

Persistence of Moral Decadence Among the Youth in the Presbyterian Church of East Africa, Chuka Presbytery, Kenya

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Abstract

This study sought to investigate the factors responsible for the persistence of moral decadence among the youth in PCEA Chuka Presbytery in spite of the measures taken by PCEA to curb it. Moral decadence among the youth has been rampant globally. Research and media reports indicate that a high percentage of youths indulge in anti-social vices such as indecent dressing, drug abuse, pre-marital sex, violence and crime, among others. Despite interventions by religious organisations, government sectors and other actors, the persistence of moral decline among the youth continues to be a threat to society. The study adopted the Descriptive survey design. It was carried out in Chuka Presbytery, located in the Eastern region of PCEA in Tharaka Nithi County. The target population was 3286 church members comprising 6 church ministers, 1743 adult church members and 1537 youths in the six parishes of Chuka Presbytery. The sample size was 334. Data was obtained using Focus Group Discussions, interviews and questionnaires. The study established that the persistence of youth moral decadence resulted from multiple factors, including inadequate parental upbringing, youth pursuit and the quest for materialism, peer pressure, a decline in religious, moral instruction, and an opulent lifestyle, among others. In view of the findings obtained in this study, it is recommended that the clergy and other Chuka Presbytery members involved in implementing youth moral programmes should embrace the use of more innovative ways of delivering moral education to the youth.

Key terms: Chuka presbytery, Presbyterian Church of East Africa, youth, youth programmes, youth morality.

INTRODUCTION

Moral decadence is a popular term in research and practice. According to Njoku (2013), it can be defined as a failure to uphold sound morality in society. As society has lost its moral compass, the issue of moral decadence has become highly contentious. Moral decadence has adverse effects on society because it changes cultural, moral, and social norms and sets new but lower standards for appropriate behaviours. Moral decadence lowers standards of moral behaviour and creates new but lower criteria for ethics and justice (Dromi & Illouz, 2010; Onebunne, 2018). It promotes public acceptance of violence, justifies discrimination and injustice, and limits opportunities for social development that are so important to keep societies flourishing. The most serious is probably the growing acceptance of lower moral standards in society. Moral decay is a collective reality. That is, everyone has his or her stake in the process, and this process affects everyone. In today's modern world, the decline of morality among youths is very evident. This phenomenon has several characteristics. For instance, in a morally decadent society, violence, radicalisation, perverted sexual behaviour, abortion, drug and substance abuse, cultism, corruption, sexual harassment, and discrimination are also prevalent (Muthamba, 2017).

Even the most morally upright and devoted person experiences the negative consequences of moral depravity in a culture full of moral compromise. The acceptance of lower moral standards in society, which is perhaps the most severe, is on the rise. Violence, prejudice, harassment, or disagreements are no longer important to people. Simply put, they are too preoccupied with their daily tasks to demonstrate their dedication or make an effort to uphold higher moral standards. The moral decadence issue among the youth has become a global problem because it attacks the very root of our society, and it mostly affects the youths who stand as light and a foundation to build our nation in the near future. Our society which should serve as a place for moral formation, has become a ground for increasing moral decadence; culture and morals that have been built and held in high esteem suddenly become a less valued style of life among youths. Moral decadence among youths has a direct negative impact on the family and society at large (Muthamba, 2017). It has led many youths into

cultism, prostitution, thuggery, examination malpractice in schools, indecent dressing, sex debut, broken relationships, drug and substance abuse and many other social vices that have remained problematic and threaten the peace and security of the large society (Nalugala, 2017).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Presbyterian Church of East Africa (PCEA) launched a number of programs in an effort to inculcate youth morals and enhance their spirituality. These programmes include; Youth Sports and Evangelism Program, Youth AIDS and HIV Program, Youth Schools and Colleges Program, Youth Training and Capacity Building Program, Youth Empowerment and Investment Program, and Youth Mission and Evangelism Program (PCEA, 1998). Johnson (2013) has pointed out that church-based youth programmes have a protective factor against delinquent behaviour. Lokkesmoe (2019) noted that youths that participate in church-based programmes such as Bible study, outreach evangelism and social action projects are less likely to be involved in the abuse of drugs and other related social evils. This implies that church youth work, coupled with effective management and delivery, is invaluable in ensuring that young people are given the opportunity to acquire the attitude, skills and knowledge they need for upright moral engagement and social action.

The most interesting thing is that in spite of engaging in the church-youth-moral programs, concerns have been voiced about the decline in moral standards among the youth in the eastern region of PCEA, notably in Chuka Presbytery (Njeru, 2019). A study by Mathai, Bururia, and Nkonge (2019) revealed that there was a general outcry against the decline in moral standards among the youth in the area, as evidenced by their promiscuous behaviour, which includes pre-marital sex, prostitution, criminality, violence, abortion, and drug misuse, among others. Exacerbating the problem is the conspicuous absence of the Christian church in public moral discourse, yet it is one of the trusted institutions credited for being a repository of moral knowledge based on Biblical underpinnings. It was therefore important and urgent to have an in-depth study to unravel the reasons for the persistence of youth moral decline despite there being robust church measures and interventions.

Previous research investigations have also failed to explain the reasons for the persistence of youth moral decadence in spite of the Church and other actors' efforts to address the problem. Therefore, it was vital to address this issue in order to raise the morality of our youth currently and for posterity. This study was significant because the elementary dictum in human social relations is embodied in moral values. If a society is good, peaceful and orderly, it is through the instrumentality of moral values perpetuated by that society. To maintain an orderly, peaceful society,

therefore, moral and character development through the instrumentality of religious interventions is of paramount importance.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Reasons for Persistence of Moral Decadence among the Youth in PCEA Chuka Presbytery

The study determined the reasons for the persistent decline in youth morals in PCEA Chuka Presbytery despite the church's efforts to promote moral values. Presented are the results of the analysis.

