only logistically feasible but also theoretically

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significant, as the researcher can access the unique and dynamic context in which the factors affecting youth engagement in church activities are manifest.

3.5 Target Population

The target population was derived from Nairobi County's general population of 4,397,073 (KNBS, 2019). Using stepwise filtering based on youth aged 18–34 years (≈36%), affiliation with Protestant and Evangelical churches (≈52%), mainstream denominational membership (≈55%), and active participation in church programs (≈1%), the resulting estimate was approximately 4,500 individuals (Gathuma, 2020). This refined figure represents the specific group under study in mainstream Protestant churches in Nairobi County. Therefore, the target population comprised 4,500 youths drawn from nine youth groups representing three prominent mainstream Protestant denominations: the Anglican Church of Kenya (ACK), the Presbyterian Church of East Africa (PCEA), and the Methodist Church. Participants included both lay members and clergy involved in youth leadership and church development. These denominations' established presence and influence in Nairobi provide a relevant and diverse sample for examining youth participation. Their varied approaches to church development and youth leadership enable nuanced comparative insights, contributing to a comprehensive understanding of the factors shaping youth involvement in mainstream Protestant churches within Nairobi County.

3.6 Sampling Size Determination and Sampling Technique

3.6.1 Sample Size

The target population comprised 4,500 youths drawn from 9 youth groups across three denominations and their branches. To determine the survey sample size, Yemane's (1967) formula was applied:

$$\frac{\quad}{\quad}$$

Where:

- n = sample size
- N = population size (4,500 youths)
- e = margin of error (commonly set at 0.05 for 95% confidence)

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$$\frac{}{} = \frac{}{} = \frac{}{} = \frac{}{} \approx 367$$

The calculated sample size was 367. By examining membership size across selected youth groups in all nine denominations, the study provided an accurate description of youth population structure; the research ensured enough members in each group to analyze group dynamics, youth participation, and leadership participation. By providing the member size distribution to readers, it was possible to place the results in the context of normal differences between groups so that findings on youth participation levels, time spent participating, and leadership participation could be interpreted in relation to each group's size. This method of providing member size distribution allowed for extensive intra-group comparison while keeping the reader informed about both group size differences.

Despite these advantages, the methodology also has limitations in external validity. Equal representation of the groups may not be an accurate reflection of the proportion of the youth in the larger population, as it may over represent some of the smaller groups and underrepresent the larger ones. Overall statistics, such as averages for participation rate, leadership involvement, and program engagement, may not represent the larger youth population in Nairobi churches but rather the sampled groups. However, the methodology, in terms of reporting membership numbers, helps the reader understand the trade-offs made to ensure the study was clear and representative, as per the sampling methodology (Hasan & Kumar, 2024; Chaokromthong & Sintao, 2021).

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3.6.2 Sampling Technique

This study employed a multistage sampling strategy, combining purposive and random sampling to efficiently navigate Nairobi's complex Protestant youth population. Among the seven primary mainstream Protestant denominations in Nairobi—Anglican Church of Kenya (ACK), Presbyterian Church of East Africa (PCEA), Methodist Church in Kenya (MCK), Africa Inland Church (AIC), Baptist Convention of Kenya, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kenya (ELCK), and Seventh-day Adventist Church (SDA), three were purposively selected: ACK, PCEA, and MCK. The study selected these denominations

based on their historical presence, robust youth programs, and substantial youth membership in Nairobi, ensuring the study captured diverse approaches to youth engagement while remaining representative of mainstream Protestant practices. Verified membership records indicated that the selected churches collectively had approximately 4,500 youth members, supporting claims of demographic reach and enabling meaningful sampling across groups.

Within these three denominations, the study identified nine youth groups across their branches as practical units for data collection. Membership data from church records provided the total number of youths per group, allowing proportional allocation of respondents based on verified group size. This approach ensured that the calculated sample size of 367 respondents, determined using Yamane's formula, was maintained and fairly distributed across groups without artificially equalizing numbers. Table 3.1 shows the distribution of youth members and the corresponding proportional sample allocation:

Table 3.1 Youth Membership Distribution and Sample Size Allocation

Denomination	Youth Group	Total Youth Members	Proportional Sample Allocation	Sample Size
ACK	Group 1	560	12.4	46
ACK	Group 2	463	10.3	38
ACK	Group 3	484	10.8	40
PCEA	Group 4	517	11.5	42
PCEA	Group 5	441	9.8	36
PCEA	Group 6	323	7.2	26
MCK	Group 7	646	14.4	53
MCK	Group 8	452	10.0	37
MCK	Group 9	614	13.6	50
Total		**4500**	**100.0**	**367**

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Respondents were randomly selected within each youth group to meet the proportional allocation, ensuring fairness and minimizing selection bias. This design addressed logistical constraints: surveying all 4,500 youths individually was impractical, and using youth groups as units allowed coherent, manageable sampling. While the groups served as practical units for organization, the study did not implement formal cluster sampling, avoiding misrepresentation of statistical procedures. By grounding sample selection in verified membership data and proportional allocation, the study maintained both

methodological rigor and transparency, enabling robust analysis of participation patterns, leadership uptake, and program engagement among mainstream Protestant youths in Nairobi.

3.7 Data Collection Instruments and Procedures

3.7.1 Data Collection Instrument

The study employed various data collection methods to gather information from research participants. The study collected quantitative data using questionnaires and qualitative data through interviews. Additionally, focus group discussions were conducted using interview guides to facilitate the exchange of ideas among different groups, namely senior youth, junior youth, and elders.

Since the main tool was the questionnaire, the questions were structured. Section A included general information about the church and respondents, church names, respondents' ages, education levels, and church leaders' locations. Section B covered numerous problems with youth leadership transitions, including the frequency of changes, the reasons of transitions, the method of selecting new leaders, the influence of transitions, and measuring youth engagement in transitions. Section C focused on leadership transformation commitment. This section examined leaders', staff's, and members' commitment to engaging youth in church development programs. Section D examined the significance of discipleship and mentorship activities leading to youth participation related to church development.

3.7.2 Validity of Research Instruments

The validity of the research instruments was critically assessed using a multi-layered approach to ensure they accurately measured the constructs of discipleship, mentorship, group development, empowerment, and youth participation in church activities. The assessment considered content, construct, criterion-related, and face validity dimensions to strengthen interpretive rigor and reduce potential measurement error. Throughout the process, the researchers addressed challenges that could affect response quality and incorporated strategies to mitigate them while maintaining the instruments' theoretical and contextual alignment.

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Content validity was established by carefully mapping each questionnaire and interview item to the study's research objectives and the theoretical constructs identified in the literature. Discipleship items captured the degree of emphasis, program types, and the sense of purpose instilled among youth. Mentorship items focused on program structure, the quality of mentor-mentee relationships, and participants' developmental outcomes. Group development items measured intergroup relationships, peer influence, social acceptance, and skill-building opportunities, whereas empowerment items assessed self-confidence, capacity activation, and communication skills. We addressed overlap among items within related constructs through precise wording and clear operational definitions, refined during pilot testing to ensure each construct remained distinct and accurately represented.

Criterion-related validity was reinforced by comparing the study instruments with prior research on youth participation, church leadership, and community development programs (Sileyew, 2019; Mishra & Alok, 2022). This review ensured that survey and interview items reflected empirically validated dimensions of similar constructs and adhered to best practices in measurement. We adjusted items to reflect contextual differences in organizational culture, practices, and demographics between previous studies and the target churches, ensuring they remained relevant and meaningful in the local setting. Expert review provided an additional layer of validation. Key informants, including church leaders, youth coordinators, and academic experts familiar with Nairobi church programs, assessed the instruments for clarity, relevance, and cultural sensitivity. Feedback led to simplifying complex wording, removing redundant items, and refining ambiguous constructs. By consulting multiple experts with diverse experience, the process balanced perspectives and strengthened content and construct validity, increasing confidence that the instruments would capture the intended variables accurately.

Face validity was further established through pre-testing with a small subset of respondents outside the main study sample. These participants were asked to interpret each question, evaluate its relevance, and comment on the clarity and ease of response. The researchers adjusted items based on their feedback, particularly complex Likert-scale items and open-ended questions, to reduce potential misinterpretation. Careful selection of pre-

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test participants with demographic and contextual characteristics similar to the main sample helped ensure the adjustments improved comprehension and minimized bias.

Construct validity was strengthened by explicitly linking each survey item to measurable indicators of youth participation, including hours spent in church programs, leadership positions held, and levels of active engagement. Self-reported responses were carefully framed to avoid socially desirable answers, emphasizing confidentiality, anonymity, and voluntary participation. Questions were phrased neutrally to encourage honest reporting and reduce pressure to conform to perceived expectations. This alignment between theoretical constructs and measurable indicators enhanced the interpretive value of both quantitative and qualitative findings.

Triangulation across data sources reinforced validity and provided a more comprehensive understanding of youth participation. Quantitative surveys, qualitative interviews, and observational notes from church activities were integrated and cross-checked to identify consistent patterns and highlight discrepancies for further analysis. While triangulation cannot eliminate all sources of bias or account for unobservable contextual influences, deliberately combining and cross-validating multiple evidence sources increased confidence that the instruments captured the constructs under investigation.

Throughout instrument development, the team maintained an iterative refinement approach. Pilot testing, expert consultation, and pre-testing cycles informed successive revisions, ensuring that the instruments remained culturally sensitive, contextually relevant, and closely aligned with the study objectives. Each refinement phase addressed challenges related to item clarity, construct overlap, cultural appropriateness, and respondent comprehension. By combining theoretical alignment, empirical grounding, expert input, practical pre-testing, and data triangulation, the research instruments achieved a high standard of validity, providing a reliable and interpretable foundation for examining youth participation in church development programs in mainstream Protestant churches in Nairobi County.

3.7.3 Reliability of Research Instruments

This study critically addressed reliability to ensure the research instruments produced consistent, dependable, and replicable results across different respondents, contexts, and

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measurement occasions (Sileyew, 2019). Establishing reliability was particularly important given the study's focus on youth participation in church activities, where responses could vary due to subjective perceptions, social desirability, or contextual influences. The study employed a multi-pronged approach to assess and enhance reliability, combining quantitative measures, qualitative checks, and iterative refinement.

Twenty individuals participated in the pilot study, representing three denominations of the Anglican Church of Kenya (ACK), the Presbyterian Church of East Africa (PCEA), and the Methodist Church in Kajiado County. Each of these denominations has a structure that is based on dioceses, presbyteries or synods; however, their urban congregations consist of the same types of organizational practices, youth programs, and levels of overall participation as those found in Nairobi. The denominations have been used as the basis for the selection of participants for the study because of the long-standing history they have with Protestant church culture, thus being able to identify several approaches related to leadership, small group interaction, and program involvement. By choosing participants from these established Protestant denominations, the research was able to get a variety of different areas associated with youth participation, peer-to-peer interaction, and group dynamics, while also providing a manageable location to work within; therefore, any initial findings related to youth participation, peer interaction, and group dynamics could be operationally comparable and contextually related to the main research population.

The pilot proved successful in testing its data collection tools and measuring youth response rates and church activity attendance patterns because it used denominational systems as its testing framework instead of using geographic urban boundaries. This phase provided direct insights that led to changes in the primary research study design and the development of research sampling methods and data collection tools (Creswell, 2021). The pilot study used established church systems to operate its research because these systems represented standard church operations, which enabled researchers to prepare for their study in Nairobi. The researchers chose the pilot sample because its demographic and contextual makeup matched that of the main study population, allowing them to transfer their insights to the main research area.

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The pilot project tested all three aspects of instrument performance, which included instrument clarity, instrument interpretability, and instrument operational capability. The researchers assessed the questionnaire items to identify unclear terms that created confusion, redundant elements, and how the survey elements connected. The feedback identified particular areas that needed improvement because the questions about group development and peer influence generated duplicate answers while the empowerment items needed to be rephrased to match the church practice of the local area. The instruments were revised by eliminating all ambiguous elements, combining several duplicate items, and creating simpler terms that still measured the same testable concepts. The order of sections was adjusted to keep respondents interested while minimizing their tiredness from answering mixed-format instruments, which included both Likert-scale items and open-ended questions. The pilot project enabled the research team to assess the full data-collection process by showing how long participants took to complete the questionnaires and how well they understood the instructions. The improvements made to the study methods allowed the main research study to obtain reliable information that reflected the typical context of youth participation and group dynamics and church engagement throughout Nairobi's Protestant churches.

Internal consistency was quantitatively measured using Cronbach's alpha for each construct, with 0.70 established as the minimum acceptable threshold for reliability (Creswell, 2021). The results indicated strong reliability, with alpha values exceeding 0.79 for all constructs, including discipleship, mentorship, group development, and empowerment. These values demonstrated good to excellent internal consistency, indicating that the items within each construct coherently measured the same underlying concept. Furthermore, the study considered inter-rater reliability for qualitative responses, particularly open-ended survey items and focus group discussions. The study checked coding consistency between the researcher and trained assistants, ensuring thematic interpretations were stable and reproducible across coders. The team discussed discrepancies and refined coding frameworks, enhancing the dependability of the qualitative analyses.

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While test-retest reliability was not formally conducted due to time and resource constraints, the pilot study served as a quasi-test-retest by allowing initial exposure to items and reviewing responses for consistency and comprehension. This iterative approach, combining qualitative feedback and quantitative assessment, reinforced the robustness of the instruments. Each refinement stage minimized potential sources of measurement error, reduced respondent confusion, and enhanced the overall credibility of the study's findings.

Finally, reliability efforts were closely aligned with the study context. The instruments were designed to capture nuanced aspects of youth participation within mainstream Protestant churches in Nairobi, considering both structured programs and informal social interactions. The combination of theoretical alignment, expert validation, pilot testing, internal consistency measures, and inter-rater checks ensured the instruments were reliable, contextually valid, culturally sensitive, and capable of generating high-quality data suitable for rigorous statistical and thematic analysis. The final reliability statistics are summarized in Table 3.2.

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Table 3.2 Reliability Test

Objective	Cronbach's Alpha	Interpretation
Discipleship	0.937	Acceptable
Mentorship	0.885	Good
Group's development	0.864	Good
Empowerment	0.794	Good

3.8 Data Analysis and Presentation

The team systematically coded questionnaire data and entered it into SPSS for analysis. The dataset was carefully cleaned to correct inconsistencies, remove outliers, and ensure accuracy. Both quantitative and qualitative data were analyzed using complementary approaches to provide a comprehensive understanding of youth participation in church activities (Sileyew, 2019).

