

THE ROLE OF CHURCH LEADERS IN RETAINING YOUTH IN THE ANGLICAN CHURCH OF KENYA: A CASE STUDY OF THE RUIRU ARCHDEACONRY

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: Young people look for a leader who has a positive influence on their lives. The church is a crucial organization for the shaping of society at large and especially the youth. This is because when they want to make a major transition in their lives they go to church if they lack guidance at home. This study aims on examining the role of leadership in youth retention in the Anglican Church of Kenya.

Research Methodology: The target population was 772 youth. A descriptive research design was used. A quantitative research method was employed. The systematic random sampling technique was used where a sample size of 110 youth was selected. Primary data was collected through the administration of questionnaires to the respondents. The questionnaires contained open and closed-ended questions. The data were analysed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 21 and excel. The data was presented using tables and pie charts.

Findings: The study found that there was a statistically significant relationship between the respondents' role in the church and their perceptions of whether church leaders inspire them, and the respondents' perception of whether church leaders inspire them and whether the church leaders

understand what needed to change in the youth ministry as they all had P-value of less than 0.05 and were all statistically significant, and there was no association between the gender of the respondents and their perception of whether their church leaders help in strengthening their skills ($P=0.055$) since it had a P-value of more than 0.05. The finding shows that there is a role played by the church leaders in retaining the youth in Ruiru Archdeaconry and this indicates that 71.68% agreed that the role played by church leaders in retaining the youth in Ruiru Archdeaconry is high.

Recommendations: The study recommends that the church leaders should give the youth an active role in the leadership, adopt good relationships with the youth, initiate awareness programs and encourage the youth to be involved in all aspects of church life to build the youth's capacity in one way or the other.

Keywords: *Church Leadership, Youth, Retention, Leadership competences, Mentorship program, Capacity building*

INTRODUCTION

According to the United Nations (2018), there is no definite definition of what age constitutes youth because the concept is highly influenced by demographics and socio-cultural settings. For statistical purposes, the UN has defined the youth as persons aged between 13-35 years. This age group comprised 16% of the world's population in 2019 (UN DESA, 2019). United Nations Population Fund UNFPA (2019) shows more than two billion job opportunities need to be created to accommodate the enormous growing number of young people in the world. A significant proportion of young persons of working age is either unemployed or underemployed, thus causing their retention in church difficult. In addition, United Nations Children's Education Fund (UNICEF) report (2019) estimated that there are millions of youngsters in the street collecting garbage, hawking goods, washing cars, shining shoes and begging. One out of ten of them is a street child who has no permanent home or connection to any family. These experiences and engagements contribute to the movement of youth out of the church and influence them negatively as they try to earn their living (Africa Development Bank, 2016).

The concept of how long the youth age should last is expanded in Africa. The African Youth Charter (2006), defines the youth as persons aged between 15-35 years. By 2015, Africa had 420 million young people falling under the African Youth Charter's definition. This population is

expected to grow to over 830 million by 2050 (AFDB, 2016). According to the Africa Union (AU) report (2011), the position of this population brings in an unusual challenge of skills for young people and their quality engagement within a progressively complex and rapidly changing global environment. The African church leaders should ensure that young people are equipped with social and market-related skills that can enable them to be competitive at the national, regional and global levels (WHO, 2018). Therefore, the need to invest in youths through proper execution of leadership roles, leadership quality, mentorship programs and capacity building in Africa remains of paramount importance. This could contribute to a better living thus retaining them in the church (Kinnaman, 2012). The African Youth Chapter (2006), asserts that youth need an empowering environment politically, economically, socially and spiritually to succeed well in their countries. They need to be vested so that they can participate in decision-making processes that affect their lives.