Table 1: Reasons for Persistence in Moral Decadence

Reasons for Persistence in Moral Decadence	Responses																					
	Youth (n =148)							Adult Church Members (n =169)														
	SA	A	NS	D	SD	Mean	SA	A	NS	D	SD	Mean										
	F %	F %	F %	F %	F %		F %	F %	F %	F %	F %											
Poor parental upbringing	34	23.6	39	27.1	36	25.0	30	20.8	5	3.5	3.5257	60	35.5	87	51.5	5	3.0	10	5.95	7	4.17	3.7886
Lack of affection and care	20	13.9	58	40.3	42	29.2	17	11.8	7	4.9	3.5662	37	21.9	41	24.3	58	34.3	29	17.2	4	2.4	3.4732
Quest for materialism	34	23.6	53	36.8	37	25.7	13	9.0	7	4.9	3.6622	49	29.0	58	34.3	28	16.6	32	18.9	2	1.2	3.6845
Socio-economic status	37	25.7	63	43.8	33	22.9	8	5.6	3	2.1	3.8851	41	24.3	74	43.8	34	20.1	15	8.9	5	3.0	3.7950
Peer influence	39	27.1	64	44.4	28	19.4	4	2.8	9	6.3	3.8108	75	44.4	44	26.0	28	16.6	9	5.3	13	7.7	3.9085
Negative media influence	31	21.5	74	51.4	24	16.7	12	8.3	3	2.1	3.8311	68	40.2	65	38.5	14	8.3	13	7.7	9	5.3	3.9306
Societal influence	29	20.1	65	45.1	21	14.6	24	16.7	5	3.5	3.6081	58	34.2	62	38.5	24	14.2	25	14.8	0	0	3.7823
Parents carefree attitude	25	17.4	53	36.8	37	25.7	28	19.4	1	0.7	3.5000	54	32.0	69	40.8	10	5.9	32	18.9	4	2.4	3.6688
Decline in religious training	29	20.1	57	39.6	29	20.1	23	16.0	6	4.2	3.5743	50	29.6	62	36.7	11	6.5	36	21.3	10	5.9	3.6309
Extravagant lifestyle	24	16.7	56	38.9	25	17.4	31	21.5	8	5.6	3.3986	48	28.4	60	35.5	31	18.3	16	9.5	14	8.3	3.5142
Race and ethnicity	20	13.9	53	36.8	31	21.5	30	20.8	11	7.6	3.2703	28	16.6	71	42.0	38	22.5	30	17.8	2	1.2	3.4385
Moral laxity in the society	23	16.0	79	54.9	28	19.4	11	7.6	3	2.1	3.7568	60	35.5	56	33.1	34	20.1	19	11.5	0	0	3.8360

Dysfunctional families	26	18.1	64	44.4	28	19.4	26	18.1	0	0	3.6014	44	26.0	67	39.6	25	14.8	17	10.1	16	9.5	3.6309
Modern education influence	27	18.8	65	45.1	24	16.7	25	17.4	3	2.1	3.6081	48	28.4	39	23.1	33	19.5	32	18.9	17	10.1	3.5584
Inadequate moral instruction	32	22.1	63	43.8	23	16.0	22	15.3	4	2.8	3.6824	37	21.9	50	29.6	31	18.3	39	23.1	12	17.1	3.5142
Lack of positive role models	31	21.5	51	35.4	23	16.0	34	23.6	4	2.8	3.4898	41	24.3	74	43.8	34	20.1	15	8.9	5	3.0	3.7950
Overall Mean											3.6107											3.6844

The results indicate that many factors are responsible for moral decadence among youths in Chuka Presbytery. The factors range from socioeconomic status (mean = 3.8851) and harmful media impact (mean = 3.9306), which stood out as the main causes of the persistence of moral decadence among youth in Chuka Presbytery, eastern region, Kenya. Inadequate parental upbringing, a lack of sympathy and concern, the pursuit of consumerism, peer pressure, cultural pressure, a carefree parental attitude, a decline in religious education, an opulent lifestyle, and societal moral laxity are other causes. Other factors that contributed to young people's moral decadence were dysfunctional families, the influence of contemporary schooling, poor moral training, and a lack of strong role models. The least bearing on young people's moral degeneration was race and ethnicity. A discussion of the reasons given for the persistence of moral decadence among the youth in Chuka Presbytery is elaborated in the subsequent themes.

Poor Parental Upbringing

Parenting is the intricacies of raising a child to foster the health of children and safety, transmitting cultural values and preparing children for life as productive adults (Ulferts, 2020). Poor parenting occurs when a parent prioritises their own interests over their children's best interests. Bad parenting can be referred to as insufficient support from parents for their children in a psychological, emotional, intellectual or physical manner (Ulferts, 2020). Poor parenting is often tied to expectations of poor results, where children are seen as being at risk of neglect or maltreatment (Schneider et al., 2017). Mohamed

Mustafa et al. (2019) avers that the role of the parent in the life of a child is critical, and poor parenting practices and skills can lead to misbehaviour.

A state of moral or creative degeneration is known as moral decadence (Quirici, 2016). Odeh et al. (2021) thought that moral decay resulted from our culture's failure to uphold moral principles. On their part, Muraino and Ugwumba (2014) stated that the phenomenon of acting in a way that displays weak moral principles is known as moral decadence. Moral decay typically reflects a fall in society's moral standards. Deji-Afuye (2015) described the types of moral decadence as; cultism, examination malpractice, underage abortion, sexual permissiveness, teenage pregnancy, prostitution, substance addiction and improper clothing, among others. The issue of moral decadence in our society today has really raised its tempo. Everyone seems to be pointing accusing fingers at one another, from parents to teachers and even to the children, as to the cause of this problem. The results of this study show that the majority, 73 (50.7%) of the youth respondents as well as 147 (87.0%) of the adult church members, agreed that poor parental upbringing contributes to the persistence of moral decadence among the youth. The results further indicate that 35 (24.3%) youth, as well as 17(10.12%) adult church members, disagreed that parental upbringing was responsible for the persistence of youth moral decadence. Those that neither agreed nor disagreed accounted for 30 (25.0%) of the sample. The results of this study are collaborated by a Nigerian scholar Adebisi (2018), who avers that parents have contributed greatly to moral laxity in our society.

Njoku and Njoku (2017) also contend that moral decadence among youths has been majorly blamed on parents for the lack of proper upbringing of their kids. Njoku and Njoku (2017) further argue that most parents these days pay more attention to their business and status without dedicating any time to their children. Parents failing in their duties is the basis of societal and national destruction. Even the Bible attests to this, "train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it" (Proverbs 22:6).

In an exclusive interview, Marete (2022) stated that most parents do not care about the discipline of their children. The joy of bringing up moral and Godly children has been replaced by the pursuit of money. Parents pursue money and let go of their responsibilities and duties towards their children. Parents want to have money in bulk before they put the morality of their children into consideration. Another clergy said that when parents do not give time to their child, such a child tends to pick up habits from the street and get influenced negatively by peer group, and all these inevitably brings about moral laxity. Social vices such as truancy, examination malpractice, stealing, drug abuse, rape, etcetera, are all a result of the poor upbringing of children. A child who lacks home training will always be associated with lots of misbehaviours. The opinions of the interviewed clergy with regard to consequences of poor child upbringing are in tandem with Onyekwere et al. (2018) conceptualisation that children without positive parenting are more at risk for their own relationship troubles, depression, anxiety, and aggression, among other negative outcomes. The results obtained from the mixed-gender FGD comprising of 7 female and 7 male youth respondents revealed that anti-social behaviour is one of the most common effects of children facing bad parenting. Further, participants in the mixed-gender FGD said that some parents had not done a good job in giving their children a solid foundation on moral life lessons and hence have lost their youthful children to moral decadence.