Quantitative analysis was conducted in multiple stages. Descriptive statistics summarized respondents' socio-demographic characteristics, including age, gender, education, and church positions, as well as perceptions of church practices, mentorship, group dynamics, and empowerment. Frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations captured central tendencies and variability, providing a foundation for more advanced inferential tests. Cross-tabulations examined associations between key independent variables, such as discipleship ratings, gender, and activity type, and youth participation. Chi-square tests assessed the statistical significance of these associations, revealing initial patterns and highlighting potential moderators, including religious identity.

Pearson correlation analysis quantified the strength and direction of linear relationships between predictors, including discipleship, mentorship, group development, empowerment, and socio-cultural factors, and youth participation. This analysis helped detect multicollinearity and informed variable selection for regression modeling. We then applied hierarchical multiple regression to estimate the predictive power of individual, programmatic, and socio-cultural factors. Standardized beta coefficients allowed for comparison of relative influence, while model fit indices, including R^2, adjusted R^2, and F-values, assessed explanatory strength. Complementary analysis of variance (ANOVA) evaluated whether groups of predictors collectively explained significant variance in youth participation, leadership likelihood, and engagement outcomes, thus validating the joint significance of key predictors (Mishra & Alok, 2022).

We analyzed qualitative data from open-ended survey items and focus group discussions using content analysis. The team systematically coded responses and organized them into key themes. Triangulation integrated findings across quantitative and qualitative data, strengthening the validity of the results by confirming that statistical trends aligned with participants' expressed experiences. This process also allowed for critical examination of inconsistencies, providing nuanced insights into youth engagement, mentorship impact, and group dynamics (Creswell, 2021).

Findings were presented in tables, charts, and graphs to improve clarity and support interpretation. Descriptive statistics summarized variables such as discipleship ratings, mentorship participation, activity preferences, and socio-cultural influences. Cross-

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tabulations highlighted patterns and associations between participation and other factors, while correlation matrices illustrated the strength and direction of associations between predictors and youth participation. Regression tables reported beta coefficients, significance levels, and model fit, showing each predictor's relative contribution. ANOVA tables confirmed the statistical significance of predictor sets, validating the robustness of the regression models.

Overall, this multi-stage analytical framework provided a structured and integrative examination of youth participation. Descriptive statistics indicated that discipleship emphasis was generally moderate to high, while participation in mentorship programs was slightly above half. Cross-tabulations revealed significant associations between participation and factors such as gender, activity type, and religious identity. Correlation analysis identified discipleship and mentorship as the strongest positive correlates of participation, and regression analysis confirmed that discipleship, mentorship, empowerment, group development, and socio-cultural factors collectively explained 56% of the variance in youth participation. ANOVA validated the joint significance of these predictors. By combining multiple analytical methods and integrating quantitative and qualitative evidence, the study identified strengths and gaps in youth participation and provided actionable recommendations for enhancing church programs and youth engagement strategies (Fellows & Liu, 2021; Mishra & Alok, 2022).

3.9 Operationalization of Variables

Following the data analysis and presentation procedures, the study operationalized key variables to ensure clarity in measurement, consistent data collection, and appropriate analytical techniques. Operationalization defines how abstract concepts, such as discipleship, mentorship, group development, empowerment, and youth participation, are measured and observed within the study context (Mishra & Alok, 2022). This step ensured that each variable aligned with the research objectives and allowed for reliable and valid interpretation of both qualitative and quantitative findings. The study focused on four independent variables, discipleship, mentorship, group development, and empowerment, and one dependent variable, youth participation in church development programs. Each variable was clearly defined by its indicators, measurement approach, scale level, data collection method, and type of analysis. Table 3.3 presents a detailed summary of the

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operationalization of variables, linking each research objective with its corresponding variable, indicators, measurement scale, data collection method, and type of analysis.

Table 3.3 Operationalization of Variables

Research Objectives	**Variable**	**Indicators**	**Measurement**	**Levels of Scale**	**Data Collection Method**	**Types Of Analysis**
To determine the influence of youth discipleship participation on church activities in church development programs in Mainstream protestant churches in Nairobi County.	Discipleship-IV	- Degree/ extent of emphasis. -Type of discipleship program -Levels of sense of purpose -Inspirational	High/low Nature High/low	Nominal	Interview/ Questionnaire	Qualitative/ Quantitative
To assess the influence	Mentorship- IV	-Mentorship program structure	Rigid/ Flexible Developme	Nominal	Interview/ Questionnaire	Qualitative/ Quantitat

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of mentorship on youth participation in church activities and church development programs in mainstream Protestant churches in Nairobi County.		-Types of mentorship -Mentee relationship quality.	ntal/ Non-developmental Good/ Bad			ive
To evaluate the influences of groups development on youth participation in church activities and church developme	Group involvement- IV	Intergroup relationship Group activities Peer influence Acceptance level Identity Social class Friendship Opportunity for skill developmen	Low/ High Quality No. of activities Level influence Low/high Individual level system Individual opinion No. of friends: few/many	Nominal	Interview/ Questionnaire	Qualitative/ Quantitative

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nt programs in Mainstream protestant churches in Nairobi County		t	Yes/no			
To examine the influence of empowerment on youth participation in church activities in mainstream Protestant churches in Nairobi County.	Empowerment -IV	Skills/ experience Self-confidence/ self esteem Activation of youth capacity Communication	No. of trainings/Level of exposure High/Low Yes / No	Nominal/ Interval	Interview/ Questionnaire	Qualitative/ Quantitative
The study is about church involveme	Youth participation in Church	Active Involvement Increased	No. of hours Active/ passive	Nominal/ Interval	Interview/ Questionnaire	Qualitative/ Quantitative

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nt activities and youth participation church development programs in mainstream protestant churches in Nairobi, Kenya	development programs **Dependent**	no. of youths Time spend by youths in the programs No. of youths holding leadership positions				

Discipleship was measured through indicators such as the degree of emphasis on discipleship, the type of discipleship program, sense of purpose, and inspirational influence. Responses were classified as high or low and measured using nominal scales via interviews and questionnaires, allowing both qualitative and quantitative analysis.

Mentorship was operationalized through mentorship program structure, types of mentorship, and the quality of the mentee-mentor relationship. Indicators included whether the mentorship was rigid or flexible, developmental or non-developmental, and the perceived quality of the mentorship relationship. These were captured using nominal scales and analyzed through both qualitative and quantitative methods. Group development was measured through indicators such as intergroup relationships, participation in group activities, peer influence, acceptance levels, social identity, friendship networks, and opportunities for skill development. The measurement employed nominal scales including low/high quality, number of activities, level of influence, and yes/no responses. Data were collected via interviews and questionnaires and analyzed using both qualitative and quantitative techniques to capture the multidimensional nature of group dynamics.

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Empowerment focused on the extent to which youth were equipped with skills and experience, self-confidence, and capacity activation. Other alternatives for "communication skills" could be ability to convey ideas, clarity in communication, or competence in communicating, depending on the context. The study used both nominal and interval scales, with qualitative and quantitative analysis to provide a comprehensive understanding of empowerment's influence on participation.

The dependent variable, youth participation in church development programs, was operationalized through indicators such as active involvement, number of participating youths, time spent in programs, and number of youths holding leadership positions. Measurement used nominal and interval scales, collected via interviews and questionnaires, and analyzed using complementary qualitative and quantitative methods to capture both the depth and breadth of youth engagement.

This structured approach ensures that the study systematically captures relevant data, aligns analytical methods with research objectives, and supports rigorous interpretation of findings related to youth participation in mainstream Protestant churches in Nairobi County.

3.10 Ethical Consideration

This study was designed and conducted with a strong commitment to upholding ethical standards at all stages of the research process. In line with recognized research ethics frameworks, the researcher fully disclosed the study's purpose, objectives, and procedures to all potential participants, ensuring transparency and fostering trust. Participants were informed that the data collected would be used solely for academic purposes, with no commercial or external application, and that their responses would not affect their relationship with the church or any affiliated institutions.

Before data collection, the researcher obtained ethical clearance from St. Paul's University Institutional Research Ethics Committee (IREC). The researcher also secured an official introduction letter, which facilitated formal permission from the National Commission for Science, Technology, and Innovation (NACOSTI), ensuring compliance with national

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regulatory requirements. To improve data collection efficiency, the researcher recruited and trained two research assistants. Training included a detailed review of ethical principles, data handling protocols, and interview techniques to ensure participants' rights and dignity were preserved throughout the process. Each assistant signed a Confidentiality Agreement, emphasizing their obligation to maintain the privacy and security of all data collected.

Participation in the study was entirely voluntary. Respondents were explicitly informed that they could withdraw at any stage without any negative consequences or impact on their relationship with the church or the researcher. Potential participants were briefed on the benefits and risks of participation and encouraged to ask questions for clarification before consenting to take part. Informed consent forms were carefully designed to communicate this information in clear and accessible language, accommodating participants with varying literacy levels.

Privacy and confidentiality were rigorously protected. Names, personal identifiers, and sensitive demographic details were anonymized during data entry and analysis to prevent participant identification. All electronic data were password-protected, and hard copies were securely stored in locked cabinets accessible only to the research team. The study also implemented measures to prevent unauthorized access to the data, including encrypting digital files and using controlled access protocols. The questionnaire and focus group discussion guides were developed with sensitivity to potential psychological influences. Questions were framed neutrally to avoid distress, embarrassment, or social desirability bias, particularly when discussing personal involvement in church activities or leadership roles. Respondents' emotional wellbeing was prioritized, and the research team was prepared to provide appropriate support or referral in the unlikely event that participants experienced discomfort.

In addition, the study carefully respected cultural and religious considerations. Questions and discussions were structured to align with participants' faith values and local norms, minimizing any perception of intrusion or disrespect. The researcher remained impartial, ensuring personal beliefs did not influence the study's conduct or the interpretation of

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findings. All interactions emphasized respect for participants' autonomy, freedom of thought, and dignity.

By adhering to these ethical principles, the study ensured the welfare, rights, and privacy of all participants while maintaining the integrity and credibility of the research process. Ethical compliance was integrated into every step, from planning and recruitment to data collection, analysis, and reporting, thereby reinforcing the study's reliability and trustworthiness (Mishra & Alok, 2022; Fellows & Liu, 2021).

3.11 Chapter Summary

This chapter delves into the methodological framework adopted for the study, providing a comprehensive overview of the choices made and the rationale behind them. Focusing on Mainstream Protestant churches in Nairobi West Sub-County narrows the research scope to enhance depth and specificity. The study explored how discipleship, mentorship, group development, and empowerment influence youth participation in church development activities in Nairobi County. The mixed-methods design integrates quantitative and qualitative approaches, using surveys, statistical analysis, interviews, and focus groups. This methodological combination aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing youth engagement by combining numerical insights with nuanced qualitative perspectives. Additionally, the chapter emphasizes the commitment to ethical considerations, ensuring transparency, privacy, and voluntary participation for all respondents. The methodological choices aligned with the study's objective of providing valuable insights into the dynamics of youth participation in church activities within the specified context.

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CHAPTER FOUR

DATA ANALYSIS, PRESENTATION, INTERPRETATION AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

This chapter delves into the analysis of the research, where the collected data were analyzed and presented in a structured format, interpreted to extract meaningful insights, and discussed to contextualize the findings within the broader scope of the study. The analysis ensured that the data were not only accurately analyzed but also presented in a manner that is accessible and comprehensible, using charts, graphs, and tables as necessary. This section presents the questionnaire response rate; the second part consists of the demographic section, and the third part presents the descriptive statistics and inferential analysis.

4.2 Response Rate

A total of 369 questionnaires were distributed, and 341 were properly completed and returned, yielding a response rate of 92.41%. This high response rate indicates strong engagement and cooperation between the researcher and participants. According to Saunders (2020), a response rate above 70% is considered very good, reinforcing the reliability of the collected data.

4.3 Demographic Profile

The demographic profile provides an overview of the participants' characteristics, including gender, age, church affiliation, and duration of attendance. Understanding these characteristics is essential for contextualizing the study's findings, as variations in gender, age, denominational background, and length of engagement may influence perspectives on participation in church activities, structured programs, and leadership initiatives. This section presents the distribution of respondents across these key variables, highlighting patterns relevant to youth involvement in discipleship, mentorship, group development, and empowerment programs.

4.3.1 Gender and Age of Respondents

The study sought to analyse the representation of male and female respondents, as well as their age distribution, to provide context for interpreting the study's findings.

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Understanding these demographic characteristics was essential, as gender balance and age composition could influence perspectives and levels of participation in church activities. Table 4.1 presents the distribution of respondents by gender and age.

Table 4.1 Distribution of Respondents by Gender and Age

Variable	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	184	54
	Female	157	46
	Total	341	100
Age (years)	18–25	105	30.8
	26–35	136	39.9
	36–45	97	28.4
	46+	3	0.9
	Total	341	100

The data shows that males formed a simple majority at 54% (n = 184), while females accounted for 46% (n = 157). This near balance allowed for meaningful comparisons between male and female perspectives in later sections of the study. Regarding age distribution, respondents aged 26–35 years made up the largest group at 39.9% (n = 136), followed by those aged 18–25 years at 30.8% (n = 105) and those aged 36–45 years at 28.4% (n = 97). Only 0.9% (n = 3) of respondents were aged 46 years or above.

4.3.2 Church Affiliation and Attendance Duration

The study also enquired about respondents' church affiliation and length of attendance. These factors were considered relevant to understand the stability of participants' engagement within their faith communities and to assess how long-term involvement might relate to the study's specific objectives on participation in church activities and development programs.

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Table 4.2 Distribution of Respondents by Church Affiliation

Category	Freq.	Percentage (%)
Anglican	110	32.2
Presbyterian	136	39.9
Methodist	95	27.9
Total	**341**	**100**

Table 4.2 shows that most respondents were affiliated with the Presbyterian Church (39.9%), followed by the Anglican Church (32.2%) and the Methodist Church (27.9%). This indicates a slightly higher representation of Presbyterians among the study participants.

Regarding duration of attendance, 44.6% of respondents had attended their church for 4–6 years, 42.2% for 1–3 years, 8.5% for 7 years or more, and 4.7% for less than one year. Most participants have therefore been involved for 1 to 6 years, suggesting a moderate level of familiarity and engagement with their respective churches. These patterns are further illustrated in Figure 4.1.