The African church needs to make an effort to provide good leadership that would build up the capacities of young people. Failure to this retention of the youth in the church will remain a major problem towards a great future for young men and women of Africa (UN, 2016). The history of the Anglican Church of Kenya dates from 1844 when the first missionary from the Church Missionary (CMS), Dr Johann Ludwing Krapf arrived in Mombasa. Kagema (2018) states that the Anglican Church of Kenya has a national population of approximately 1.5 million (29%) youth who range from 13 to 35 years. In Thika Diocese, there is 6,172 youth who cover 18% of the total diocesan population. Ruiru Archdeaconry has a total of 772 registered youth covering an approximately 24% of the total population (ACK Diocese of Thika, 11th session of Synod Document, 2020). This study examined the role of church leadership on youth retention in the Anglican Church of Kenya.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Young people look for a leader who has a positive influence on their lives. The church is a crucial organization for the shaping of society at large and especially the youth. This is because when they want to make a major transition in their lives they go to church if they lack guidance at home. The implementation of the church leadership role is closely connected with youth retention. Gill (2008) explains that leadership is an aptitude for attracting and retaining people to carry out the underlined task. However, according to the 9th Ordinary Session of Synod report (2016), the youth

membership after graduating from Sunday school declined by 48%. The 10th Ordinary Session of Synod report (2018) shows that the youth declined by 54%. The 11th Ordinary Session of Synod (2020) shows that the youth declined by 63%. These statistics should make the church leaders spend sleepless nights.

This may negatively affect the numerical growth and if action is not taken, the church might lose 68% of the youths by 2025. Some of the studies concentrate on various variables, for example, mentorship programs and their impact on retaining young people in the church, such as Spicer (2017) conducted a study on adolescence in the Church: perspectives from church youths on mentorship and spiritual formation in the church. Boyd (2013) investigated the role of the local church in the maturation process during the transition from childhood into adulthood. The study concentrated on the transition of children to adulthood but failed to link it to aspects that would lead to young people's retention in the church. It is for this reason the researcher found the importance of studying the role of church leadership in retaining the youth in the Anglican Church of Kenya.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

To determine the role of leadership in youth retention in the Anglican Church of Kenya.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Leadership is the capacity of a trusted individual to contain or inspire people to carry out a common task. According to Bird (2013), a leader has a responsibility of retaining and growing his/her team members to accomplish the shared vision. Sadeghi and Pihie (2012) defined leadership as a person who could inspire confidence and support among people who have been organized to achieve the set goals of an organization. The concept of church leadership involves a person determining the direction of the church's vision and mission. In this sense, a leader should develop a mechanism to execute his / her role effectively to help the followers to overcome hurdles, and adversity and identify with them as they grow instead of quitting the leader. A pastor is a father figure to his people and has the role of guiding and helping the followers to deal with issues (Sanders 2007).

Thompson (2013) adds that leaders; whether in secular or in faith-based organizations like the church should possess values to make things happen. Integrity and commitment are essential values in leadership (Kiiru, 2018). A commitment to the youth ministry should be an outflow of the

inner values, which characterize the being of a leader. To retain the youth in the church, church leaders must hold to higher standards than the youth to motivate them. Values in the church are the standards, principles, and broad guidelines that Christian leaders must observe. Values practices are upright, honorable, moral, lawful, above-board, and full of integrity. The conduct and lifestyle of modern-day Christian leaders are always under scrutiny. Church leaders should exhibit Godliness and integrity. Bird (2013) explains that leaders' values reflect who an individual is and his conduct, his private thoughts, his speaking, teaching, and lifestyle. Christian values vary from secular values because Christian values are linked to the Bible and determined by the unchanging truth of Scripture.

Githiga (2009) echoed the importance of mentorship in the church, especially to the young generation. This endeavors to strengthen the young generation's life who are responsible to take over the leadership of the church in future. Young people should be developed and nurtured for leadership continuity. This implies that the youth should not be seen as passive adherents to the church but as people to whom meaningful leadership roles should be assigned (Ragira *et al.*, 2017). Kessler & Kretzschmar, (2015) emphasizes that youth mentorship is a process of matching mentors with young people who need or want a caring, responsible church leader in his / her life. The goal of a mentorship program is to improve the leadership well-being of the youths by providing a role model that can support them in leadership activities. The church leaders are good mentors who are wise and willing to share their knowledge and experiences to help the youth to succeed. The youths in the Anglican Church of Kenya are talented in diverse ways. They are ambitious in finding methods of developing themselves. An effective mentorship program supports the youths to overcome the hindrances and hurdles that prevent their growth from developing their skills (Kessler & Kretzschmar, 2015).