There is clear evidence from the findings of this study that parents can and do influence children's moral growth. The key to raising moral children lies with the parents. As the primary moral agency, parents can significantly influence the development of morals in their children. However, it has been equally obvious

that children are learning many things through their daily experiences in interacting with the physical and social world. The level of moral decadence in society today is one anomaly that requires the concerted effort of all stakeholders to address. Though the magnitude varies from one society to another, generally, moral decadence is at the root of every societal problem that requires redress.

Lack of Affection and Care

According to Arar et al. (2018), affection is a feeling of liking and caring for someone or something, while care refers to the provision of what is necessary for the maintenance, health, welfare, and protection of someone or something (Bennett et al., 2017). Humans are wired to give and receive care and affection. Care and affection make the recipient feel seen, validated, wanted, and loved. Since care and affection are basic human needs, a lack of them is bound to cause problems. Receiving the affection and attention of parents and other primary caregivers is necessary for the healthy development of children.

The results of this study show that the majority, 78 (54.2%) of the youth respondents agreed that lack of affection and care contribute to persistence in youth moral decadence, while the majority, 91 (53.9%) adult church members were not certain whether lack of affection and care contributes to youth moral decadence. Samson and Allida (2018) showed that a decline in morals among secondary students in Uganda had been greatly affected by a lack of parental care and affection. In Kumasi Metropolis, Ghana, Britwum and Aidoo (2022) identified a lack of parental affection and care as a predictor of youth immorality. In Kenya, Wachege and Rugendo (2017) established that the failure of parents to provide the necessary needs to their children, which include care and affection, predisposes them to immoral behaviours such as greed.

Mutura (2022), who was interviewed to shed more light on the issue, said that a reasonable percentage of parents nowadays lack time to take care of their children or even to observe their children's actions. Children have more often than not been left in the care of house helps who are not responsible, thereby predisposing them to undesirable behavioural practices. In a similar vein, primary data obtained from

the female FGD indicates that youth from broken families where parental care and discipline are inadequate are more likely to engage in undesirable practices like pre-marital sex and drug abuse. Masolo and Ongong'a (1987) say that children reared by single parents lack either paternal or maternal affection and love. Consequently, they engage in undesirable practices in the search for lost paternal or maternal care. In view of the data presented and discussed, it can be argued that most Kenyan youths engage in anti-social behaviour due to defective homes that rarely satisfy children's basic needs, let alone parental affection. Therefore, parents should consciously carry out their primary obligation and responsibility of taking care of their children by being affectionate and caring to mitigate the declining moral standards among our youth population.

Quest for Materialism

Materialism may refer to the tendency to prioritise the pursuit of money and material possessions over other life goals and to view them as essential to happiness and success (Kasser, 2016). Kasser (2016) posits that people who give importance to money and otherworldly things give up moral values to gain worldly stuff. They believe that nothing is wrong in resorting to the wrong means in order to enjoy the luxuries of life. Scholars have examined the relationship between materialism and youth crime, but they have done so without involving youth in self-research. In this study, 148 youth were involved in an effort to prioritise their voice and perspectives. Results obtained in this study show that the majority, 87 (60.4%) of the youth respondents as well as 107 (63.3%) adult church members agreed that the quest for materialism contributed to persistence in moral decadence among the youth. The results further indicate that 37 (25.7%) youths were not certain whether the quest for materialism was a factor responsible for the persistence of youth moral decay, while 20 (13.9%) disagreed. In a similar vein, 28 (16.6%) adult church members were non-committal to this, while 34 (20.1%) indicated that the quest for materialism is not a predictor of endemic youth moral decline. Similar findings were established by Okulicz-Kozaryn (2022), who identified modern youth as being consumerist and materialistic. Liu et al. (2022) state that individuals high on materialism report a greater discrepancy in the moral judgments of their own and

others' behaviour. Odeh et al. (2013) also established that the causes of moral decadence among the youth are strongly collated with the quest for material wealth.

The mentality of making money and becoming somebody (the richest man) through corrupt means of acquisition of money and material wealth has invaded and permeated every aspect of Nigerians' moral life. Agha (2019) viewed materialism as the acquisition of material wealth at the expense of others. He noted that it has been treated as an enemy by the church and the moralists. The nation is embroiled in an excessive materialistic ideology that portends doom to our collective morality. The destructive acquisitive instinct of Western capitalism has colonised the Nigerian mind such that the dominant philosophy is to acquire money by all means. Materialism is associated with a greater drive to acquire goods (Richins & Dawson, 1992), and those with high materialism are usually less concerned about ethical issues (Kasser, 2016). Ghadirian (2011) even contended that materialism deteriorates morality in human society, impedes sustainable consumption, and contributes to various societal problems, including child labour, human trafficking, and forced labour. For such reasons, negative relationships between materialism and people's prosocial behaviours, such as ethical consumption; have been reported in most research (Dittmar et al., 2014, Kozar & Marcketti, 2011).

Mawira (2022), a church minister that participated in the survey, reported that most of the youth nowadays dream of money and luxury goods as well as luxurious living. The attitude towards careers has changed; young people no longer take education seriously because they think money is everything, and they believe in getting things easily without perceiving the consequences thereafter. Results from the mixed-gender FGD provide a nuanced picture of how materialism relates to individuals' moral attitudes and behaviour. Participants reported that many youths easily deactivate moral self-regulatory processes such as guilt and self-censure to allow themselves to engage in unethical behaviour just to acquire wealth.

Previous research demonstrates a negative association between materialism and morality. Gentina et al. (2018) connote that the love of money is the root of all

kinds of evil. It has predisposed young people to stealing, prostitution, thuggery, gangsterism, cultism and other forms of anti-social behaviour. Joye et al. (2020) found that materialism is higher in urban areas. Thus, youth in urban areas are more susceptible to immorality as a result of the negative effect of urbanism. Based on the findings of this study, no one can deny the fact that society has dramatically transformed. Money and material well-being are priority goals for millions of people, who would easily give up their moral principles for financial gain or authority. This moral decadence has adverse effects on society because it changes cultural, moral, and social norms and sets new but lower standards for appropriate behaviours. It promotes public acceptance of violence, justifies discrimination and injustice, and limits opportunities for social development that are so important to keep societies flourishing. This is the prime reason why churches and other trusted institutions should strive to bolster the youth with a moral emblem.

