

EVALUATING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF YOUTH PROGRAMS OFFERED BY THE YOUTH MINISTRY DEPARTMENT IN CHARACTER FORMATION IN METHODIST CHURCH IN KENYA, KAAGA SYNOD

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Abstract

This study evaluated the effectiveness of the youth programs offered by the youth ministry department in character formation in the Methodist Church in Kenya, Kaaga Synod. Bandura's social learning theory led this study from a sociological point of view. During the study, descriptive formats were used to collect, analyse, compare and interpret the data. The study targeted five circuits in Kaaga Synod, Meru County. The study used random samples to select churches. A sample of youth church members was selected using the proportionate sampling technique. Targeted samples were used for selecting church ministers, youth ministers and church chairpersons as key informants because of their accurate knowledge of church youth issues. The researcher used questionnaires, interview schedules, and focus group discussions to gather the necessary information. Discussions, as well as tables, were used to collect and analyse the data. The findings of this study contributed to the knowledge of religion and morality. The outcome of this study is also beneficial to participants who are policymakers and designers, parents and educators in their efforts to promote youth morals.

Key terms: Character, Department, Effectiveness, Formation, Youth Programs.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Methodist Church in Kenya has put different departments based on age to ensure representation from all the parties, including parents, youths, and children. The youth ministry department in the Methodist Church in Kenya has been an instrumental tool in the character formation of the Kenyan youth. The department has been instrumental in encouraging youth participation in church activities and encouraging good behaviour (Ibuathu, 2014). The MCK youth department is intended to care for the needs of youths between the ages of 15 and 35. The youth ministry department coordinates all youth programs in the Church (MCK Records, 2015). The mission of the MCK youth ministry is to create relationships among youngsters and equip them to serve the church and the community. The youth department plays a crucial role in addressing youth development in the church through various programs.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

Prayer communities have been related to a higher quality of life and have been shown to help young people develop excellent character (Ai et al., 2009). Methodist Church of Kenya ensures the youth are involved in planning for worship. Mass worship offers the youth opportunity to participate in religious rituals such as prayer and worship, which plays an essential role in community life. Worship emphasises and encourages collective survival, interdependence, and cooperation. In worship, God is viewed as responsible for the creation of everything and healing. Worship is a ritual that may provide emotional support and psychological stability, thus helping the youth avoid alcohol and drug abuse, sexual immorality, theft, etc. (MCK Records, 2015). For persons and families who attend weekly worship services together, it is a reminder that there is a God in control of all things and that support is available amid life's challenges. Worship, therefore, becomes a critical coping mechanism for many youths struggling to avoid alcohol and drugs.

Rallies and crusades are gospel meetings where the youth are encouraged to present songs and testimonies publicly. They are held mainly during the school holidays. The preacher presents a sermon, mentioning Alcoholism and addiction in an informed, accepting, and hopeful manner. Immersion in such church activities equips the youth with skills to resist the temptation of abusing alcohol and drugs (MCK Records, 2015). Christian recovery uses Bible principles to help build and strengthen the life-giving tools needed to analyse and rebuild relationships that may have been severely damaged by addiction. Such principles are based on mass teaching in religious and religious meetings (Cook, 2008). Sabloff (2002), Carothers et al. (2005), Webb and Whitmer (2001) argued that prayers are effective healing tools and improve the quality of human commitment for individuals in religious wars.

Individuals involved in church work are more likely to be friends with other young people engaged in similar activities and are less likely to form friendships with strangers (Mason & Windle, 2001). Young people who are less involved in church work are at greater risk. For example, drug users tend to have less attendance at church and less involvement in church work and activities (Miller, 2013). One way to reduce alcohol and substance abuse in adolescents is to actively participate in church and community activities.

3.0 METHODS

Bandura's social learning theory led this study from a sociological point of view. During the study, descriptive Formats were used to collect, analyse, compare and interpret the data. The study targeted five circuits in Kaaga Synod, Meru County: Kaaga, Ruri, Karanene, Kibirichia, and Buuri. Each circuit consists of eight local congregations. The study used random samples to select churches. A sample of youth church members was selected using the proportionate sampling technique. Targeted samples were used for selecting church ministers, youth ministers and church chairpersons as key informants because of their accurate knowledge of church youth issues. The researcher used questionnaires, interview schedules, and focus group discussions to gather the necessary information. Discussions, as well as tables, were used to collect and analyse the data.