Mwangi (2015) define capacity building in the church as the process of enabling church members to develop the appropriate life skills that can make them more effective and sustainable, thus increasing the potential of enriching their lives and solving individual and societal problems. Mwangi (2015) stresses that the church leadership should create an environment that is conducive to capacity-building and encourage the youth to participate in the crucial decision-making processes. Bird (2013) demonstrates that the youth could participate equitably in identifying problems and developing solutions in the church and society. This confirms that retaining the youth in the church could build their spirituality, character, and leadership skills, and develop talents and

life skills thus helping them stand an opportunity to be involved to develop the change they want and contribute to the holistic growth of the church.

Youth is a significant period for a person's personality growth. During the youth period, persons experience a holistic change in body, mind, emotional and social relations. Faced with such change, many young people search for a place in the world by defining who they are, what they want and how they matter (Kessler & Kretzschmar, 2015). Thus, this is a key period for youth's identity formation and preparation for an inclination (Krejcir, 2014). Their experience can only make sense in terms of the society in which they are developing. For a couple of years, the church has been losing its mechanism to hold onto youths who are transitioning from childhood to adulthood. However, a broad survey indicates that young people between the ages of fifteen and twenty-one are turning their attention away from religion and the church (Zaiceva & Zimmermann, 2014).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study employed a descriptive research design and the use of a quantitative research method. The population was the nine parishes within the Ruiru Archdeaconry was 7,193 Christians and 772 (10.7%) of the total population were registered youth of Kenya Anglican Youth Organization (KAYO). The simple random sampling procedure was used to select the required number from the registered target population of 772 of youth in the Anglican Church of Kenya, Ruiru Archdeaconry. The study used questionnaires as an instrument of data collection. The questionnaire was divided into two parts; the demographic characteristics of the youth and the main areas of study organized in sections of objectives. Analysis was done based on graphs, tables and descriptive statistics to help in interpreting the results. The research findings were presented in the form of frequencies and percentages. SPSS made it easy to summarize the huge information into categories which the researcher wanted. A Pearson's Chi-square in SPSS was used to determine the association between the role of church leadership and youth retention in the Anglican Church of Kenya by looking at the level of significance of 0.05, where any value more than 0.05 is deemed to be not statistically significant.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Response Rate and Demographic Data of Respondents

The study indicated that out of 116 sample sizes 110 questionnaires were returned. This gave 94.8% response. As to their marital status, the study established that 82 (90%) of the respondents were single while 28 (10%) were married. The age distribution of the respondents: 39 (38.20%) of the respondents were aged between 18-21 years. This was closely followed by 38 (37.30%) representing those aged between 22-25 years old, while 14 (10.90%), 12 (9.10%), and 7 (4.5%) represented the group aged between 13-17, 26-30 and above 31 years old respectively as shown in figure 3 below. Regarding educational level, the study revealed that 40 (39.10%) had attained a Diploma, 39 (38.20%) of them had attained a bachelor's degree, 19 (16.40%) had a Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE) Certificate, 8 (5.5%) had a Kenya Certificate of Primary Education (KCPE) certificate, and 4 (0.9%) had attained a master's degree, whereas none (0%) of the respondents had attained PhD.

The role of Church Leadership in Retaining the Youth in the Anglican Church of Kenya

The study analyzed various items to establish the role of church leadership in retaining the youth in the Anglican Church of Kenya. The objective question was converted into statements. The result was presented in Table 1 below based on a Likert scale analysis.