Socio-Economic Status

Socioeconomic status is defined as a measure of one's combined economic and social status (Baker, 2014). It is a way of describing people based on their education, income, and occupation (type of job). Socioeconomic status affects moral reasoning as operationalised in moral domain theory (Caravita et al., 2012). Psychologists have broadly investigated the influence of socioeconomic factors on morality. Socioeconomic factors can modulate moral reasoning. For instance, Robinson and Piff (2017) established a strong impact of changing socioeconomic of society on the moral values of the youth. Yang, Guo, Wu and Kou (2020) established that low socioeconomic status increases the propensity of youth to indulge in immoral behaviour.

Results obtained from this study show that the majority, 100(69.5%) of the youth, as well as 115 (68.1%) adult church members, agreed that socioeconomic status contributed to the persistence of moral decadence among the youths in the study locale. On the contrary, 33(22.9%) youth, as well as 34 (20.1%) adult church members, were not certain, as opposed to 11(7.7%) youth and 20 (11.9%) adult church members that disagreed. Research suggests that socioeconomic status is a key factor that influences quality of life,

across the life span, for children, youth and families. The findings of a study across age, gender and socioeconomic status carried out by Ganguli and Chatterjee (2017) in West Bengal resonate very well with those of the current study. Ganguli and Chatterjee (2017) established that the socioeconomic status of the individuals that took part in the survey had a significant impact on their morality and living.

In an exclusive interview with Wamugunda (2022), it was noted that when youth lack jobs or when they are not able to adequately meet their basic needs, they end up becoming social misfits leading to moral decadence. Primary data generated from the mixed-gender FGD revealed that youths are more susceptible to moral dysfunctions due to a lack of necessities of economic life, money, material properties, and means of living. Suffice it to say that socioeconomic inequalities are accepted widely to have a deleterious effect on youth's moral resilience. An increasing emphasis should be placed on addressing youth unemployment, which exacerbates the problem. Through education, action and empowerment, youth engagement in economics can lead to moral transformation in a range of ways.

Peer Influence

Peers are people who are part of the same social group, so the term peer influence is termed as the influence that peers can have on themselves (Russell et al., 2015). Peer influence occurs when friends create opportunities for unsupervised activities. The interaction process with peers can change many things that happen in one's life, including behaviour (Wolske et al., 2020). Peer influence has been shown in previous research as facilitator of youths' social conduct (Zhu et al., 2020). The current research uses the data from a survey of Chuka Presbytery youth to examine how peer influence contributes to persistent moral decadence.

Results of the study show that the majority, 103 (71.5%) of the youth respondents, as well as 119(70.4%) adult church members, agreed that peer influence contributed to persistence in moral decadence among the youths. Those that held a contrary opinion included 28 (19.4%) youth and 28(16.6%) adult church members that were not sure, compared with 13 (9.1%) youth and 22(13.0%) adult church members that

disagreed that peer influence was contributing to persistence in youth moral decadence. This finding is in consonance with that of McGloin and Thomas (2019), who reported that peers can strongly influence an adolescent's preferences in dressing, speaking, using illicit substances, sexual behaviour, adopting and tolerating violence, adopting criminal and anti-social behaviours, and in numerous other aspects of his or her life. Obiageli and Nasiru (2021) investigated the relationship between peer group influence and moral activities among in-school adolescents in Ilorin South Local Government Area, Kwara State, Nigeria. The findings of the study indicated that there was no significant relationship between group peer influence and moral activities among in-school adolescents. This negates the findings of the current study. This implies that peer pressure can manifest itself in a variety of ways.

In an exclusive interview, Karendi (2022) reported that many youths had been found to derail in constructive moral behaviours not because they lack a teacher or mentor but because they are concerned that they will not be accepted by their peers or that they will be negatively influenced. Another clergy reported that the majority of the youth are led by peer pressure in making their decisions. Some end up following bad company without their knowledge.

Society is grappling with many behavioural problems of church members. The impact of peer groups on youths' moral behaviour in Chuka Presbytery has long been a source of worry among parents and even the clergy. Due to Peer influence, the youth have been lured into harmful habits such as alcohol drinking, smoking, engaging in unhealthy sexual behaviour, cultist activities, and other maladaptive behaviours that divert their attention away from prosocial behaviours. The continuing degeneration of personal virtue among the youth seems to be emerging as the single-most urgent issue of our time. Thus, the issue of youth moral decadence in our society is a concern that needs a multidimensional approach to address.

Negative Media Influence

Media influence is the force exerted by a media message that alters or reinforces the audience's or an individual's beliefs (Biagi, 2014). Media messages can have an unhealthy/negative influence on youth

behaviour (Biagi, 2014). The negative influence of mass media on society can drive people towards poverty, crime, nudity, violence, and bad mental and physical health disorders (Reny & Manzano, 2016). The cases of youth killing innocents by acquiring weapons are considered one of the major negative effects of mass media on children, as they usually get carried away by provoking news stories, action movies, and games.

Results of this study show that the majority, 105 (72.9%) of the youth respondents as well as 133 (78.7%) adult church elders agreed that negative media content contributes to the persistence of moral decadence among the youths in our society. The results also show that 24 (16.7%) youth and 14 (8.3%) adult members neither agreed nor disagreed as compared with 15 (10.4%) youth and 22 (13.0%) adult church members that disagreed. Huesmann and Taylor (2006) carried out a meta-analysis of 431 research related to the effects of media violence, of which 264 focused on youth aged 18 years. The study established that exposure to media violence was associated with negative outcomes such as more aggressive behaviours, thoughts, and feelings, as well as reduced helping behaviour. This correlates very well with the findings of the current study. A Presbytery moderator, Wamugunda (2022), who took part in the survey, reported that social media is increasing the dependency of youth on its usage and impacting social and moral values. The more time the youth spend on the usage of social media, the more their personality traits are influenced by its usage.

Despite having many advantages, social media has several disadvantages along with negative impacts on social, moral, ethical, and societal values. Children and teens that are dependent on the usage of social media websites tend to have different behaviours, different moral and ethical values, and different forms of personality development. The moderator further indicated that there is much immoral behaviour that has superimposed moral behaviours of youth as a result of the use of social media platforms. In a related response, Marete (2022) reported that youth that are consistent users of social media develop traits of hatred, ignorance, arrogance, selfishness, and dishonesty. Traits that should be a part of youth personalities, such as honesty, sincerity, loyalty, help, and support for other people, are now lacking in the

youth as a result of interacting with media content that has a lot of negative influence.