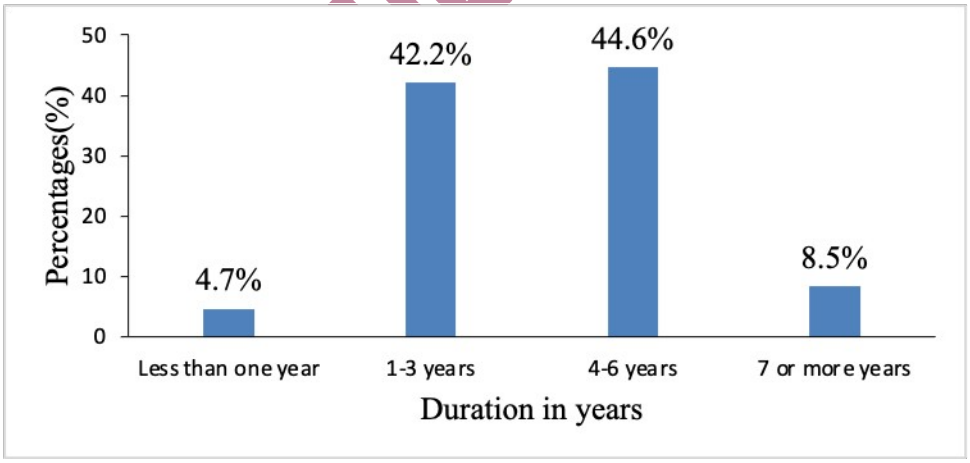


Figure 4.1 Duration of Church attendance

Attendance duration was important for assessing whether long-standing members showed different levels of participation or awareness of church programs than newer members,

which directly related to the study's objective of evaluating engagement patterns in church-led development initiatives.

4.4 Descriptive Statistics

This section presents descriptive statistics on key study variables: discipleship, mentorship, group development, empowerment, and socio-cultural factors in relation to youth participation in church activities. Frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations summarize respondents' perceptions and reported experiences. The section shows baseline patterns of emphasis, participation, and variability across leadership practices and contextual influences before proceeding to inferential analysis.

4.4.1 Influence of Discipleship on Youth Participation in Church Activities

The study sought to determine how respondents perceived discipleship in their churches in Nairobi, Kenya. Respondents were asked: "How would you rate the emphasis on discipleship within your church in Nairobi, Kenya?" Descriptive statistics summarized the responses, including frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations, to provide an overview of respondents' perceptions and ratings.

Table 4.3 Discipleship

Rating	Frequency (F)	Percentage (%)
Very Low (VL)	5	1.5
Low (L)	30	8.8
Moderate (M)	115	33.7
High (H)	163	47.8
Very High (VH)	28	8.2
Total	341	100

Mean: 3.52 **SD:** 0.824

Nearly half of the respondents (47.8%) reported a high emphasis on discipleship, while 33.7% rated it as moderate. Fewer respondents perceived a very high emphasis (8.2%), and 8.8% considered the emphasis low. Only 1.5% of respondents felt that discipleship received very little attention. Overall, the mean score of 3.52 (SD = 0.824) indicates that the emphasis on discipleship in Nairobi churches is generally moderate to high, reflecting a strong commitment to fostering spiritual growth among congregants.

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4.4.2 Influence of Youth Mentorship Programs on Church Participation

The study examined whether respondents had participated in mentorship programs within their churches in Nairobi, Kenya. Descriptive statistics, including frequencies and percentages, were used to summarize participation rates. The finding is as displayed in Figure 4.2:

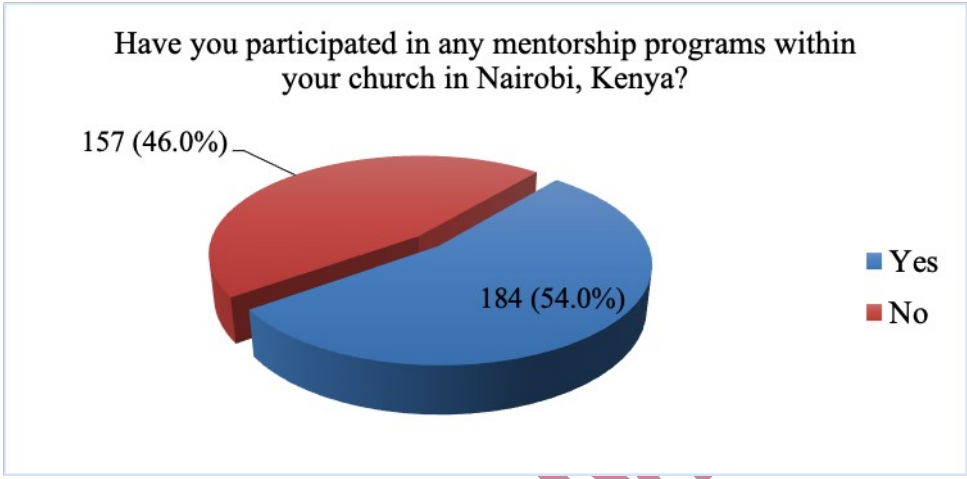


Figure 4.2 Mentorship Programs in Church

From the analysis in Figure 4.2, the majority of the respondents stated Yes (54.0%) to participating in mentorship programs within their church. This suggests that mentorship is relatively common, with more than half of the participants having engaged in such programs. While a significant 46.0% of respondents have not participated in any mentorship program. This indicates that while mentorship programs exist, many youth have not been involved in them.

Respondents were asked: *"How do you perceive the impact of church mentorship programs on the involvement of youths in development activities?"* Descriptive statistics were used to summarize the responses, including frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations to provide an overview of respondents' perceptions, as shown in Table 4.4

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Table 4.4 Perceived influence of church mentorship programs

Rating	Frequency (F)	Percentage (%)
Very Negative Impact (VNI)	37	10.9
Negative Impact (NI)	104	30.5
Neutral (N)	15	4.4
Positive Impact (PI)	149	43.7
Very Positive Impact (VPI)	10	10.6
Total	341	100

Mean: 2.60 **SD:** 1.173

Most respondents (43.7%) perceived mentorship programs as having a positive impact on youth involvement, while 10.6% rated the impact as very positive. Conversely, 30.5% and 10.9% viewed the impact as negative and very negative, respectively. Only 4.4% reported a neutral perception. Overall, the mean score of 2.60 (SD = 1.173) suggests a moderately positive perception of mentorship programs among the youth, though a substantial proportion remain unconvinced of their effectiveness.

The findings show a divided pattern in perceptions of church mentorship programs. While 54.3% of respondents rated the impact as positive or very positive, a substantial 41.4% reported negative or very negative perceptions, with only 4.4% remaining neutral. The mean score of 2.60 (SD = 1.173) falls below the midpoint and, together with the relatively high standard deviation, indicates considerable variation in responses rather than a clear positive consensus. The data do not capture how mentorship is structured, delivered, or experienced, and therefore cannot explain the basis of these contrasting views. However, the observed distribution suggests that mentorship outcomes vary across contexts and groups, but the specific factors driving negative perceptions remain unclear. These results point to the need for further analysis, including cross-tabulation and qualitative follow-up, to identify where and why mentorship is perceived as ineffective.

4.4.3 Influence of Group Development on Youth Participation in Church Activities

The study examined the influence of group development on youth participation in church activities. To capture this, respondents were asked: *"How do you perceive the influence of groups in relation to the participation of youths in church activities in your church?"*

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Descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations, summarized the responses. The results are presented in Table 4.5

Table 4.5 Group Development and Youth's participation in Church Activities

Statements	SD (n, %)	D (n, %)	N (n, %)	A (n, %)	SA (n, %)	Mean	SD
Group provides avenues for meaningful engagement with friends	12 (3.5)	76 (22.3)	9 (2.6)	136 (39.9)	108 (31.7)	3.74	1.22
	76 (22.3)	17 (5.0)	5 (1.5)	108 (31.7)	135 (39.6)	3.6	1.573
Group prevents loneliness and provides opportunities for skill development	17 (5.0)	76 (22.3)	6 (1.8)	134 (39.3)	108 (31.7)	3.7	1.262
By taking part in church activities, I get a chance to meet with my friends	78 (22.9)	15 (4.4)	6 (1.8)	108 (31.7)	134 (39.3)	3.7	1.579
Groups strengthen and activate youths' capacity to satisfy their needs	76 (22.3)	76 (22.3)	76 (22.3)	76 (22.3)	76 (22.3)	3.71	1.251
Group positively influences involvement of youths in church activities	77 (22.6)	15 (4.4)	9 (2.6)	108 (31.7)	132 (38.7)	3.6	1.57
Group activities impact self-confidence and learning experiences, facilitating participation in church activities	14 (4.1)	78 (22.9)	8 (2.3)	130 (38.1)	111 (32.6)	3.72	1.249
Close friends have similar interests, principles, and attitudes towards church activities							

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The findings in Table 4.5 reveal a complex and context-dependent influence of youth group development on participation in church activities. For "Group provides avenues for meaningful engagement with friends," 12 respondents (3.5%) strongly disagreed, 76 (22.3%) disagreed, 9 (2.6%) were neutral, 136 (39.9%) agreed, and 108 (31.7%) strongly agreed (M = 3.74, SD = 1.22). This distribution indicates that while a majority recognize social engagement benefits, more than a quarter of respondents experience limited or negative engagement, suggesting heterogeneity in how group interactions are experienced.

The moderate standard deviation reflects meaningful variation that warrants attention when interpreting the overall impact of group participation on social cohesion.

The item "Group prevents loneliness and provides opportunities for skill development" shows more pronounced divergence: 76 respondents (22.3%) strongly disagreed, 17 (5.0%) disagreed, 5 (1.5%) were neutral, 108 (31.7%) agreed, and 135 (39.6%) strongly agreed (M = 3.60, SD = 1.573). Here, a substantial minority perceives minimal benefit from group participation, highlighting that developmental and psychosocial gains are not consistently realized across all members. Similarly, for "By taking part in church activities, I get a chance to meet with my friends," 17 (5.0%) strongly disagreed, 76 (22.3%) disagreed, 6 (1.8%) were neutral, 134 (39.3%) agreed, and 108 (31.7%) strongly agreed (M = 3.70, SD = 1.262), showing that while peer interactions are valued broadly, a significant fraction of youth report limited access to meaningful connections.

Items capturing empowerment, confidence, and capacity-building illustrate duality in experiences. "Groups strengthen and activate youths' capacity to satisfy their needs" had 78 respondents (22.9%) strongly disagreeing, 15 (4.4%) disagreeing, 6 (1.8%) neutral, 108 (31.7%) agreeing, and 134 (39.3%) strongly agreeing (M = 3.70, SD = 1.579). Likewise, "Group activities impact self-confidence and learning experiences" shows 77 (22.6%) strongly disagreeing, 15 (4.4%) disagreeing, 9 (2.6%) neutral, 108 (31.7%) agreeing, and 132 (38.7%) strongly agreeing (M = 3.60, SD = 1.57). These distributions highlight that while many youths derive confidence and developmental benefits from participation, a notable minority experience limited or adverse outcomes, reflecting uneven access to group-based empowerment.

Perceptions of participation alignment and cohesion further emphasize divergent experiences. "Group positively influences involvement of youths in church activities" presents a perfectly even distribution with 76 (22.3%) in each response category from strongly disagree to strongly agree (M = 3.71, SD = 1.251), suggesting extreme polarization of opinions and indicating that the same group structures are perceived very differently across respondents. "Close friends have similar interests, principles, and attitudes towards church activities" shows 14 (4.1%) strongly disagreed, 78 (22.9%) disagreed, 8 (2.3%) were neutral, 130 (38.1%) agreed, and 111 (32.6%) strongly agreed (M = 3.72, SD = 1.249), reflecting partial homophily that reinforces engagement for some

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but not all members. Overall, these descriptive statistics illustrate that youth group participation produces both enabling and constraining experiences. The variability in responses and the relatively high standard deviations underscore the heterogeneous nature of group influence, indicating that benefits are contingent on individual, relational, and contextual factors rather than universally experienced.

4.4.4 Influence of Empowerment on Youth Participation in Church Activities

Descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations, summarized youth engagement in church activities. The study first examined the types of activities youths most frequently participate in. Table 4.6 presents these findings.

Table 4.6 Church activities do youths most frequently participate in.

Church Activities	Frequency	Percent
Worship services	42	12.3
Bible studies	109	32.0
Community Services	40	11.7
Youth Retreats or Camps	150	44.0
Total	341	100.0

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The findings reveal varying levels of youth participation across different church activities. Youth retreats or camps (44.0%) are the most popular activity among respondents, suggesting that structured and immersive programs attract the highest level of engagement. Bible studies (32.0%) also draw significant participation, indicating that many youths want to deepen their understanding of scripture. Worship services (12.3%) and community service activities (11.7%) have relatively lower participation, suggesting that while these activities are essential to church life, they may be less engaging for younger members. Therefore, the results suggest that youth prefer interactive and socially engaging activities over traditional forms of worship and service.

Building on the frequency analysis of specific church activities, the study also examined broader dimensions of youth empowerment in church participation, including overall involvement, time commitment, satisfaction with participation, and leadership engagement. The aim was to provide a quantitative overview of youth engagement beyond activity type, capturing both behavioral (participation, hours) and perceptual (satisfaction,

leadership likelihood) aspects. Table 4.7 presents these descriptive statistics, summarizing means and standard deviations for each variable.

Table 4.7 Descriptive Analysis of Youth Empowerment in Church Activities

Variable	Statement	N	Mean	Std.Dev
Participation	How would you describe the number of youths participating in church activities over the years?	341	3.38	1.641
Hours	On average, how many hours per week do young people typically spend participating in church activities?	341	3.28	1.309
Satisfaction	Overall, how satisfied are you with the amount of time young people spend in church activities?	341	3.17	1.279
Leadership	How many young people do you know who currently hold leadership positions in the church?	341	3.4	1.135
Leadership Likelihood	How likely do you think young people are to pursue leadership positions within the church?	341	3.25	1.364

The descriptive statistics indicate that youth participation in church activities over the years has a mean of 3.38 (SD = 1.641), reflecting a moderate level of engagement. While some youths participate actively, the variability suggests that participation is uneven, with a mix of highly engaged and minimally involved individuals; this points to differences in interest, availability, or access to activities among the sampled youths.

Time commitment and satisfaction reveal similar patterns. Youths reported spending an average of 3.28 hours per week on church activities (SD = 1.309) and expressed moderate satisfaction with this involvement (mean = 3.17, SD = 1.279). These findings indicate that while youths are dedicating some time to church engagement, the intensity and perceived value of participation vary considerably. Factors such as activity type, facilitation quality, and personal interest likely influence these responses.