Table 1: The Leaders of my Church have raised the level of my spiritual maturity

Statement	1 Strongly disagree	2 Disagree	3 Neutral	4 Agree	5 Strongly agree	Total
The leaders of my church have raised the level of my spiritual maturity.	2 (1.8%)	7 (6.40%)	29 (26.4%)	45 (40.9%)	27 (24.5%)	110
The leadership of my church has created a positive change in my life.	1 (0.9%)	7 (6.40%)	10(9.1%)	60(54.4%)	32 (30.0%)	110
The leaders of my church do not create a vision in me.	42 (38.1%)	37 (33.6%)	18 (16.4%)	7 (6.4%)	6 (5.5%)	110
The leadership of my church helps me to improve my commitment to the church.	1 (0.9%)	5 (4.5%)	20 (18.2%)	40 (36.4%)	44 (40%)	110
The behaviors of my church leaders have influenced me to serve others first.	4 (3.6%)	6 (5.5%)	21 (19.1%)	45 (40.9%)	34 (30.9%)	110

Table 1 shows that the church leaders have raised the level of the spiritual maturity of the youth, the study revealed that 45 (40.9%) (majority) of the respondents agreed with the statement that the church leaders enhanced their spiritual maturity, 29 (26.4%) of the respondents were neutral whereas 2 (1.8%) strongly disagreed with the statement. These findings indicate that although the leaders of the Anglican Church of Kenya are committed to fulfill their responsibility to raise the spiritual maturity of the youth more effort is required hence retain them in the church.

The Leadership Values in Retaining the Youth in the Anglican Church of Kenya.

The question on how leadership quality contributes to youth retention in Anglican Church of Kenya the respondents, were asked to rate the extent to which they agreed on the kind of leadership qualities aided in retaining youth. Responses were categorized as follows: Strong disagree, Disagree, Neutral, Agree, and strongly agree as shown in the Table 2

Table 2: Leadership Quality

Statement	1. Strongly disagree	2. Disagree	3. Neutral	4. Agree	5. Strongly agree	Total
The leaders of my church listen to me.	4 (3.6%)	7 (6.4%)	30 (27.3%)	45 (40.9%)	24 (21.8%)	110
The leaders of my church are honest.	5 (4.5%)	5 (4.5%)	28 (25.5%)	46 (41.8%)	26 (23.6%)	110
I don't trust the leaders of my church.	45 (40.9%)	29 (26.4)	20 (18.9)	8 (7.3%)	8 (7.3%)	110
The leaders of my church do not have the ability to inspire my participation in church.	45 (40.9%)	31 (28.2%)	18 (16.4%)	10 (9.1%)	6 (5.5%)	110
The leaders of my church understand what need to change.	17 (15.5%)	17 (15.5%)	25 (22.7%)	32 (29.1%)	19 (17.3%)	110

Table 2 shows that the respondents asserted that the leader's church leaders listen to the youth in the Anglican Church of Kenya. This was because 45 (40.9%) of the respondents agreed with the statement, 33(30.0%) of the respondents agreed, none were neutral, and 30 (27.3%) of them were neutral while 4 (3.6%) strongly disagreed. The majority (40.9%) of the respondents show the church leaders listen to the young people therefore the leaders have a good quality that can help in achieving the retention strategy of the youth in the church. Similarly, the respondents asserted that the church leaders are honest. This was supported by the results of the study that showed that 46 (41.8%) of the respondents agreed with the statement that, the leaders of the church are honest, 28 (25.5%) of respondents were neutral while 5 (4.5%) strongly disagreed. Although some respondents were neutral on the church leaders' honesty they can simply retain and attract more youth to the Anglican Church of Kenya.

Similarly, a negative statement was posted on whether the respondents don't trust the church leaders. Whereby 45 (40.9%) of the respondents indicated strongly disagree, 21 (18.9%) were neutral and 8 (7.3%) strongly agreed. This was interpreted that the church leaders were trustworthy and hence could effectively retain the young people in the Anglican Church of Kenya. Furthermore, another negative statement was posted on whether the leaders of the church cannot

inspire the respondents' participation in the church. This was a test of the church leader's quality of competency to inspire the youth. From the study 45 (40.9%), strongly disagreed with the statement, 18 (16.4%) the respondents were neutral and 6 (5.5%) strongly agreed. Therefore, the church leaders in the Anglican Church of Kenya can retain the youth by inspiring them to participate in the church. The respondents were asked whether the leaders of the church understand what needed to change in the youth ministry, 60 (55%) of the respondents said that the leaders of the church do not understand what needs to change in the youth ministry, while 50 (45%) agreed with the statement that the leaders of the Anglican Church of Kenya understand what needs to change in the youth ministry. Lastly, as to whether the leaders understand change, the majority of 60 (55%) respondents listed the various reasons why the church does not understand what needs to be changed in the youth ministry.