Data obtained from FGD indicate that moral deterioration is associated with a number of factors. In a mixed-gender FGD session with youth at one of the Presbytery centres, the youth had insights that media and particularly social media was responsible for youth moral deterioration. Media contributes to moral degradation because it exposes uncensored messages and images to the public. We can deduce from the results that negative media content largely influences youth moral development. This concern should be addressed so that the youth can learn about the important moral traits in their lives. These traits are necessary to make youth ethical and responsible citizens of any country or society. Any society that is not morally sound is bound to experience a variety of social menace.

Societal Influence

Society refers to the aggregate of people living together in a more or less ordered community (Sheehy et al., 2015). Social influence is any change in behaviour, emotion or thinking that other individuals cause, even if their presence is only imagined, expected or implied (Flache et al., 2017). Thus, societal influence means the intentional and unintentional efforts by people living in a community to change another person's beliefs, attitudes, or behaviour. Society shapes our values by the roles in which we play. Society plays a huge role in moulding youths' behaviour, attitude and character. It determines how they view other people, their general outlook, and their ethics. Ethical relativism is the concept that holds that morality is relative to the cultural norms of an individual. Moral standards are values that a society uses to determine what is reasonable, correct, or acceptable (Reamer, 2018). That is, whether an action is right or wrong depends on the society's moral norms of practised. The same action may be morally right in one society but be morally wrong in another.

Results of this study reveal that the majority of 94 (65.2%) youth and 120 (72.7%) adult church members that took part in the survey agreed that societal influence contributes to persistence in moral decadence among the youths. The results also show that 21 (14.6%) youth, as well as 24 (14.2%) adult church

members, were not sure that societal influence had an effect on the persistence of youth moral decline, while 29 (20.2%) youth and 25 (14.8%) adult church members disagreed. Silke et al. (2020) argue that society affects youth behaviours by influencing them through cultural values, norms, and social ideals. In a one-on-one interview with Gitari at Kiereni PCEA, it was noted that the issue of youth moral decadence has become very controversial as society has lost a sense of morals. The clergy reported that from the early stages of development and throughout life, we learn to adapt our behaviour according to social expectations and requirements. Therefore, our moral is largely influenced by the society we live in. Social norms, both implicit and explicit, guide individual behaviour. On this view, some aspects of moral competence may be universal and long-lasting, while others may be ephemeral.

The discussion of the mixed gender FGD reported that youth moral development is tied to their social development in the context of the society they live in. The moral development of a child is shaped by multi-factors. First is the family, then school, society and the nation. In general, a good society helps in the moral development of children. On the other hand, a bad society can have a negative impact on the moral development of children. Conceptually, Odeh (2013) asserted that moral decadence is the failure of our society to uphold moral standards. Muraino and Ugwumba (2014) noted that moral decadence is the process of acting in a manner that demonstrates a lack of moral standards. It means a significant decline in the moral values in a particular society. Since moral interactions occur in the contexts of society, factors predisposing our youth to serious anti-social behaviour that poses a threat to the education, life and well-being of Kenyan youths should be mitigated.

Parents Care Free Attitude

Care-free attitude refers to one's behaviour of not allowing anything to cause you to become irritated or angry, even if an occurrence causes you problems (Kahan, 2022). Attitudes refer to perspectives, reactions, viewpoints or settled ways of thinking about parenting aspects or child development, including parents' roles and responsibilities. A carefree person is, therefore, someone who does not care about nurturing and supporting their children's moral

growth. Parents and other caregivers are important resources for children in managing behaviour. In this role, they provide the most intimate context for the nurturing and safeguarding of children as they develop their identities and personalities, as well as they mature physically, cognitively, emotionally, and socially.

Results of this study indicate that the majority, 78 (354.2%) of the youth respondents and 123 (72.8%) adult church members, agreed that the carefree attitude of parents indeed contributes to the persistence of moral decadence among the youths in the study locale. The results further indicate that 37 (25.7%) youth, as well as 10 (5.9%) adult church members, were not sure whether the carefree attitude of parents was responsible for the persistence of youth moral decadence as opposed to 29 (20.1%) youth and 36 (21.3%) adult church members that strongly disagreed.

A one-on-one interview with Mutura (2022) revealed that parents who take a casual role in parenting predispose their children to increased alcohol use and higher rates of social misconduct. Permissive parents do not regulate or control the behaviour of their children; hence less aware of the limits of acceptable. Parents and guardians leave the house early in search of the means of survival and come back late, tired; they abandon their responsibilities to outsiders and technological devices. The results are bad habits learned from television, films, video games, telephones, the internet and other social networks. These are expressed in the forms of indecent dressing, permissive lifestyle, wild partying and drug abuse. In general, kids with parents that are carefree or easy-going have worse social skills. Children raised by permissive parents typically lack a strong sense of self-discipline since permissive parenting implies a lack of demands and expectations. A study by Pinquart (2017) demonstrated that children raised by permissive parents are likely to suffer from social dysfunctions. Findings from data generated from the FGDs indicate that permissive parents provide few limits or discipline for misbehaviour. Permissive parents are less demanding and more lenient. Uninvolved parents offer little support or guidance for the child's life outside of the home and are characterised by a lack of responsiveness to the needs of a child. Children of

uninvolved parents are more likely to engage in hazardous behaviours and have lower self-esteem. Children with permissive parents could occasionally not be under the direct watch of adults who care about them enough to make sure they follow the rules in all situations where they deal with others. The focus group discussions confirmed that parents are their children's strongest role models and greatest influence. Parenting styles are a major factor in children's development. The way parents interact with their children has a significant effect on the child's behaviour. Children always adopt their parent's values and types of behaviour; hence, a carefree parent is not only endangering the life of his children but his personal life and the society at large.

Decline in Religious Training

Religious training is the teaching of a particular religion and its varied aspects: its doctrines, beliefs, rituals, customs, rites and personal roles (Goldman, 2018). This instruction is given by teaching people the principles of Christianity and training them on habits of piety. The contemporary paradigm of religious, moral education is based on the combination of moral action and moral knowledge. In order to produce concurrent changes in the cognitive (knowledge and assumption of values, principles, and religious norms), affective-motivational (favouring the manifestation of religious belief and motivational support required to comply with the norms), and behavioural levels, religious education assumes a constant oscillation and guidance of instructional formative approaches between reason and feeling (acquiring skills specific to religious behaviour).