Leadership involvement and prospects show that youths are moderately represented in leadership roles (mean = 3.40, SD = 1.135) and perceive a moderate likelihood of pursuing leadership positions themselves (mean = 3.25, SD = 1.364). Although these results suggest

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some degree of empowerment, the variation implies that many youths may not feel prepared or motivated to assume leadership.

Overall, the findings suggest that while youths are moderately engaged in church activities, their participation, satisfaction, and leadership involvement are uneven, highlighting areas where targeted support and interventions could strengthen youth empowerment.

To explore participation trends over time, respondents were asked how youth involvement has changed in recent years. A majority of respondents (42.2%) believe youth participation has increased significantly, suggesting that many churches have successfully engaged young people. Smaller proportions reported moderate (10.9%) or slight (11.7%) increases, indicating gradual growth in some settings. Participation has remained stable in 12.6% of cases, while 22.6% reported declines, highlighting concerns about diminishing engagement in certain congregations. **Figure 4.3** summarizes these responses.

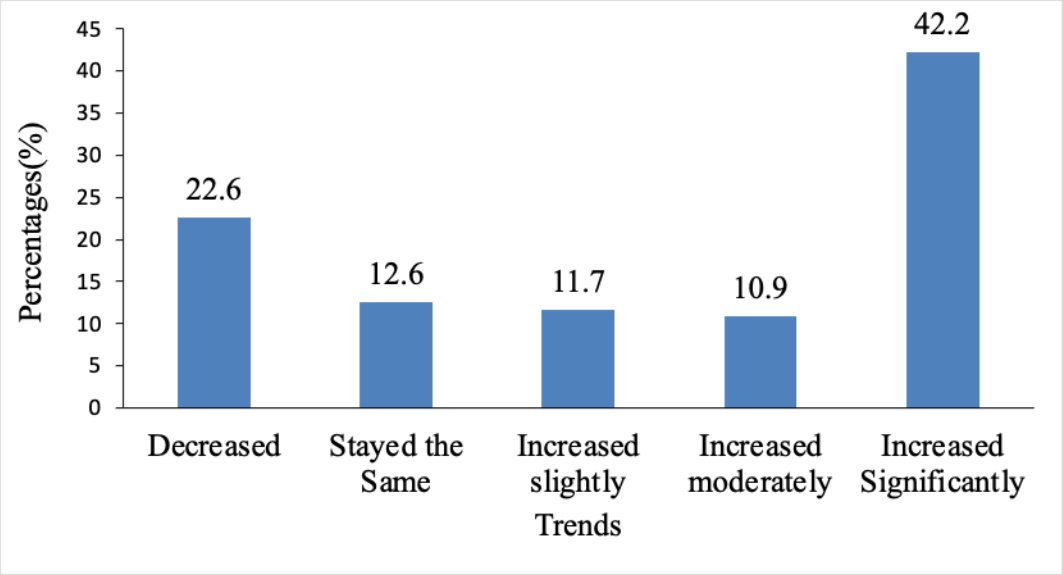


Figure 4.3 Trends in Youth Participation in Church Activities Over Time

Overall, these findings indicate that while most respondents perceive upward trends in youth participation, a notable minority experience stagnation or decline. This underscores the need for targeted strategies to sustain and enhance youth involvement. These results

align with Njoroge (2019), who found that limited motivation, interest, and time significantly constrained youth participation in church activities.

4.4.5 Moderating influence of Social Cultural Issues

Descriptive statistics, including frequencies, means, and standard deviations, were used to assess the moderating influence of social and cultural issues on youth participation in church activities within mainstream Protestant churches in Nairobi. The analysis covered four domains: peer pressure, peer conformity, cultural traditions, and religious identity. The findings are summarized in Table 4.8.

Table 4.8 Descriptive Statistics of Social/ Cultural Moderators on Youth Church Participation

Statement	N	Mean	Std. Dev.
How influential do you perceive peer pressure to be in shaping your decision to participate in church activities?	341	3.09	1.374
How significant is it for youth to conform to peer expectations regarding church involvement?	341	2.89	1.402
To what degree do you think cultural traditions or practices within the church influence youth participation?	341	3.07	1.409
In your opinion, do you think religious identity influence the level of engagement of youth in church activities within your community?	341	1.42	0.494

The results show that peer pressure recorded the strongest influence (M = 3.09, SD = 1.374). This indicates that many youths perceived their peers as an important factor shaping their participation in church activities. However, the relatively high standard deviation highlights wide variation in responses. While some youths reported strong peer influence, others experienced little or none, which makes peer pressure an inconsistent moderator of participation across congregations. Cultural traditions and practices followed closely (M = 3.07, SD = 1.409). Like peer pressure, their influence varied widely, with some traditions promoting youth involvement while others discouraged it. Because respondents did not specify which traditions were most relevant, this factor risks being

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interpreted too broadly. As a potential moderating variable, cultural traditions appear situational rather than consistently influential.

Peer conformity was rated lower (M = 2.89, SD = 1.402). On average, the need to conform to peer expectations was perceived as moderately significant, but again, high variability points to mixed experiences. For some youths, conformity drove participation, but for many others, it was negligible. This inconsistency weakens peer conformity as a reliable moderator of youth involvement in mainstream Protestant churches. Religious identity scored the lowest influence (M = 1.42, SD = 0.494). Unlike the other factors, responses here were consistent: most youths agreed that identity did not significantly shape participation. This finding suggests that collective social and cultural issues exert more influence as moderating factors than individual identity. At the same time, it raises concerns about the depth of religious commitment among youths, a question this descriptive data cannot address.

Taken together, the descriptive results suggest a relative pattern: peer pressure and cultural traditions emerge as stronger moderating influences, peer conformity is weaker, and religious identity is weakest. The wide variability across three of the four domains underscores that descriptive analysis alone is insufficient to establish moderating influence. The wide variability across three of the four variables shows that descriptive statistics alone are insufficient for drawing conclusions about moderation. That is why cross-tabulation and inferential testing (e.g., regression or moderation models) were necessary in the subsequent section to examine whether these factors statistically moderate youth participation in church activities.

4.5 Cross-Tabulation Analysis

Cross-tabulation analysis was undertaken to examine how youth participation in church activities interacts with discipleship, mentorship, group development, empowerment, and socio-cultural factors. Unlike descriptive statistics, which summarize variables in isolation, cross-tabulation allows for direct comparison across categories, making it possible to identify patterns of association that reveal how specific program and contextual elements influence participation outcomes.

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In this study, youth participation was cross-tabulated with discipleship levels (very low to very high), mentorship by gender, group development through perceptions of youth dynamics (such as positive engagement, preventing loneliness, meeting friends, strengthening capacity, and fostering self-confidence), empowerment through activity types (retreats, Bible studies, worship services, and community service), and socio-cultural issues represented by religious identity. The combined results, as presented in Table 4.9, highlight how these variables jointly shape participation patterns and provide a stronger foundation for testing significance through Chi-square analysis.

Table 4.9 Cross-Tabulation of Youth Participation by Key Factors

Variable	Category	Yes (n, %)	No (n, %)	n	χ^2 (df)	p-value
Youth Participation	–	–	–	–	–	–
Discipleship (X_1) *(Youth Participation × Discipleship level)*	Very Low	2 (0.9%)	3 (2.4%)	5	12.54 (4)	0.002
	Low	15 (6.9%)	15 (12.2%)	30	–	–
	Moderate	70 (32.1%)	45 (36.6%)	115	–	–
	High	112 (51.4%)	51 (41.5%)	163	–	–
	Very High	19 (8.7%)	9 (7.3%)	28	–	–
Mentorship (X_2) *(Youth Participation × Gender)*	Male	108 (58.7%)	76 (41.3%)	184	4.12 (1)	0.042
	Female	76 (48.4%)	81 (51.6%)	157	–	–
Group Development / Youth Dynamics (X_3) *(Youth Participation × Perceptions of group influence)*	Positive influence/engagement	144 (71.1%)	100 (28.9%)	244	176.7 (5)	<0.001
	Prevents loneliness/skill development	143 (70.9%)	100 (29.1%)	243	–	–
	Meeting friends/participation	143 (70.9%)	99 (29.1%)	242	–	–
	Strengthen youth capacity	143 (70.9%)	100 (29.1%)	243	–	–
	Self-confidence/ learning	142 (70.4%)	100 (29.6%)	242	–	–
Empowerment (X_4) *(Youth Participation × Type of activity)*	Retreats/Camps	85 (56.7%)	65 (43.3%)	150	28.47 (3)	<0.001
	Bible Studies	50 (45.9%)	59 (54.1%)	109	–	–
	Worship Services	10 (23.8%)	32 (76.2%)	42	–	–
	Community Services	8 (20.0%)	32 (80.0%)	40	–	–
Socio-Cultural Issues (X_5) *(Youth Participation × Religious identity)*	Religious identity: Yes	90 (45.2%)	50 (25.1%)	199	12.45 (2)	0.002
	Religious identity: No	55 (38.7%)	60 (42.3%)	142	–	–

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Note: For *Group Development / Youth Dynamics (X_3)*, respondents could select multiple perceptions. Subtotals for each row do not sum to 341. Only the combined chi-square test ($\chi^2 = 176.7$, **df = 5, p < 0.001**) is used for statistical inference.

The cross-tabulation results revealed notable associations between youth participation and the five variables under investigation. For Discipleship (X_1), participation was higher among respondents reporting moderate to high levels of discipleship, with 51.4% in the high category and 32.1% in the moderate category. In contrast, very low and low discipleship levels accounted for minimal participation (0.9% and 6.9%, respectively). The Chi-square test ($\chi^2 = 12.54$, df = 4, p = 0.002) indicated a statistically significant relationship, suggesting that youth involvement in church activities along with discipleship intensity.

For Mentorship (X_2), gender appeared to shape participation patterns. Male youth reported higher participation (58.7%) compared to female youth (48.4%). This difference was statistically significant ($\chi^2 = 4.12$, df = 1, p = 0.042), highlighting a measurable gendered dimension in how mentorship interacts with church involvement. While both groups were engaged, the results show a skew towards higher male representation in active participation.

The findings for Group Development / Youth Dynamics (X_3) showed strong and consistent associations. Across perceptions of group influence, positive engagement, preventing loneliness, meeting friends, strengthening capacity, and fostering self-confidence, participation clustered around 70%. The combined Chi-square statistic ($\chi^2 = 176.7$, df = 5, p < 0.001) confirmed the significance of these associations. These results highlight the multiple roles group dynamics play in shaping youth experiences, spanning social connection, skills development, and self-efficacy within church spaces.

For Empowerment (X_4), activity type was associated with different levels of participation. Retreats and camps reported the highest involvement (56.7%), followed by Bible studies (45.9%). In contrast, worship services (23.8%) and community services (20.0%) reflected lower levels. The relationship was statistically significant ($\chi^2 = 28.47$, df = 3, p < 0.001). These figures suggest that activity format matters, with more interactive and peer-centered events aligning with higher reported participation.

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Lastly, Socio-Cultural Issues (X_5), operationalized through religious identity, showed a statistically significant association with youth participation ($\chi^2 = 12.45$, df = 2, p = 0.002). Respondents who expressed a strong religious identity reported higher participation (45.2%) than those with weaker identification (38.7%). This pattern shows that how central young people see religion to their personal and social identity influences their engagement in church activities. It suggests that participation is shaped not only by programmatic factors such as discipleship or empowerment but also by broader cultural and value-based orientations. Youth who align themselves more strongly with religious beliefs appear more inclined to sustain active involvement, whereas those with weaker identification may engage less consistently, pointing to the moderating role of socio-cultural context in shaping the outcomes of church initiatives.

Taken together, the cross-tabulation results show that youth participation in the three Nairobi churches and their branches is shaped by a combination of discipleship, mentorship, group development, empowerment activities, and socio-cultural identity. These findings show that participation is uneven and reflects structural and cultural differences within church communities. Importantly, the results also raise critical issues: activities central to church life, such as worship services and community service, drew lower levels of engagement than retreats and camps, and mentorship outcomes were less favorable for female youth. This indicates that while leadership practices and structured programs enhance participation, clear gaps remain in aligning church strategies with the diverse interests, identities, and expectations of young people.

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4.6 Inferential Statistics

This section presents analyses to understand the relationships between leadership practices and youth participation in church activities. Following descriptive and cross-tabulation results, Pearson's correlation was conducted to examine the strength and direction of associations among the key study variables, discipleship, mentorship, group development, empowerment, and socio-cultural factors, prior to regression modeling. The results show which leadership practices are most closely linked to engagement and assess potential interrelationships that could affect predictive analyses. Findings are integrated with qualitative accounts and prior literature to situate the results within the broader context of youth participation in Nairobi's mainstream Protestant churches.

4.6.1 Correlation Analysis

Building on the cross-tabulation analyses, Pearson's correlation analysis assessed the strength and direction of linear relationships between study variables. The results, summarized in **Table 4.10**, show that all predictors were significantly and positively correlated with youth participation, with varying strengths.

Table 4.10 Combined Correlation Matrix for Study Variables

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6
Youth Participation	1					
Discipleship (X_1)	.61***	1				
Mentorship (X_2)	.57***	.49***	1			
Group Development (X_3)	.54***	.46***	.44***	1		
Empowerment (X_4)	.52***	.41***	.43***	.47***	1	
Socio-Cultural Issues (X_5)	.39***	.28***	.31***	.29***	.33***	1

Note. Pearson correlations reported. ***$p < .001$.

The test was chosen because it identifies significant associations before regression modeling, helping flag potential multicollinearity risks. Inter-correlations among predictors were moderate ($r = .28–.49$), below the .70 threshold, supporting their inclusion in subsequent regression analyses.

The combined correlation results indicate that all leadership practices had statistically significant and positive associations with youth participation in church activities. Discipleship emerged as the strongest predictor ($r = .61$, $p < .001$), showing a strong positive linear relationship. This means that higher investment in discipleship practices is consistently linked with greater levels of youth engagement. Mentorship also demonstrated a strong positive relationship ($r = .57$, $p < .001$), suggesting that where role modeling and guidance are emphasized, youth involvement tends to increase significantly. As one respondent explained,

> *"When the church takes discipleship seriously and mentors us, we feel guided and remain active in ministry."* (R007, 2024)

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Group development ($r = .54$, $p < .001$) and empowerment ($r = .52$, $p < .001$) also showed moderate-to-strong positive correlations, confirming that both collective activities and opportunities for responsibility are positively related to participation. These results indicate that structured group roles and empowerment strategies encourage stronger belonging. A youth respondent reflected this by stating, *"Sometimes what keeps us committed is being trusted with leadership roles in youth groups; it makes us feel part of the church, not outsiders."* Socio-cultural issues recorded the weakest association ($r = .39$, $p < .001$), but the relationship remained positive and significant. This suggests that external cultural pressures and peer norms still shape participation, even if their influence is less direct compared to church-based practices.