Role of Mentorship Programs in Retaining the Youth in the Anglican Church of Kenya

The respondents were asked to indicate their extent of agreement on whether there was a mentorship program for retaining the youth in Anglican Church of Kenya. The responses were analysed and summarized in Table 3.

Table 3: Mentorship Programs

Statement	1 Strongly disagree	2 Disagree	3 Neutral	4 Agree	5 Strongly agree	Total
The leaders of my church organize mentorship programs for the youth.	8 (7.3%)	16 (14.5%)	26 (23.6%)	37 (33.6%)	23 (20.9%)	110
The mentorship programs in my church have helped me to be responsible.	10 (9.1%)	12 (10.9%)	29 (26.4%)	36 (32.7%)	23 (20.9%)	110
The mentorship programs in my church are not relevant to the youth.	32 (29.1%)	30 (27.3%)	15 (13.6%)	16 (14.5%)	17 (15.5%)	110
The leaders of my church do not involve me in planning the mentorship programs.	19 (17.3%)	36 (32.7%)	22 (20%)	23 (20.9%)	10 (9.1%)	110
Through the mentorship programs in my church, I have positively changed.	6 (5.5%)	13 (11.8%)	21 (19.1%)	45 (40.9%)	25 (22.7%)	110

The respondent state that the leaders of their church organize mentorship programs for the youth that aims in building their character, and spiritual formation and respond to the needs of their lives. This was because 37 (33.6%) of the respondents agreed, 23 (20.9%) strongly agreed, 26 (23.6%) were neutral and 8 (7.3%) strongly disagreed. Therefore, the majority (33.6%) of the respondents show that their church leaders organize or provide mentorship programs that are key in retaining the young people of the Anglican Church of Kenya. At the same time, it was established that the church leaders organize mentorship programs to help the youths to be responsible. This was supported by an analysis that explained that 36 (32.7%) of the respondents agreed, however, 29 (26.4%) of the respondents were neutral while 10 (9.1%) strongly disagreed that the mentorship programs helped retain the youth in the Anglican Church of Kenya. Since the mentorship programs in the church have helped the youth. As to the relevancy of the programs, the respondents were further probed whether the offered mentorship programs were relevant to them. Out of the total respondents asked, 73 (66%) of them said yes while only 37 (34%) did not agree with the relevancy

of the program being offered to them.

CONCLUSIONS

The study concluded that Anglican Church of Kenya, Ruiru Archdeaconry leaders lack the leadership qualities to retain youth. The study identified barriers to youth church membership. Church leaders were less committed to the youth. Leaders of the church had no time to listen to youth affairs, including implementing ideas raised by the youth. There was limited concern about strengthening the youth leadership, and the church leaders did less in inspiring, teamwork, and uniting the youth. The appointed youth patron did little to the youth affairs. The youths prefer radical leadership, but it fails to accommodate a wide variety of interest groups, thus it's necessary to reconcile their leadership orientation in the Anglican Church of Kenya, Ruiru church Archdeaconry. The study concluded that religious leaders organised mentorship programmes for youth. Ruiru Archdeaconry church's mentorship programme had certain limits. Some of the mentorships supplied to youth were not relevant to them, most students were unaware of the Anglican Church of Kenya's mentorship, and the quantity of offered mentorship programmes was restricted to satisfy the youth's spiritual and basic living needs. The survey indicated that church leaders had tried to enhance the youth's capacity, but the youth want more. The study indicates that church leaders failed to benchmark with other churches in Ruiru Archdeaconry, identify and foster the young's ability, and involve the youth in team-building activities in the church that could make spiritual, character, and leadership formation possible.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Church leaders of Ruiru Archdeaconry should recruit adult leaders for youth activities who are knowledgeable, committed, spiritually mature, and effective in communicating with young people. Church leaders should integrate service-learning into Christian education to teach discipleship and involve youth in planning and leading mission activities. Church leaders should adopt good relationships with the youth. Youth ministry is about relationships.

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