Religious training provides opportunities to promote spiritual development and is touted as the most trusted means of curbing moral decadence among youths (Goldman, 2018). The youth are an important section of church membership as it is in them that the future of any society and its morality abound. In this context, every society would strive to inculcate and nurture what it upholds as morally good to its members through religious training. Results of this study show that the majority, 86 (59.7%) of the youth respondents, agreed, as well as 112 (66.3%) adult church members, that the decline in religious training has partly contributed to the persistence of moral decadence among the Kenyan youth. Those that

presented a contrary opinion included 29 (20.1%) youth, 11 (6.5%) adult church members that were non-committal, 29 (20.2%), and 46 (27.2%) youth and adult church members that were in disagreement. This finding collaborated with the findings obtained by Storm (2016), who found a positive association between religious education and morality. The study revealed that children having religious education displayed more confidence, self-discipline and capacity to overcome stress and depression. On the contrary, the absence of religious education was observed to cause moral deterioration, as mentioned by Gogo (2020), Khanam et al. (2020). The research findings are helpful to review and improve religious education, especially related to moral practices.

The findings generated from the questionnaires corresponded with interview observations that religious education influences peoples' morals and values through multiple pathways. Marete (2022) reported that religious teachings shape the way people think about and respond to the world, fosters habits such as church attendance and prayer, and provide a web of social connections. It supports them in developing and ruminating on their values and moral reasoning ability. However, Wamugunda (2022), in charge of the Kambandi parish of the PCEA, reported that the declining moral standards among youth were associated with deficiencies in religious training. This makes the effects of present religious input on youth moral development questionable. Therefore, it is essential to identify the reason for such dissonance.

A brief description of FGDs summaries reveals that the present church seems not to adequately prepare the youths for responsible moral adulthood. The irresponsible behaviour in the lives of many youths today can be attributed to the weakening of moral formation in their respective backgrounds. Demands are therefore made to the bodies in the society entrusted with moral guidance to urgently respond to the declining level of morality among the youth population.

Extravagant Lifestyle

Extravagance refers to the practice of spending more money than is necessary or wasteful, lavish, profligate spending. Proverbs 25:27 provides that too much

honey is not good for you, and so is trying to win too much praise. Someone who is ostentatious spends more money than they can afford or makes excessive use of a resource than is reasonable. The lifestyle of a particular person or group of people is the living conditions, behaviour and habits that are typical of them or are chosen by them. An extravagant lifestyle, therefore, implies the act or habit of spending more money than the available or than is necessary. Kattey, the Archbishop of the Province of Niger Delta Anglican Communion, blames the high level of moral decadence in the society on a lack of fear of God and the glorification of earthly luxuries (Kattey, 2016).

Results of this study reveal that a majority of 80 (55.6%) of the youth, as well as 108 (63.9%) of the adult church members that participated in the survey, agreed that extravagant lifestyle contributes to persistence in moral decadence among the youths. Those that held differing sentiments included 39 (27.1%) youth and 30 (17.8%) adult church members who strongly disagreed as opposed to 24 (17.4%) and 31 (18.3%), respectively, who neither agreed nor disagreed. In a study focusing on the pervasiveness of materialism sensation and its effects on youth behaviour in a small comprehensive South African University, Ravhuhali et al. (2020) established that students nowadays dream of money and luxury, which affects their behaviour since they highly embrace these aspects. According to Zaheer (2018), Pakistani youth are spending money just to be a part of society and focus more on materialistic things like cars and houses. This obsession with an extravagant lifestyle has led to a decline in moral values among the youth.

Based on the shared views from respondents who participated in the FGDs, this research identified extravagance as a lifestyle risk factor responsible for the persistence of youth moral decadence in contemporary society. Studies by Oguntola et al. (2010), Yeoman (2011) and Dođru et al. (2015) affirm this claim. Moral decadence is the decay of ethical values and norms that govern an individual and society at large. It lowers standards of moral behaviour and creates new but lower criteria for ethics and justice. The advent of the ostentatious, extravagant lifestyle of modern youth has done much harm to the moral acumen of the average Kenyan youth. The resultant effects of this unfolding malady are the complete loss

of interest in hard work, the dignity of work, and the "get-reach-quick" syndrome. This trend needs urgent reversal if the youth population are to be salvaged morally. There is a need to emphasise holiness, righteousness and moral living rather than prosperity message. "Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach" (Proverbs 14:34). In this simple verse, we see established a rule, or standard, composed of two alternatives. There is no middle ground. This can drive a change of attitude towards restitution and a U-turn from moral decadence.

Race and Ethnicity

Race describes the concept of dividing individuals into groups based on different sets of physical characteristics and the process of assigning social significance to those groups (Denton & Deane, 2010). Ethnicity describes the people's culture in a given geographic area, including their language, heritage, religion and customs (Banks et al., 2019).

The results of this study show that racial and ethnic affiliations had the least influence on youth moral decadence, as seen from the descriptive statistics (mean = 3.2703; 3.4385) generated from youth and adult church members, respectively. According to Agbeusi (2021), issues of youth morality are widespread and cannot be tagged to a specific ethnic group or race. However, racial and ethnic prejudices contribute to the disparities in the prevalence and persistence of moral decadence across the globe.

In an exclusive interview with Mutura (2022), it was deciphered that even though moral decay was prevalent among the younger generation, race and ethnicity were not significant predictors of vice. Every human society is grappling with this problem, albeit with racial and ethnic affiliations. A report published by Barna (2016) noted that the majority of American adults across age groups, ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic status and political ideology express concern about the nation's moral condition. The maxim of the argument lies in the effect of globalisation. Globalisation has effected changes in the scheme of a worldview, which affected the acceptable ways by which each society chooses to behave in line with the moral values embedded in their cultural process. The manner in which society tends to impact sound moral values in children and youths is

very contrary to what operated in the past when parents decide what is right on the basis of cultural heritage and moral values. The changes in the societal role in promoting positive social and moral values are being influenced by cultural globalisation, which refers to the intensification and expansion of cultural flows globally. Based on the foregoing information, it is evident that immorality has become the new normal, and therefore, the need to curb this decadence is a realistic world panacea.

Moral Laxity in the Society

Morality is a code of conduct or a set of rules that ought to govern our lives, self-interest, attitudes and values. Moral laxity, therefore, refers to a lack of strictness, severity, or concern for one's work, rules, or standards of behaviour (Szram, 2017). It may refer to an individual act or behaviour that is not conforming to generally accepted moral standards. It can also refer to a general atmosphere or culture in which morality is not taken seriously or is seen as unimportant.