Importantly, inter-predictor correlations ranged from .28 to .49, all positive and below multicollinearity cutoffs. This demonstrates that while leadership practices are related, each explains a unique portion of the variance in youth participation. The uniform positive direction of coefficients further shows that none of the predictors act as suppressors; instead, they reinforce one another in promoting engagement.

These findings align with prior Kenyan studies. Nyaga et al. (2023) observed that discipleship builds moral awareness but does not guarantee long-term participation, echoing the present study's indication that emphasis alone must be matched with quality implementation. Onyango (2018) similarly highlighted how cultural obligations such as family rites often pull youth away from church commitments, reflecting the smaller but still significant influence of socio-cultural factors observed here. Kunyiha (2017) emphasized the importance of participatory group structures, which corresponds with the strong correlations for group development and empowerment in Nairobi congregations. By contrast, Hickman (2020) reported in U.S. contexts that cohesion and belonging were stronger predictors than structured leadership opportunities, underscoring contextual differences. In Nairobi's Protestant churches, visible roles, discipleship, and mentorship appear more critical than generalized trust or communal bonds.

The present study both confirms and extends earlier findings. Kunyiha (2017) reported a weaker but statistically significant relationship between peer pressure and worship commitment in Nairobi ($\chi^2 = 8.29$, $p = 0.081$), whereas the current results show that peer influence relates more broadly to leadership engagement, participant satisfaction, and

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involvement in church programs. This divergence likely stems from scope, as Kunyiha focused narrowly on worship adherence, whereas the present study assessed multiple dimensions of youth engagement. The weaker role of religious identity observed here also contrasts with Kunyiha's emphasis on doctrinal adherence, suggesting that identity markers may be declining in salience among urban Protestant youth. International evidence further illustrates complexity: Somerville et al. (2019) showed in Colombia that peer presence can either encourage prosocial behavior or amplify risk, depending on context. This reinforces a key caution from the present study: the positive influences of peer and cultural dynamics are not automatic and require intentional structuring to channel them toward sustained participation rather than reinforcing exclusion or negative practices.

These results confirm that a comprehensive engagement strategy must integrate discipleship, mentorship, empowerment, and structured group development, while remaining sensitive to external socio-cultural factors. Taken together, this synthesis highlights both consistencies and tensions across studies. The evidence converges on the central role of peer groups and cultural norms in shaping participation, but diverges on whether these influences reliably foster positive engagement. This underscores a key caution from the present study: the positive influences of peer and cultural dynamics are not automatic and require intentional structuring to guide participation toward sustained engagement rather than reinforcing exclusion or negative practices. The results indicate that a comprehensive engagement strategy must integrate discipleship, mentorship, empowerment, and structured group development, while remaining sensitive to external socio-cultural factors. Overall, this synthesis highlights both consistencies and tensions across studies. The evidence converges on the central role of peer groups and cultural norms in shaping participation, yet diverges on whether these influences consistently foster positive engagement. The present findings contribute by quantifying the comparatively weaker role of religious identity relative to peer and cultural dynamics, revealing patterns that earlier studies did not fully capture.

At the same time, the results expose a gap in existing research. None of the studies, including the present one, unpack the mechanisms through which peer and cultural pressures translate into actual behaviors across different church structures. Previous work has largely identified correlations rather than explored processes, leaving unanswered

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whether these influences enable sustainable leadership pathways or simply produce short-term involvement. Addressing this limitation requires designs that move beyond cross-sectional correlations to longitudinal or process-based approaches that can trace how cultural and social dynamics evolve into patterns of sustained or declining participation.

Together, the quantitative and qualitative evidence supports the conclusion that leadership practices are central to sustaining youth involvement, setting the stage for the regression analysis to assess their combined predictive power.

4.7 Multiple Regression Analysis

This section presents multiple regression analyses examining the predictive power of individual, programmatic, group, and socio-cultural factors on youth participation in church activities. Interaction terms were excluded across all models because small counts in extreme categories could destabilize coefficient estimates. The analyses provide insight into the relative importance of each predictor and the extent to which they contribute to youth engagement. The regression model was specified as:

$$\text{Participation}_i = \beta_0 + \beta_1 (\text{Individual Factors})\, i + \beta_2 (\text{Program Factors})\, i + \beta_3 (\text{Group Factors})\, i + \beta_4 (\text{Socio-Cultural Factors})$$

Where participation represents the frequency and intensity of youth engagement in church activities. Individual factors include age, gender, and education level; program factors capture mentorship quality and availability of skill-building opportunities; group factors measure cohesion, peer support, and leadership roles; and socio-cultural factors reflect family support, community norms, and cultural alignment. Interaction terms were excluded due to small counts in extreme categories, which could destabilize coefficient estimates. Table 4.11 summarizes the model used and the results.

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Table 4.11 Multiple Regression of Predictors on Youth Participation in Church Activities

Predictor	B	SE	Beta	t	p
Constant (β_0)	1.12	0.28	–	4.00	0.000
Discipleship (X_1)	0.42	0.10	0.35	4.20	0.000
Mentorship (X_2)	0.38	0.09	0.3	4.11	0.000
Group Development (X_3)	0.27	0.08	0.22	3.37	0.001
Empowerment (X_4)	0.33	0.11	0.25	3.00	0.003
Socio-Cultural Issues (X_5)	0.29	0.12	0.20	2.42	0.016

Model Fit Statistics: $R^2 = 0.56$, Adjusted $R^2 = 0.54$, $F(5, 359) = 24.87$, $p < .001$

The predictors collectively explained 56 percent of the variance in youth participation ($R^2 = 0.56$, Adjusted $R^2 = 0.54$, $F(5, 359) = 24.87$, $p < .001$). This indicates strong explanatory power for behavioral data and underscores the combined importance of discipleship, mentorship, empowerment, group development, and socio-cultural issues. Among the predictors, discipleship had the strongest influence on youth participation ($\beta = 0.35$, $p < .001$), highlighting the central role of spiritual formation and the church's emphasis on discipleship in sustaining engagement. Mentorship followed closely ($\beta = 0.30$, $p < .001$), underscoring the importance of structured guidance and role modeling for young people. Empowerment ($\beta = 0.25$, $p = .003$) and group development ($\beta = 0.22$, $p = .001$) also contributed significantly, suggesting that when youths have opportunities to take initiative and participate in organized group activities, their involvement in church life increases meaningfully. Socio-cultural issues, though the weakest predictor ($\beta = 0.20$, $p = .016$), still demonstrated a significant influence, showing that external factors such as peer expectations, cultural traditions, and broader social norms shape the likelihood of youth participation.

The findings indicate that discipleship provides the strongest foundation for youth engagement, with its high standardized influence highlighting the central role of spiritual formation in sustaining participation. Mentorship emerges as another critical driver,

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showing that structured guidance and role modeling are essential in reinforcing consistent involvement. Empowerment and group development also contribute meaningfully by giving young people opportunities to take initiative and engage in collective activities that build belonging and responsibility. Although socio-cultural issues exert the weakest influence, their significance underscores that external pressures and community norms remain integral to participation outcomes. This suggests that even strong church-based programs benefit when aligned with the wider cultural and social environment in which youth live.

These patterns were echoed in the qualitative responses. One youth respondent remarked: *"When the church takes discipleship seriously and mentors us, we feel guided and remain active in ministry."* Another explained: *"Sometimes what keeps us committed is being trusted with leadership roles in youth groups; it makes us feel part of the church, not outsiders."*

Such reflections confirm the regression results by illustrating how discipleship and mentorship foster guidance and consistency, while empowerment through leadership opportunities strengthens commitment. At the same time, several respondents noted that peer expectations and community norms shape involvement, reflecting the significant though smaller role of socio-cultural issues.

These findings align with Shi (2020), who argued that intentional discipleship mentoring equips youth leaders with critical participation skills, reinforcing the statistical evidence that higher discipleship ratings encourage greater involvement. Similarly, Hickman (2020) emphasized that discipleship fosters a sense of direction and purpose, which resonates with the present study's result that perceived discipleship emphasis predicts stronger engagement. However, Alicia (2020), studying Catholic contexts in Rome, found that hierarchical church structures limited youth involvement despite available discipleship teachings. This highlights a contradiction: while discipleship emphasis is a predictor in Kenya, structural barriers can still negate its impact in other contexts. Levin (2020) showed that African churches have historically sidelined youth in leadership, though some denominations have responded by creating youth-specific leadership wings and adopting modern practices. This reflects the present study's observation that empowerment and

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group development strengthen participation, but only when young people are trusted with meaningful responsibility. In the Kenyan context, Onyango (2018) found that cultural obligations such as family rites often pulled youth away from church commitments, illustrating how non-religious cultural practices weigh heavily on engagement. The weaker influence of doctrinal identity in the present study reinforces his conclusion that belief markers alone cannot sustain long-term involvement.

Taken together, the findings demonstrate that youth participation is shaped by a combination of individual formation, programmatic support, group experiences, and socio-cultural conditions. This layered evidence aligns with prior studies but also underscores a critical gap: emphasis on discipleship and mentorship, while essential, is insufficient without structural openness, cultural sensitivity, and empowerment opportunities. Effective engagement strategies must therefore integrate spiritual formation with institutional reforms and responsiveness to the broader socio-cultural environment.

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4.8 Analysis of Variance

To assess the overall significance of the regression models, we conducted ANOVA for each set of predictors. These analyses examine whether the predictors collectively explain a significant portion of variance in youth participation, leadership likelihood, and engagement outcomes.

Table 4.12 Combined ANOVA Results

Model	Predictors	df (Regression, Residual)	F	Sig.
Discipleship Ratings & Practices	X1, X2	2, 338	39.81	<0.001
Mentorship Participation	X1, X2	2, 338	6.42	0.002
Youth Group Dynamics	X1–X5	5, 335	33.47	<0.001
Participation Dimensions & Leadership Likelihood	X1–X3	3, 337	7.25	0.001
Social & Cultural Moderators	X1–X4	4, 336	45.67	0.001

The analysis of discipleship ratings and specific discipleship practices demonstrates a highly significant contribution to youth participation, $F(2, 338) = 39.81$, $p < 0.001$. This indicates that the combination of perceived emphasis on discipleship and the implementation of targeted practices accounts for a substantial portion of variance in youth involvement. Notably, the perceived emphasis on discipleship exerts a stronger influence than isolated practices, suggesting that structural attention to discipleship, including its

visibility, integration into church programs, and prioritization by leadership, is more consequential than individual activities alone. This finding extends the work of Nyaga, Kagema, and Kathenge (2023), who reported that discipleship and evangelism were the only youth programs with tangible influences in PCEA churches. While previous studies focused on discrete interventions, the current study adds nuance by showing that a systemic emphasis amplifies engagement. The result underscores the importance of embedding discipleship within broader church strategies rather than treating it as a supplementary program.

The mentorship model also reached statistical significance, $F(2, 338) = 6.42$, $p = 0.002$, though its explanatory power is smaller than that of discipleship. Youth who actively participate in mentorship initiatives and perceive them as impactful show higher levels of engagement in church activities. This suggests that mentorship functions as a facilitator rather than a primary driver of participation. Consistent with Chaney et al. (2021) and DeVries et al. (2020), mentorship enhances belonging, spiritual development, and confidence, providing relational scaffolding for meaningful engagement. Stole (2020) similarly affirmed mentorship's utility in U.S. churches. However, the limited variance explained indicates that mentorship alone cannot substitute for broader structural emphasis on discipleship. The study thus supports a combined approach where mentorship complements systemic discipleship efforts, highlighting the need for church programs to integrate relational and structural interventions to optimize youth participation.

Youth development collectively accounted for substantial variance in youth's participation, $F(5, 335) = 33.47$, $p < 0.001$, with leadership and peer mentoring emerging as the strongest predictors. Decision-making inclusion and conflict management contributed positively but less strongly, while cohesion and trust had minimal independent influences. This suggests that structured leadership opportunities and active peer support mechanisms drive engagement more strongly than general group cohesion. Participation dimensions, frequency, time commitment, and satisfaction jointly predicted leadership potential, $F(3, 337) = 7.25$, $p = 0.001$, highlighting the interplay between sustained engagement and personal investment in fostering leadership readiness. Corley (2018) similarly emphasizes the role of relationship-building in participation, while Perry (2023) identifies cohesion as a critical factor in small groups in Ireland. The present study,

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however, demonstrates that in the Kenyan Protestant context, cohesion alone is insufficient without structured leadership and mentorship opportunities, reflecting culturally specific group dynamics and expectations.

Social and cultural factors, peer pressure, peer expectations, cultural traditions, and religious identity, were collectively significant, $F(4, 336) = 45.67$, $p = 0.001$. Peer influence and cultural norms emerged as dominant predictors, highlighting the centrality of normative and contextual cues in shaping youth engagement. Peer expectations reinforced positive participation behaviors, while cultural traditions stabilized engagement patterns. Religious identity, although significant, had a weaker influence, suggesting that spiritual affiliation alone does not guarantee active involvement; social and cultural reinforcement is essential. These findings align with Kunyiha (2017), who observed peer pressure as a key driver of youth worship participation in Nairobi. Conversely, Ango (2017) in Equatorial Guinea highlights that cultural alignment is insufficient if secular pressures counteract participation. This illustrates that social and cultural moderators exert a strong but contextually contingent influence on engagement.

Taken together, the models indicate that relational, structural, and cultural factors shape youth participation more than doctrinal reinforcement alone. Discipleship emphasis exerts the strongest influence, followed by social and cultural moderators, group leadership, and mentorship. The relative influence sizes suggest a hierarchy of engagement drivers: structural emphasis and normative contexts have the greatest impact, while mentorship and cohesion serve as secondary but supportive mechanisms. This hierarchy reflects the integration of Social Learning Theory and Social Capital Theory, wherein observational learning, modeling, and access to relational networks interact with structural church processes to shape youth participation outcomes.