Results of this study indicate that the majority, 102 (70.9%) of the youth and 116 (68.6%) adult church members that took part in this study affirmed that moral laxity in society, to some extent, contributed to the persistence of moral decadence among the youths. On the contrary, 14 (9.7%) youth and 19 (11.5%) adult church members respondents disagreed as opposed to 28 (19.4%) youth and 34 (20.1%) adult church members that indicated that they were not sure whether moral laxity in the society was contributing to the persistence in youth moral decline. Different scholars concur that the lack of consistency in checking youth indiscipline accounts for the multiplicity of reasons for the persistence of moral decadence (Onyekwere et al., 2018. Karendi (OI, 2022), who is A church minister from Kambandi PCEA parish, clearly stated that immorality had become so rampant in Chuka Presbytery despite the establishment of the youth programs. The clergy reiterated that the lack of moral instructions in schools and places of worship exacerbated the problem. On the other hand, data generated from FGDs revealed that there are many reasons for persistence in moral decadence among the youth, including such factors as moral slackness in society.

Based on the research finding of this study, it can be said that moral laxity is a reality among youths, adults and society. If the situation is not checked as soon as possible, it will bring us to a sad ruin. Moral laxity in present-day social life can be solved only by campaigning for wider and more conscientious acceptance of Christian moral standards among the country's youth. The youths should be encouraged to translate their immoral and destructive energies into meaningful activities that are morally acceptable to society. Adults should also embrace healthy moral lives that youths will emulate to build a better society. Reclaiming youths is not an easy task at all; it is a task for all.

Dysfunctional Families

A dysfunctional family is one in which the child's physical and emotional requirements are not met due to conflict, misbehaviour, a lack of structure, chaos, or indifference (Flores et al., 2014). The primary causes of dysfunctional families are two adults, one of whom is typically overtly abusive and the other codependent. Factors that can impair the functioning of a family include poor communication, poor parenting, distressed or abusive environments, substance abuse, mental illness and chronic physical illness (Flores et al., 2014). Dysfunctional families have dynamics in which parents repeatedly and consistently neglect their children, emotionally traumatise them, and treat them in disrespectful ways.

Results from a survey of youth and adult church members in the Chuka Presbytery indicated that the majority of 90 (62.5%) of the youth and 111 (65.6%) of the adult church members agreed that dysfunctional families contributed to the persistence of moral decadence among the youth in the Presbytery. Those with a contrary opinion included 26 (18.1%) youth and 33 (19.6%) adult church members that disagreed, 28 (19.4%) youth and 25 (14.8%) adult church members who neither agreed nor disagreed. This finding raises the question of whether dysfunctional families account for the persistence of youth moral concerns.

Several studies, based on years of observation, note that the traumatic behaviour of parents predisposes their children to moral apathy (King & Smith, 2016; Spitzer et al., 2016; Dalgaard et al., 2016). Similar results were found descriptively from an interview

with Wamugunda (2022). The clergy reported that children of dysfunctional families struggle with trust and self-esteem issues. Clearly, these deficits often tend to bleed into all areas of their social-emotional lives, thereby affecting their moral stability. The clergy added that life in a dysfunctional family is emotionally tumultuous. It is characterised by abuse, neglect, and poor communication, all of which bleed aggression among children. The clergy adds that no family is perfect; every family occasionally experiences conflict, stress, and even suffering. At the end of the day, however, love, healthy communication, trust, support, and respect are what get a healthy family through.

A phenomenological analysis of the FGDs reports reveals that the quality of family relationships, including social support (providing love, advice, and care) and strain (arguments, being critical, making too many demands), can influence well-being through psychosocial, behavioural, and physiological pathways. Based on the findings of this study, it can be deciphered that growing up in a dysfunctional family can largely have a negative effect on children's moral development. The family is considered the vital component of a life that brings about the existence of society. Through time, the family has always been the foundation from and upon which the morals of children are built, nurtured and developed, which implies that the family is of basic importance and necessity. The alarming rate of youth moral decadence in Kenya could be the cumulative effects of the failure of many social institutions, such as the family, school, and the church, to spearhead programmes that support family stability.

Influence of Modern Education

Modern education is the most recent and current form of education taught in schools and other learning institutions (Qi, 2010). Modern education is not merely concerned with imparting formal knowledge; rather, it strives for the individual's total development. The basic philosophical assumptions are that modern education has shaped youth moral development in a number of ways. The current study investigated factors accounting for the persistence of moral decadence among the youth despite of church's effort to instil morality among the young people in Chuka Presbytery. Results obtained indicate that the majority, 92 (63.9%) of the youth as well as 87 (51.5%)

of the adult church members that participated in the survey, agreed that modern education has a role to play in the persistence of moral decadence among the youths. The results further indicate that 28 (19.5%) youth and 49 (29.0%) adult church members that took part in the study did not agree with the sentiment that modern education had an impact on youth moral decline.

Hitherto, 24 (16.7%) youth and 33 (19.5%) adult church members indicated that they were not certain whether modern education was responsible for the persistence of youth moral decadence. Inglehart (2018) contends that standards of behaviour and moral values have changed over time, from generation to generation, across cultures and locations as a result of modern education. In the old African civilisation, both boys and girls participated in initiation rites where the youth were taught appropriate behaviour. The boys were taught how to be morally upright, strong, avoid crimes like theft, have good connections with neighbours, suffer hardships, be patient and tolerant, keep peace at home, and take care of the family. Girls were instructed in moral behaviour, how to be good brides, and how to be excellent mothers. The majority of academics and researchers agree that cultural changes, contemporary education, and to some extent, different societies have eroded the African tradition's system of moral teaching. This makes it challenging to come up with a system that everyone can use to teach young people moral principles.

According to Marete (2022), a clergyman from the Chuka PCEA parish, until the arrival of the missionaries, who offered formal education, young people typically learned about moral habits from the older generation through informal education. In our contemporary society, it is evident that most adults have no time for their children in that they are busy with activities of income generation. The clergy assert that advancements in science and education have weakened religious convictions. Youth are less interested in religion and prefer a deontological approach to new social and economic problems. As a result, programs for religious instruction, ethics, guidance, and counselling, which are crucial for moral growth, receive little focus. In contrast to other disciplines like math and physics, there are not as

many teachings on religion, ethics, and advice and counselling. This accounts for the rampant immoral behaviour among the youth today.

Members of the FGDs postulated that the main reason for youth moral decadence is that technologies like social media, smartphones, and artificial intelligence brought about by modern education have provided a platform where the youth can carry out immoral acts without being seen or judged by society. Furthermore, the internet is becoming the primary venue for vices such as cybercrime and human trafficking, where criminals carry out their deeds without regard for how the victims feel or how the outcome will turn out. The Youth are increasingly using the internet to extort money unlawfully, with no regard for what society thinks of their actions. Although modern education is solving most of society's problems, which would otherwise take ages to tackle through technology, it is also resulting in immorality, which is threatening the overall existence of human beings.