The findings underscore the need to move beyond isolated interventions and adopt integrated strategies that address multiple dimensions of engagement simultaneously. Discipleship, mentorship, group dynamics, and cultural context do not operate in isolation; they interact synergistically to influence participation. The current analysis highlights a critical gap: a lack of research on how structural emphasis, relational support, and cultural moderation interact. For instance, discipleship programs may be most effective when reinforced by supportive peer networks and cultural norms, while mentorship may yield

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greater returns in well-structured group environments. Addressing this gap could inform the design of multi-level church programs that optimize youth engagement through coordinated structural, relational, and contextual interventions.

For church leaders, youth coordinators, and policymakers, the findings offer clear guidance. Institutionalize and integrate strategic discipleship across all church programs, and design mentorship initiatives to complement these structural efforts. Prioritize group-based leadership opportunities and peer mentoring over generalized cohesion-building activities. Moreover, programs must consider cultural and peer contexts to leverage normative influences. Implementing evidence-based interventions that align structural, relational, and cultural factors can maximize participation, foster leadership potential, and enhance the overall impact of youth programs. Future research should explore interaction influences, longitudinal dynamics, and the scalability of integrated engagement strategies to provide a more nuanced understanding of youth participation in Kenyan Protestant churches.

4.9 Integration of Insights

4.9.1 Integration of qualitative Findings

The qualitative data from focus group discussions (FGDs) and key informant interviews (KIIs) provide rich insight into patterns observed in the quantitative analysis of youth participation, leadership likelihood, and engagement in church programs. Across the interviews and discussions, several consistent themes emerged, revealing mechanisms, barriers, and contextual factors that explain why some predictors were significant while others had weaker influences.

Discipleship encompasses structured spiritual growth, including following Christ, scriptural study, prayer, meditation, fasting, service, and communal fellowship. One informant noted,

> "*Discipleship teaches us to study the Bible and pray, but not all youth participate fully in activities"* (KII 01, 2024).

This aligns with quantitative findings showing that discipleship ratings positively predict youth participation but do not fully account for it. The qualitative data suggest that

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practical implementation gaps, where teaching exists but mechanisms for active engagement are uneven, moderate the influence of discipleship on participation:

> "*The teaching exists, but mechanisms to involve youth practically are uneven*" (2nd FGD, 2024) and "*Differences in church resources, leadership styles, and local culture affect whether discipleship leads to real participation*" (1st FGD, 2024).

These statements indicate that structural and contextual factors limit the translation of discipleship principles into actual youth engagement, nuances not captured by quantitative measures alone.

Mentorship programs were similarly constrained. While participation and perceived impact were associated with higher youth involvement, effect sizes were modest. Qualitative findings clarify why. Inadequate funding and resource constraints were cited repeatedly: "*This area of youth Ministry needs more financial investment. The person leading the youths must be fully supported to enable him/her to champion the vision of the youths*" (KII 03, 2024).

Operational challenges were also described:

"*My work needs a lot of network planning; creativity, and I must be in constant touch with the youths. But without adequate resources it has become very difficult to be effective… I have approached different church groups to sponsor different programs as we wait for budget allocation in future*" (KII 03, 2024).

Limited resources affected engagement tools as well: *"I used to come to church where I played drum set, but I needed to grow so I left for Nairobi Chapel where there were modern instruments… I am often given fares which make me happy*" (KII 05, 2024).

Programmatic inconsistency further constrained participation:

> "*In church there was a weak discipleship program, one time it was there, another time not there… I went through discipleship class and graduated. Initially she was thinking of going back but did not because they had formed a life group for all*

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those who graduated there. There she felt loved and cared for" (Respondent 011, 2024).

Collectively, these quotes illustrate that mentorship programs have potential but are limited by funding, structural inconsistency, and variable program quality—factors not directly measurable in the regression models.

Group development was also central to youth participation in church activities. Leadership and peer mentoring emerged as the strongest motivators: "*Our youth leaders always encourage us to take part in Sunday programs and community outreaches. Without them, many would not join at all*" (FGD, Youth Participant, Nairobi), and *"Peer mentoring really keeps the younger members motivated. When someone guides you through activities, you feel confident to participate"* (KII, Youth Pastor, Nairobi). Cohesion and trust alone were less decisive, explaining why regression coefficients for group cohesion were smaller; participants emphasized that without leadership and mentoring, cohesion does not automatically motivate engagement. Conflicts and uneven inclusion were recurrent themes, consistent with moderate influences for conflict management and decision-making inclusion in the quantitative analysis.

Structured and interactive participation, frequency of involvement, hours spent, and satisfaction, predicted leadership potential in the quantitative analysis, but qualitative evidence adds depth, emphasizing the value of retreats, Bible studies, and creative arts programs: *"Activities for youth in church ministry encompass various engaging options, including Bible studies, contemporary worship nights, prayer groups, retreats, and game nights*" (KII 07, 2024), and "*Retreats, camps, and creative arts workshops combine fun with spiritual growth… Testimony nights allow the Christian youth group to share their faith journeys*" (KII 03, 2024). "*Youth Ministry provides a dedicated space for youth to explore their faith… Youth Ministry is vital for building a sense of belonging and identity"* (KII 011, 2024). Mentorship and group support further enhance leadership development: *"Mentorship programs, where older members walk alongside younger ones, foster personal and spiritual growth… Encouraging involvement in community service helps youth cultivate compassion*" (KII 05, 2024). These insights explain why participation metrics only partially predict leadership likelihood; the unmeasured qualitative dimensions of belonging, identity, moral grounding, and peer guidance are crucial moderators.

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Social and cultural moderators also shape participation. Peer pressure and cultural norms consistently influenced engagement, while religious identity played a weaker role: "*I usually attend church programs because my friends always go; I wouldn't come if they didn't invite me*" (Respondent 010, 2024), *"Most of us try to meet the expectations of our peers in the youth group, so we don't feel left out*" (Respondent 010, 2024), and "*In my church, participating in youth activities is considered normal, so you feel pressured to join even if you are not interested*" (Respondent 009, 2024). In contrast, religious identity and situational factors exerted smaller but notable influences: "*Even those who do not identify strongly with the church still join some activities because the events are popular or fun*" (KII 14, 2024) and "*Sometimes I come because of my parents or transport is easy, not because I feel a connection to the church*" (Respondent 022, 2024).

These statements suggest that peer influence and cultural norms drive participation, while religious identity plays a more situational role. Situational factors such as parental support or transport ease also shape engagement, which the regression models only partially capture.

Overall, the qualitative data reveal that discipleship practices are essential but insufficient on their own, with structural implementation gaps limiting their reach. Mentorship programs are associated with higher participation but are constrained by funding, resources, and program consistency. Youth group dynamics, particularly leadership and peer mentoring, correlate strongly with engagement, whereas cohesion alone has a more limited role. Structured, interactive programs support leadership development, while qualitative factors such as belonging, identity, and peer guidance explain additional variation in participation. Social and cultural moderators, especially peer norms and expectations, are closely linked *to* engagement, whereas religious identity shows a weaker *association.* Finally, situational and contextual factors, including accessibility and parental support, contribute to variability not fully captured in quantitative analyses. These integrated insights underscore the complex interplay between structural, programmatic, social, and cultural dimensions of youth participation and leadership, providing a comprehensive understanding of what fosters engagement, what constrains it, and where interventions may be most strategically applied.

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4.9.2 Integration of Quantitative Statistics

The integration of the quantitative analyses, including descriptive statistics, cross-tabulation, correlation, regression, and ANOVA, shows that youth participation in Protestant churches is shaped by multiple but uneven factors. Discipleship consistently appears as a significant predictor, with higher ratings associated with greater participation ($\chi^2(4) = 12.54$, $p = 0.002$), yet the descriptive results reveal that even respondents with high ratings often reported non-facilitative practices. This suggests that while spiritual instruction is important, it does not automatically translate into meaningful engagement. Mentorship participation also achieves statistical significance in regression models, but its practical impact is modest: nearly equal proportions of youths rated it as neutral or negative, and the explained variance attributable to mentorship remained limited. Activity type emerges as one of the strongest differentiators, with retreats and Bible studies associated with much higher participation and leadership potential ($\chi^2(3) = 28.47$, $p < 0.001$), confirming that structured, interactive programs provide stronger platforms for empowerment. Gender differences reach significance ($\chi^2(1) = 4.12$, $p = 0.042$), but the influence size is trivial, while religious identity shows a moderating influence ($\chi^2(2) = 12.45$, $p = 0.002$) though non-affiliated youths also report moderate or high engagement, indicating that affiliation shapes but does not determine participation.

Correlation and regression analyses further highlight positive relationships among participation frequency, satisfaction, peer support, and leadership likelihood, while ANOVA results confirm that the predictors collectively explain meaningful but limited variance in youth outcomes, with F-values ranging from 6.42 to 45.67 (all $p < 0.01$) and R^2 values between 0.10 and 0.28. These findings indicate that although certain structural and programmatic elements, such as discipleship, mentorship, and activity design, exert measurable influence, their influences are often uneven, fragile, or conditional. Most of the variation in participation remains unexplained, pointing to broader contextual, cultural, or resource-related factors not captured by the models. Overall, the results suggest that no single predictor is sufficient to drive engagement, and effective interventions must address

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not only formal structures but also implementation quality, inclusivity, and the wider socio-cultural environment.

4.10 Summary

Taken together, the findings make clear that youth participation in Protestant churches is constrained by structural gaps, inconsistent program design, and weak follow-through, even where discipleship and mentorship frameworks are emphasized. Discipleship shows measurable statistical influences but loses practical impact when leadership hierarchies and cultural barriers restrict youth agency. Mentorship programs provide some value but remain fragile without funding, consistent delivery, and clear purpose. Structured activities such as retreats and Bible studies link more strongly to empowerment than worship services, yet resource shortages and poor institutional prioritization limit their reach. Peer influence can boost participation, but unmanaged dynamics risk reinforcing exclusion or negative pressure, leaving outcomes uneven. Overall, the evidence points to an uncomfortable reality: churches often overstate the influence of existing frameworks while underinvesting in the structures, accountability, and resources needed to translate potential into sustained youth leadership. Without addressing these systemic weaknesses, well-intentioned programs are likely to reproduce cycles of partial engagement and disengagement, rather than deliver durable empowerment.

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CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter summarizes the findings, conclusions, and recommendations based on the study objectives. The study investigated the factors influencing youth participation in church activities within mainstream Protestant churches in Nairobi, Kenya. The key areas examined include how discipleship, mentorship, group development, and empowerment influence youth involvement in church activities. The presentation integrates descriptive

statistics, cross-tabulations, correlation coefficients, regression results, and ANOVA tests, with limited reference to qualitative insights to contextualize patterns. The findings demonstrate how different leadership practices and contextual influences relate to youth participation across the three churches and their branches in Nairobi.

5.2 Summary of Findings

5.2.1 Influences of Discipleship on Youth Participation in Church Activities

The first objective was to examine how discipleship influences youth participation in church activities. Descriptive statistics indicate that 1.5% of respondents rated discipleship as very low, 8.8% as low, 33.7% as moderate, 47.8% as high, and 8.2% as very high. The mean score was 3.52 with a standard deviation of 0.824. Cross-tabulation showed that 51.4% of respondents in high-emphasis congregations participated in church activities, compared to 0.9% in very low-emphasis congregations ($\chi^2 = 12.54$, $p = 0.002$). Regression analysis reported a beta coefficient of 0.35 for discipleship ($p < .001$). Qualitative data noted variations in session regularity, coordination, and follow-up.

Response patterns show variability across congregations. While a majority rated discipleship high or moderate, some congregations had lower participation despite high ratings. Standard deviations reflect divergent responses, and descriptive data do not indicate causal mechanisms. Frequencies, percentages, means, standard deviations, and qualitative notes record reported emphasis and observed differences in implementation across the sample.

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5.2.2 Mentorship and Youth Participation in Church Activities

The second objective examined the relationship between mentorship and youth participation in church activities. Findings show that 54% of respondents reported involvement in mentorship programs, with perceptions of impact divided: 43.7% rated them positive or very positive, while 41.4% rated them negative or very negative ($M = 2.60$, $SD = 1.173$). Gendered differences were observed, with 58.7% of males participating compared to 48.4% of females ($\chi^2 = 4.12$, $df = 1$, $p = 0.042$).

Cross-tabulation results show that participation varied across congregations and gender, indicating uneven engagement patterns. Regression analysis identified mentorship as the second strongest predictor of youth participation ($\beta = 0.30$, $p < .001$), following discipleship. Descriptive data and qualitative accounts indicate irregularity in program structure, follow-up, and leadership support, which correspond with the observed divergence in participation and perceived impact.

Overall, the findings report an association between mentorship and youth participation, with variability across gender and congregations. Frequencies, chi-square statistics, means, and regression coefficients document these patterns, while qualitative accounts highlight inconsistencies in program delivery. The data do not clarify mechanisms of mentorship success or failure and do not provide causal explanations.

5.2.3 Influence of Group's development on youth participation in Church Activities

The third objective assessed how group development relates to youth participation in church activities. Descriptive statistics show moderate overall means across group development items (M ~ 3.6–3.74) with high standard deviations up to 1.579, reflecting variability in experiences. One item exhibited perfectly even distribution across all response categories (22.3% each), indicating polarization among respondents. Qualitative accounts noted both supportive environments for building friendships, skills, and confidence, and limiting dynamics such as peer pressure and interpersonal conflict. Participation patterns varied across activity types, with structured and interactive activities, including retreats and focused study sessions, showing higher engagement, while routine worship and general service activities showed lower engagement. Gender differences were also observed, with males reporting slightly higher participation in structured group activities.

Cross-tabulation results indicated that about 70% of respondents linked group development to positive engagement, skill-building, and self-confidence ($\chi^2 = 176.7$, $df = 5$, $p < .001$). Regression analysis placed group development fourth in predictive power for youth participation ($\beta = 0.22$, $p = .001$). These statistics show variability across respondents and contexts, highlighting that while youth groups provide multiple pathways for engagement, outcomes differ by activity type and individual experience. Qualitative

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observations correspond with these findings, noting both facilitative and constraining aspects of group dynamics.

5.2.4 Influence of Empowerment on Youth Participation in Church Activities

The fourth objective examined the influence of empowerment on youth participation in church activities. Descriptive statistics show variation across activity types and leadership opportunities, with higher participation in retreats and Bible studies and lower participation in worship services and community service. Broader measures of involvement, leadership, and satisfaction had moderate means with substantial variability across respondents. Qualitative accounts referenced opportunities for youth to assume responsibilities, participate in decision-making, and develop leadership skills, alongside reports of uncertainty regarding future participation.