Based on the arguments presented under this finding, it is cogent to allude that one of the most pressing concerns confronting the globe today is the decline of morality in society. Western civilisation and colonisation, as typified by contemporary education, science, and technology, are responsible for the perpetuation of moral decay. Kenyan youth's attention has been diverted from conventional value systems to the computer internet, resulting in a divided interest in vices that violate societal norms and values. This breach has not only continued, but it has corroded moral and cultural ideals and is responsible for moral decadence's continuation. Similarly, there has been a focus on formal education without a parallel effort on moral education. This fallacy is to blame for the continuation of moral degradation.

Inadequate Moral Instruction

Moral instruction is when a person teaches and gives advice to another person about moral behaviour (Adler, 2019). For the purpose of this study, moral instruction refers to the help given to enable youth to acquire virtues or habits that help them to individually live good lives and, at the same time, become useful and contributing members of their communities. Thus, effective moral instruction could be described as teaching that inculcates values, norms and knowledge

that enable someone to function effectively in society. In Kenya, moral instruction is transmitted in churches, schools and families.

Results of this study show that the majority, 95 (65.9%) of the youth respondents and 87 (51.5%), agreed that lack of effective moral instruction in churches and schools contributed to the persistence of moral decadence among the youths. The results further show that 26 (18.1%) youth and 51 (40.2%) adult church members disagreed as opposed to 23 (16.0%) youth and 31 (18.3%) adult church members that were uncertain. In a study of moral instruction and its relationship with character development, Silay (2014) established a link between moral education and good character. Primary data obtained using interviews and focus group discussions revealed that the persistent moral decadence among the youth population can be attributed to a lack of a solid moral education. Moral education entails developing the ability, knowledge, freedom, and willingness to adhere to ethical norms in one's daily decisions and acts. In an interview with Mawira (OI, 2022), it was established that inadequate moral instruction in places of worship, schools and at home contributed to the persistence of moral decay in society. The clergy noted that even though Churches play a key role in the moral education of young people in addition to attending to their spiritual needs, it has failed to implement long-lasting moral instruction.

It can be argued from the foregoing discussion that the neglect of moral instruction is responsible for the rampant cases of armed robbery, examination malpractice, unwanted pregnancies, child abandonment, cultism, drug trafficking, embezzlement of public funds, corruption, and dishonesty, among other social evils. This negligence could be part of the explanation for the disorders that are so common in our society. Measures should be taken to make moral instruction in schools and churches effective, as this is the only way that we can move our nation forward in this age of technology and globalisation.

Lack of Positive Role Models

A role model is a person admired by someone and whose behaviour they try to copy (Morgenroth et al., 2015). Role models are influential in shaping people's character making. These people internalise the ethical

behaviour they learn, imitate, or copy from their role models. There are two different types of role models, positive ethical role models and negative role models. A positive role model an example to children; it inspires them to live meaningful lives. Studies show that youth who look up to role models that engage in negative or risky behaviours such as drugs, drinking, promiscuity and violence are more likely to follow suit and, in the end, engage in the same risky behaviours (Hardy et al., 2015). Youngsters may assume that the behaviours of negative role models are typical, safe, and acceptable. Studies also support the notion that youth who have positive role models engage in less problematic behaviours than those who do not (Hurd et al., 2011).

Social learning theory depicts that a lot of our behaviour is learned from observing the actions of others. Results of this study show that the majority, 82 (56.9%) of the youth, as well as 115 (68.1%) adult church members, agreed that lack of positive role models in society contributes to the persistence of moral decadence among the youths. The results further show that 38 (26.4%) youth, as well as 20 (11.9%) adult church members, disagreed that lack of positive role models was a contributing factor to the persistence of youth moral decline, while 23 (16.0%) and 34 (20.1%) respectively were unsure about this. This finding agrees well with Wachege (2017)'s findings that the presence of positive role models can play a central role in shaping youth behaviour during early adolescence. Brown and Treviño (2014) indicated that role models have a great impact on shaping the ethical behaviour we see in the world today; for example, parents can shape their children's behaviours in that the child will exactly copy what he or she sees the father or mother doing making such behaviour become part and parcel of the child. All these sources state that behaviour is influenced through imitations, which can become permanent. Thus, role models highly influence and convey ethical standards to young people, whether they are wrong or right. This finding is important for youth who come from environments where there is a lack of positive role models. Youth should be wary of negative media role models because they may glamorise truly wrong values.

In an exclusive interview, Marete (2022) reported that most people have a role model who inspires them to

achieve certain goals or lifestyles. Positive role models offer a range of useful or helpful behaviours, but negative role models, on the other hand, offer examples of harmful or disruptive behaviours. Since many people can observe these individuals' behaviours, it is likely that people will imitate their behaviours and attitudes. Generally, it is young people who are still developing their own identities that strive so hard to imitate their role models. Few studies have, however, sought to understand the kind of values young people hold or their perception of what a good person is and who or what influences their values. Results of FGDs revealed that role models influence the attitudes and behaviours of both youth and adults in a variety of ways. Positive role models can be instrumental in developing the career aspirations, educational goals, and consumer behaviour of the youth, while negative role models can motivate youths toward unhealthy behaviours, like bullying, cheating in school or substance abuse. It is obvious from the foregoing discussion that the influence that role models have over young people is vast and great. Role models can affect a young person's beliefs or possibly change their entire outlook. Additionally, role models have an astounding effect on young people's lives in our society. A role model is able to shape the ideals, views, and actions of a young person. The more we understand how and why role models influence teens, the better we can support young people in their journeys toward adulthood. By examining the influence of role models in the community, we will be

able to establish the true effect that role models have on the youth's lives.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion: Youth moral decadence poses a serious threat to families, traditional institutions, the church, the educational system and society at large. The study established identified several factors responsible for the persistence of moral decadence among the youth. Socioeconomic status and harmful media content stood out as the main causes of the persistence of moral decadence among youths in Chuka Presbytery. Inadequate parental upbringing, a lack of sympathy and concern, the pursuit of consumerism, peer pressure, cultural pressure, a carefree parental attitude, a decline in religious education, an opulent lifestyle, and societal moral laxity are other reasons. Other reasons contributing to young people's moral decadence include broken families, the influence of modern schools, inadequate moral education, and a lack of good role models. Race and ethnicity had the least impact on young people's moral degradation.

Recommendations: The clergy and other PCEA members involved in implementing youth moral programmes should embrace the use of more innovative ways of delivering moral education to the youth. Sometimes, youth get easily preoccupied with other cognitive issues if the content delivered to them is not relevant and experiential. This is why programme facilitators should make lessons clear and stimulating. Structuring a good lesson can be key to better learning among the youth.

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