Cross-tabulation analyses revealed differences in participation by activity type, with interactive formats associated with higher engagement levels. Regression results placed empowerment third in predictive power for youth participation ($\beta = 0.25$, $p = .003$). Descriptive data and qualitative notes reported uneven implementation of empowerment opportunities, including variability in follow-up, leadership support, and activity structure.
Participation patterns varied notably across activity types and respondents. Engagement was higher in interactive formats such as retreats and Bible studies, while it was lower in routine worship services and community service. Means for broader measures of leadership involvement and satisfaction were moderate, with considerable variability. Cross-tabulation and regression results confirm that empowerment ranks third in predictive strength for youth participation. Qualitative accounts highlighted differences in implementing empowerment opportunities, particularly in follow-up and leadership support.

5.2.5 Moderating influences of socio-cultural issues

The final objective assessed the moderating influence of socio-cultural issues on the relationship between leadership practices and youth participation in church activities within mainstream Protestant churches in Nairobi, Kenya. Descriptive statistics show variability in socio-cultural influences: peer pressure and cultural traditions had moderate means with wide standard deviations, peer conformity was slightly lower, and religious

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identity showed minimal effect. Qualitative accounts noted peer guidance and cultural practices shaping participation, while religious identity was mentioned less often.

Cross-tabulation analyses revealed differences in participation by religious identification, with those reporting stronger religious identity more represented in higher engagement categories. Regression results placed socio-cultural issues last in predictive power for youth participation ($\beta = 0.20$, $p = .016$). Chi-square tests confirmed significant differences in participation levels associated with religious identification ($\chi^2 = 12.45$, $p = 0.002$). Qualitative notes highlighted situational variability in how peers and cultural norms influenced attendance and activity engagement.

Patterns of engagement through socio-cultural factors were inconsistent across respondents. Peer-related dynamics showed comparatively stronger links than cultural traditions or religious identity, but all moderators displayed wide variability. Regression and cross-tabulation analyses indicate that socio-cultural influences predict youth participation less strongly than leadership practices such as discipleship, mentorship, group development, or empowerment. Qualitative feedback emphasized that social and cultural pressures operate contextually, affecting some youths' participation while leaving others unaffected, reflecting uneven and situational effects rather than uniform trends.

5.3 Conclusions

This study concludes that leadership practices within mainstream Protestant churches in Nairobi critically shape youth participation, with discipleship, mentorship, group development, and empowerment each contributing in distinct ways. Evidence shows that discipleship has the strongest and most consistent influence, particularly when structured, regular, and connected to practical involvement in church programs. Congregations with weak follow-through or irregular discipleship sessions fail to sustain youth engagement, highlighting that emphasis without execution is insufficient.

Mentorship contributes positively but unevenly. While mentor guidance motivates participation, structural gaps, gender disparities, and inconsistent program delivery limit its effectiveness, showing that mentorship alone cannot drive meaningful participation. Group development emerges as another key driver, with leadership roles and peer mentoring offering measurable engagement benefits. Yet, challenges such as peer pressure, conflict,

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and uneven cohesion moderate these effects, illustrating that group dynamics enhance participation but are context-sensitive.

Empowerment facilitates youth involvement and leadership potential, but its influence is modest and highly context-dependent. Youth respond positively when given structured responsibilities, yet symbolic or unsupported empowerment limits long-term impact. The evidence clearly indicates that empowerment is most effective when integrated with discipleship, mentorship, and group development, forming a comprehensive ecosystem for engagement.

Socio-cultural factors moderate participation in uneven ways. Peer influence consistently emerges as the strongest moderator, while cultural traditions and religious identity exert weaker or variable effects. This demonstrates that youth engagement cannot be fully understood or enhanced without considering social and cultural contexts, yet leadership practices remain the dominant determinants of participation.

Collectively, the findings establish the central thesis: sustained youth participation in Nairobi's mainstream Protestant churches relies on consistent, well-structured leadership practices, with socio-cultural factors shaping their effectiveness. Where these practices are weak, participation declines despite high religious commitment. These findings reflect associations based on self-reported data and do not capture broader influences such as social change, technology, or informal expressions of faith which may also affect participation.

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5.4 Recommendations

This study recommends that churches strengthen their discipleship programs by making them regular and coordinated and ensuring they are clearly linked to youth involvement in church activities. This is because irregular sessions and poor follow-through were linked to weaker participation.

Strengthen mentorship programs through consistent mentor-mentee interactions and better program coordination. This is tied to the observed variability in mentorship experiences and poor follow-through which had a moderate link to participation. Additionally,

differences in participation across gender groups suggest that churches should also address the issue of access and inclusion in their programs. Otherwise, mentorship programs are likely to continue to contribute unevenly to participation.

Churches should promote and enhance group development by establishing a structured retreat or small group format designed for active participation rather than relying on regular group activities, which, according to the findings, were associated with greater youth participation. They also needed to address the two main factors, which are, peer pressure and conflict, identified in the study as facilitating and hindering participation.

Churches can increase youth empowerment by providing more opportunities for clear roles and involvement in church decision-making, as evidence shows that higher perceived empowerment relates to higher engagement. In instances where empowerment was considered either symbolic in nature or unsupported, the influence of empowerment upon participation was minimal, indicating that youth need to be practically responsible and have follow-up support.

Churches should incorporate peer-based engagement strategies, such as peer mentoring programs and youth-led groups, because peer dynamics emerged as the strongest factor that determined youth participation, while multiple leadership styles affected their response to church activities. Programs need to adapt their cultural practices to existing traditions because these were found to either reinforce or constrain participation depending on how they are experienced and how they interact with leadership approaches.

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5.5 Areas for Further Research

The study suggests the following areas for further research:

I. Investigating the long-term impact of discipleship programs on youth retention and engagement in church activities.
II. Exploring innovative mentorship models that can address the challenges faced in church mentorship programs.
III. Leveraging the most commonly used social media platforms by youths and technology to enhance participation in church activities.

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APPENDICES

Appendix I Research Questionnaire

Introduction to the Research Questionnaire

You are invited to participate in a study exploring how leadership practices influence youth participation in church activities within mainstream Protestant churches in Nairobi, Kenya. The purpose of this study is to understand how practices such as discipleship, mentorship, group development, and empowerment affect the engagement of young people in church programs. Your responses will provide valuable insights into current practices and help identify areas for improvement.

Participation is voluntary, and all information you provide will be treated confidentially and used solely for research purposes. There are no right or wrong answers; we are interested in your honest experiences and perceptions. The questionnaire has two main sections: demographic information and questions related to leadership practices and youth participation. Please answer all questions to the best of your ability.

Thank you for taking the time to contribute to this study. Your input is important and will help guide strategies to enhance youth engagement in church activities.

A. DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

1. Gender;

☐ Male ☐ Female

2. Age:

18-25 ( ) 26-35 ( ) 36-45 ( ) 46 and above ( )

3. Denomination:

Anglican ( )

Presbyterian ( )

Methodist ( )

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Other (please specify) _____

4. For how long have you been attending your current church in Nairobi?

Less than 1 year ( )

1-3 years ( )

4-6 years ( )

7 or more years ( )

B. DISCIPLESHIP AND YOUTH PARTICIPATION IN CHURCH ACTIVITES

5. How would you rate the emphasis on discipleship within your church in Nairobi, Kenya?

Very low

Low

Moderate

High

Very high

6. In your opinion, how does discipleship influence participation of the youth in church activities in your church?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

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7. Are there any specific discipleship practices or approaches that facilitate or hinder youth involvement in the development activities of your church?

(Yes/No)

If yes, please describe the discipleship practices or approaches that facilitate or hinder youth participation of the church's development activities.

_____

_____

_____

_____

C. YOUTH DEVELOPMENT AND PARTICIPATION

8. In your view, indicate your level of agreement with the statements below relating to influences of youth development and youth participation in church development activities. Use a Scale of 1-5, where 1- strongly disagree, 2- disagree, 3- neutral, 4- agree, 5- strongly agree

Statements	**5**	**4**	**3**	**2**	**1**
Group positively influence involvement of youths in church development activities					
Group provides avenues for meaningful engagement with friends					
Close friends have similar interests, principles and attitudes towards church development programs					
Group prevents loneliness and provide opportunities for skill development					
By taking part in church development programs, I get a chance to meet with my friends					
Group activities impact self-confidence and learning experience hence facilitate participation of the youth in development programs					
Groups strengthen and activate youth's capacity to satisfy their needs					

9. How do you perceive the influence of group in relation to participation of youths in development activities in your church?

Very relevant ( )

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Relevant ( )
Fairly relevant ( )
Irrelevant ( )

D. MENTORSHIP AND YOUTH PARTICIPATION

10. Have you participated in any mentorship programs within your church in Nairobi, Kenya?

(Yes/No)

Explain:

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

11. How do you perceive the impact of church mentorship programs on involvement of youths in development activities?

Very negative impact ( )
Negative impact ( )
Neutral ( )
Positive impact ( )
Very positive impact ( )

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12. In your view, indicate your level of agreement with the statements below relating to influences of mentorship and youth participation in church development activities. Use a Scale of 1-5, where 1- strongly disagree, 2- disagree, 3- neutral, 4- agree, 5- strongly agree

Statements	**5**	**4**	**3**	**2**	**1**
Builds self-confidence and competence to participate in development programs					
Enhances knowledge, thereby facilitating participation in church activities					
Youths in empowerment programs are more motivated to shape their environment, including participation in church development activities					
Youths in empowerment programs are more motivated to influence their environment including participation in church development activities					
Strengthens and activates youth capacity to meet their needs					

13. In your experience, what are the key benefits of church mentorship programs for youth participation in church development activities?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

14. Are there any challenges or limitations associated with church mentorship programs that hinder youth participation in church development activities?

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(Yes/No)

If yes, please describe the challenges or limitations associated with church mentorship programs that hinder youth leadership transition.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

In your opinion, how can the church solve or address the challenges that have been mentioned above?

SECTION E: SOCIAL-CULTURAL ISSUES

15. How influential do you perceive peer pressure to be in shaping your decision to participate in church activities?

Not influential at all ( )
Slightly influential ( )
Moderately influential ( )
Very influential ( )
Extremely influential ( )

16. In your opinion, how does peer influence affect the participation of youth in church-related activities?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

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17. On a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being highly important, how significant is it for youth to conform to peer expectations regarding church involvement?

Not important at all ( )
Slightly important ( )
Moderately important ( )
Very important ( )
Highly important ( )

18. How do you perceive the influence of cultural norms and values within your church community on youth participation in church activities?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

19. To what degree do you think cultural traditions or practices within the church influence the participation of youth?

Minimal influence ( )
Slightly ( )
Moderate influence ( )
Significant influence ( )
Very significant ( )

20. From your observation, what cultural barriers, if any, do you think hinder youth participation in church events or programs?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

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21. In your opinion, do you think religious identity influence the level of engagement of youth in church activities within your community? Yes ( ) No( )

Explain:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

SECTION F: YOUTH'S PARTICIPATION IN CHURCH'S ACTIVITIES

22. What types of church activities do youths most frequently participate in?

Worship services ( )

Bible studies ( )

Community service ( )

Youth retreats or camps ( )

23. How would you describe the number of youths participating in church activities over the years?

Decreased ( )

Stayed the same ( )

Increased slightly ( )

Increased moderately ( )

Increased significantly ( )

24. What do you think has contributed to the current number of youths participating in church activities?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

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25. On average, how many hours per week do young people typically spend participating in church activities?

Less than 1 hour ( )
1-2 hours ( )
3-4 hours ( )
5-6 hours ( )
More than 6 hours ( )

26. In general, how satisfied do you think young people are with the amount of time spent in church activities?

Not satisfied at all ( )
A little satisfied ( )
Somewhat satisfied ( )
Very satisfied ( )
Completely satisfied ( )

27. What factors do you believe influence the amount of time young people spend in church activities?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

28. How many young people do you know who currently hold leadership positions in the church?

None ( )
1-2 young people ( )
3-4 young people ( )
5-6 young people ( )
More than 6 young people ( )

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29. How likely do you think young people are to pursue leadership positions within the church?

Not likely at all ( )
A little likely ( )
Somewhat likely ( )
Very likely ( )
Extremely likely ( )

30. In your opinion, what improvements or changes could be made in your church to enhance involvement of the youth in development activities?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Thank you very much for your valuable insights and time to fill this questionnaire. Your input has provided valuable information and perspectives the strategies influencing youth participation in church activities in mainstream protestant churches in Nairobi, Kenya." Your participation in this study is greatly appreciated and will contribute to advancing our understanding of this important topic. Your input will be treated with the utmost confidentiality and will be instrumental in shaping the findings and conclusions of my PhD study. If you have any further thoughts, suggestions, or additional information you would like to share, please feel free to reach out to me. Once again, I extend my sincere gratitude for your participation and support in this research. Thank you.

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Appendix II Interview Guide

Introduction:

Background Information:

1. Please provide some background information about yourself, including your role and involvement in the church?

2. How would you describe the overall approach to church development in your church?

3. Can you provide specific examples of strategies or initiatives your church has implemented to foster church development?

4. In your church, how does the development of physical infrastructure (e.g., buildings, facilities) align with the development of the congregation and ministries?

5. Have there been any challenges or barriers encountered in implementing church development approaches? If so, how were these challenges addressed?

6. How does your church measure the success of its church development initiatives?

7. How would you describe the current involvement of youth in development activities within your church?

8. What specific roles and responsibilities do youth leaders have in your church?

9. What training or support mechanisms are in place to prepare youth for leadership positions?

10. How does your church ensure a smooth transition of youth leaders into more significant leadership roles as they grow older?

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11. From your perspective, what impact do youth leaders have on the overall growth and development of the church?

12. Have there been any challenges in participation of youth in more significant church development activities within your church?

13. How does your church address any resistance or pushback from older members when it comes to involving youth in development programs?

14. Are there specific strategies or programs your church has implemented to encourage and support youth participation in development activities?

15. How does your church promote the active participation of youth in decision-making processes?

16. In your opinion, what are the key opportunities for enhancing youth participation in your church and other Protestant churches in Nairobi?

Conclusion:

Thank you very much for your valuable insights and time during this interview. Your input has provided valuable information and perspectives the strategies influencing youth participation in church activities in mainstream protestant churches in Nairobi, Kenya." Your participation in this study is greatly appreciated and will contribute to advancing our understanding of this important topic. Your input will be treated with the utmost confidentiality and will be instrumental in shaping the findings and conclusions of my PhD study. If you have any further thoughts, suggestions, or additional information you would like to share, please feel free to reach out to me. Once again, I extend my sincere gratitude for your participation and support in this research. Thank you.

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Appendix III Participant Consent Form

TOPIC: "**LEADERSHIP PRACTICES INFLUENCING YOUTH PARTICIPATION IN CHURCH ACTIVITIES IN MAINSTREAM PROTESTANT CHURCHES IN NAIROBI, KENYA."**

Principal Investigator: Diane Kawira Mugambi

Contact Information: 0721435935

Introduction: You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Diane Kawira Mugambi a PhD Student at St. Paul's University. The purpose of this study is to investigate the topic leadership practices influencing youth participation in church activities in mainstream protestant churches in Nairobi, Kenya."

Study Procedures: The estimated duration of your participation will be approximately 45 minutes to 1 hour.

Risks and Benefits: While every effort will be made to ensure your safety and confidentiality, it is important to note that there are no risks associated with participating in this study. However, it is anticipated that this research will contribute to the advancement of knowledge in Leadership transitions and church youth development studies.

Confidentiality: All data collected during this study will be kept strictly confidential. Your personal information will be anonymized and stored securely. Only the research team will have access to the data, and any published results will not include any personally identifiable information.

Voluntary Participation: Participation in this study is entirely voluntary, and you have the right to withdraw at any time without providing a reason or incurring any penalties or negative consequences.

Contact Information: If you have any questions or concerns about the study, you may contact Diane K Mugambi at 0721435935. Additionally, if you have any concerns about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the postgraduate@spu.ac.ke .

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postgraduate@spu.ac.ke

Consent: Having read through the information provided above, do you consent and voluntarily agree to participate in this research study, and do you understand that you are free to withdraw at any time without any negative consequences? (Please tick against the box below.)

Yes	
No	

Date: _____

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Appendix IV Nacosti Permit

REPUBLIC OF KENYA

NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR SCIENCE,TECHNOLOGY & INNOVATION

Ref No: 716330

Date of Issue: 26/November/2024

RESEARCH LICENSE



This is to Certify that Rev.. Diana Kawira Muganbi of St. Paul's University, has been licensed to conduct research as per the provision of the Science, Technology and Innovation Act, 2013 (Rev.2014) in Nairobi on the topic: "LEADERSHIP PRACTICES INFLUENCING YOUTH PARTICIPATION IN CHURCH ACTIVITIES IN MAINSTREAM PROTESTANT CHURCHES IN NAIROBI, KENYA." for the period ending : 26/November/2025.

License No: NACOSTI/P/24/41242

716330

Applicant Identification Number

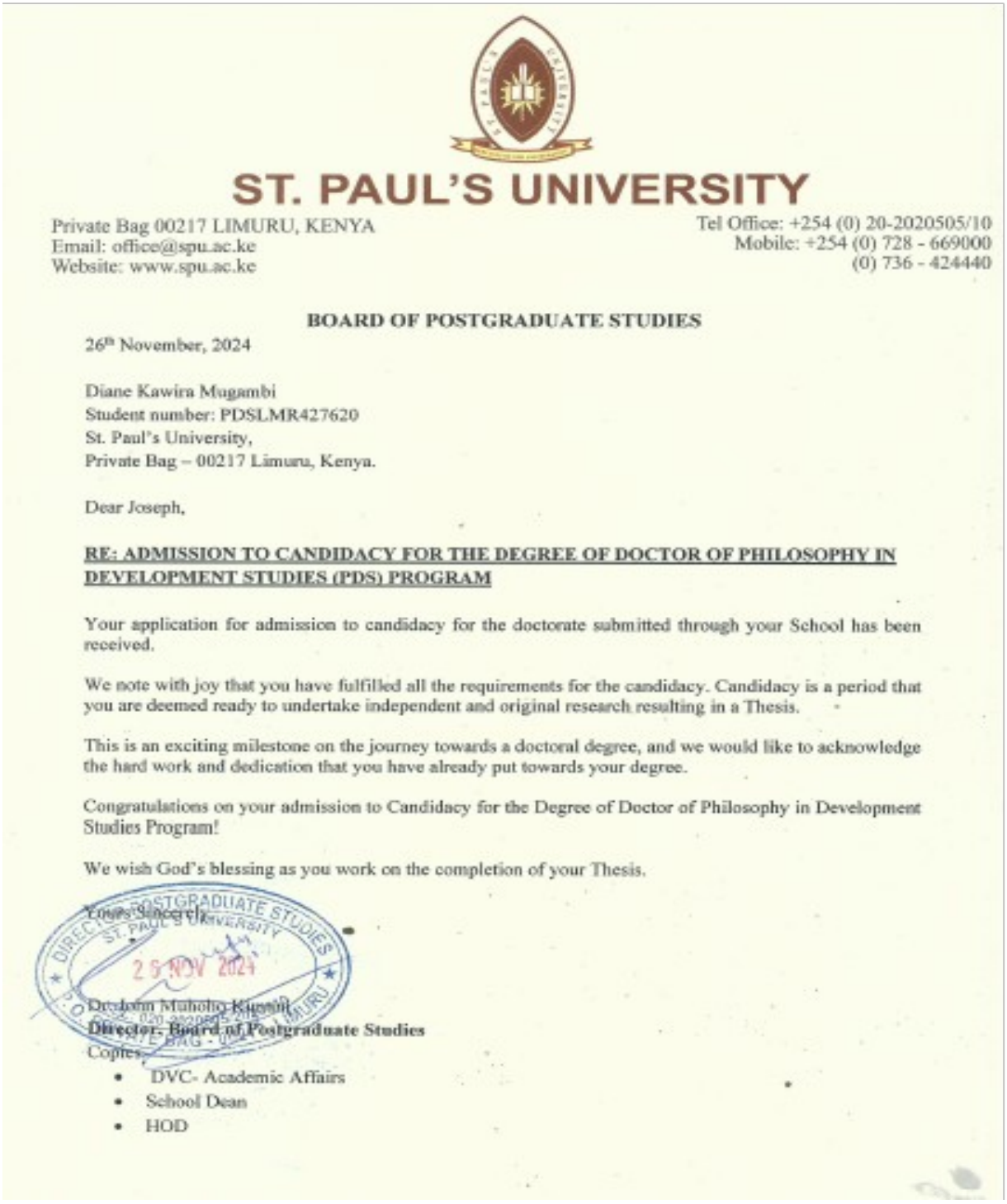
Director General
NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR SCIENCE,TECHNOLOGY & INNOVATION

Verification QR Code

NOTE: This is a computer generated License. To verify the authenticity of this document, Scan the QR Code using QR scanner application.

See overleaf for conditions

Appendix V: Postgraduate Admission



ST. PAUL'S UNIVERSITY

Private Bag 00217 LIMURU, KENYA
Email: office@spu.ac.ke
Website: www.spu.ac.ke

Tel Office: +254 (0) 20-2020505/10
Mobile: +254 (0) 728 - 669000
(0) 736 - 424440

BOARD OF POSTGRADUATE STUDIES

26th November, 2024

Diane Kawira Mugambi
Student number: PDSLMR427620
St. Paul's University,
Private Bag – 00217 Limuru, Kenya.

Dear Joseph,

RE: ADMISSION TO CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN DEVELOPMENT STUDIES (PDS) PROGRAM

Your application for admission to candidacy for the doctorate submitted through your School has been received.

We note with joy that you have fulfilled all the requirements for the candidacy. Candidacy is a period that you are deemed ready to undertake independent and original research resulting in a Thesis.

This is an exciting milestone on the journey towards a doctoral degree, and we would like to acknowledge the hard work and dedication that you have already put towards your degree.

Congratulations on your admission to Candidacy for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Development Studies Program!

We wish God's blessing as you work on the completion of your Thesis.

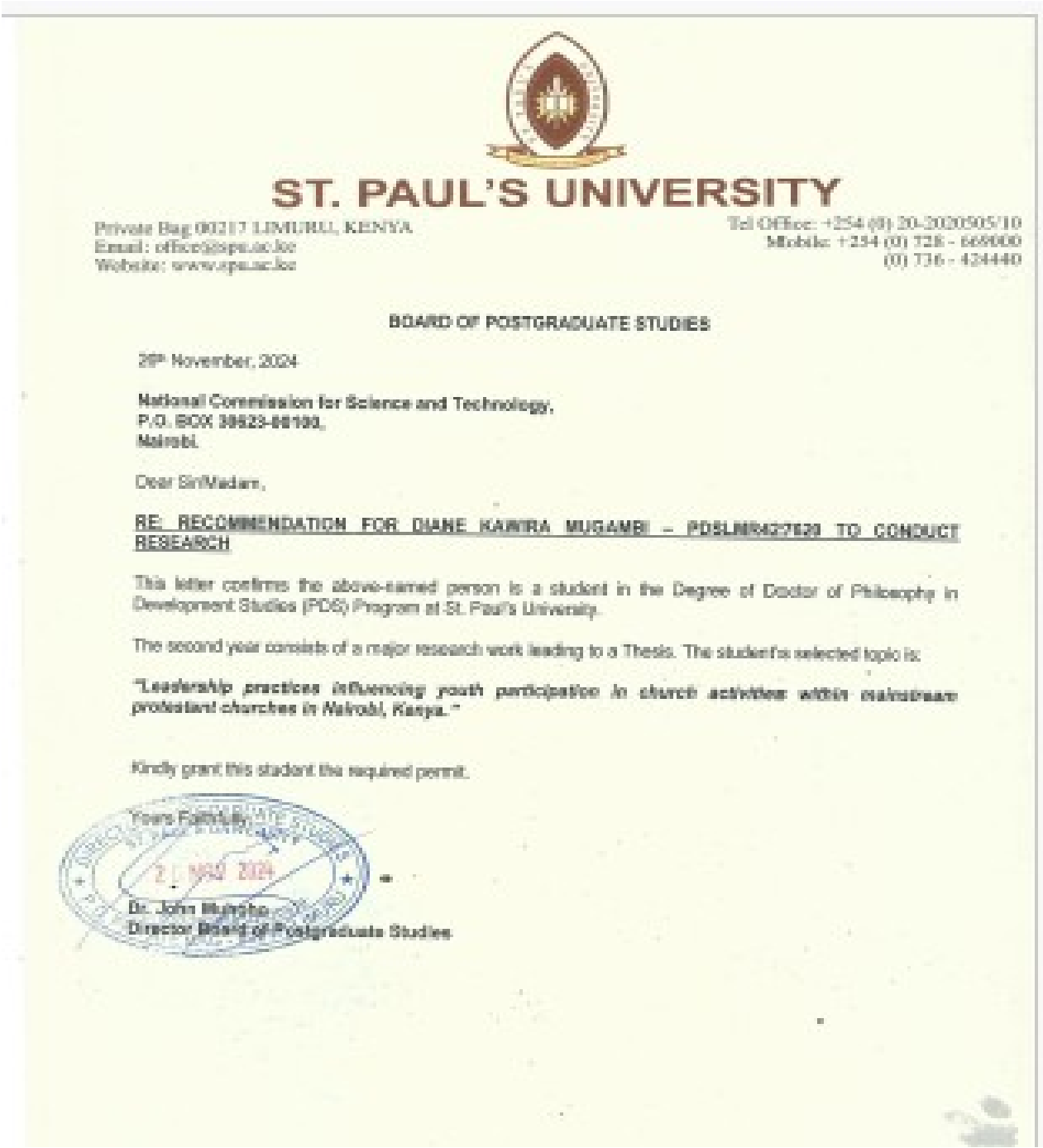
Yours Sincerely,

DIRECTOR - POSTGRADUATE STUDIES ST. PAUL'S UNIVERSITY 25 NOV 2024

Dr. John Muholo Kimani
Director, Board of Postgraduate Studies

Copies:
- DVC- Academic Affairs
- School Dean
- HOD

Appendix VI SPU Research Permit



ST. PAUL'S UNIVERSITY

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(0) 736 - 424440

BOARD OF POSTGRADUATE STUDIES

29th November, 2024

National Commission for Science and Technology,
P.O. BOX 30623-00100,
Nairobi.

Dear Sir/Madam,

RE: RECOMMENDATION FOR DIANE KAWIRA MUGAMBI – PDSLM/M427/020 TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

This letter confirms the above-named person is a student in the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Development Studies (PDS) Program at St. Paul's University.

The second year consists of a major research work leading to a Thesis. The student's selected topic is:

"Leadership practices influencing youth participation in church activities within mainstream protestant churches in Nairobi, Kenya."

Kindly grant this student the required permit.

Yours Faithfully,

21 NOV 2024

Dr. John Mutiso
Director Board of Postgraduate Studies

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Appendix VI Institutional Scientific Ethics Review Committee Approval

ST. PAUL'S UNIVERSITY

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Mobile: +254 (0) 728-669000 (0) 736-424440

ST. PAUL'S UNIVERSITY

REF: SPU/244/2024 Date: 29th October 2024

TO: Diane Mugambi
St. Paul's University

Dear Diane,

==========

REF: Leadership Practices Influencing Youth Participation in Church Activities within Mainstream Protestant Churches in Nairobi, Kenya

==========Greetings,

This is to inform you that SPU- Institutional Scientific Ethics Review Committee has reviewed the above-named research proposal. **Your ERB approval number is 253, for the period between 29th October 2024 – 29th October 2025 (1 year).**

This approval is subject to compliance with the following requirements;

i. Only approved documents including (informed consents, study instruments) will be used.
ii. All changes including (amendments, deviations, and violations) are submitted for review and approval by SPU- Institutional Scientific Ethics Review Committee.
iii. Death and life-threatening problems and serious adverse events or unexpected adverse events whether related or unrelated to the study must be reported to SPU-Institutional Scientific Ethics Review Committee within 72 hours of notification
iv. Any changes, anticipated or otherwise that may increase the risks or affected safety or welfare of study participants and others or affect the integrity of the research must

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be reported to *SPU- Institutional Scientific Ethics Review Committee* within 72 hours

v. Clearance for export of biological specimens must be obtained from relevant institutions.

vi. Submission of a request for renewal of approval at least 60 days prior to expiry of the approval period. Attach a comprehensive progress report to support the renewal.

vii. Submission of an executive summary report within 90 days upon completion of the study to SPU- Institutional Scientific Ethics Review Committee.

viii. Please note that it is within the ISERC's mandate to monitor your research and to do random visits to the site. All research is subject to post approval monitoring. Prior to commencing your study, you will be expected to obtain a research license from National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI) ***https://research-portal.nacosti.go.ke*** **and also obtain other clearances needed.**

Yours sincerely,

Dr. Daniel Nzengya, PhD
Chairperson
SPU- Institutional Scientific & Ethics Review Committee



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