4.0 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Respondents in this study were asked to indicate their level of satisfaction with regard to the effectiveness of the youth programs offered by the youth department in character building in Methodist Church Kaaga Synod in Kenya. The findings on the effectiveness of the youth programs offered by the youth department In Methodist Church Kaaga Synod are discussed below. They include:

Table 1: Youth Ministry and Fellowship

Level of satisfaction	Frequency	Per cent
Fairly Effective	15	4.5
Not Sure	6	1.8
Effective	96	29.1
Very Effective	213	64.5
Total	330	100.0

Results in the table above indicate that most of the church youth members, 213 (64.5%), confirmed that the youth ministry and fellowship program, which was established by the youth department, is very effective in character building among the youth in Methodist Church Kaaga Synod. Further, the findings indicated that 96 (29.1%) of the church youth members aver that the youth ministry and fellowship program are effective in enabling character formation among the youth in the church, while 15 (4.5%) of the church youth members asserted that the youths ministry and fellowship is fairly effective when it comes to character formation among the youths in the youths department in Methodist church Kaaga Synod.

The results also indicated that 6 (1.8%) of the church youths members were not sure whether youth ministry and fellowship in Methodist Church Kaaga Synod enhanced character formation among the youth in the church. Thus, from the findings, it is clear that most of the church youth members acknowledged that youth ministry and fellowship, established by the youth department in Methodist Church Kaaga Synod, is very effective in character building among the youth in Kaaga Synod Methodist Church.

Table 2: Youth Conferences and Camps

Level of satisfaction	Frequency	Per cent
Not Effective	4	1.2
Fairly Effective	10	3.0
Not Sure	32	9.7
Effective	255	77.3
Very Effective	29	8.8
Total	330	100.0

The findings show that the majority of the church youth members, 255(77.3%), acknowledged that youth conferences and camps are effective in character building among the youths in Methodist Church Kaaga Synod, while 4(1.2%) of the church young members avers that youth conferences and camps are not effective in the formation of character among the youth in the youth department in Kaaga Synod, Methodist Church in Kenya.

The research further established that 32(9.7%) of the church youth members asserted that they are not sure whether the youth conference and camps are effective in character building among the youth in Methodist Church Kaaga Synod. The study also established that 29(8.8%) of the church youths alluded that youth conferences and camps are very effective in character formation among the youths in the Church. There is also a church youth member, 10(3.0%), who opined that youth conferences and camps are fairly effective in the formation of characters among the youth in Kaaga Synod, Methodist Church in Kenya. Therefore, this study established that the majority of the church youth members acknowledged that the youth conferences and camps are effective in character formation among the youth in Methodist Church Kaaga Synod.

Education through conferences and youth camps or forums is one of the most commonly used intervention approaches to tackle youth drinking (Anderson & Baumberg, 2006). This study therefore established conferences and youths camps are very effective in character formation among the youths. The study further established that the youths who attend conferences and camps could shun away from drug abuse and immoral behaviours', which are not desirable in society, compared to the youths who fail to, attend these programs that enhance character formation among the youths in the church.

Mathai (2019) affirms that conferences and youth camps or forums were initiated to inform the community of the dangers that ADA is likely to cause in the community. Since alcohol is the most consumed substance in society, Mathai (2019) argues that education focusing on the same is important. Conferences and youth camps forums are popular and much-used approaches to educating the youth on the potential for harm from alcohol and drug consumption. Thus, enabling the youths to embrace desirable characters in society. Therefore, this study established that seminars, conferences, workshops and youth camps effectively enhance character formation among Kaaga Synod Methodist Church youths.

Table 3: Guidance and Counseling

Level of satisfaction	Frequency	Per cent
Not Effective	8	2.4
Fairly Effective	79	23.9
Not Sure	19	5.8
Effective	97	29.4
Very Effective	127	38.5
Total	330	100.0

This study's findings show that most of the church youth members, 127(38.5%), affirmed that the guidance and counselling program in Methodist Church Kaaga Synod is very effective. They acknowledged that this program has enhanced character formation among the youth department in the church. The research also established that church youth members 97(29.4) asserted that the guidance and counselling program, which was established by the youths department, has effectively moulded the characters of various youths in the church.

The research further affirmed that 79(23.9%) of the church youth members acknowledged that the guidance and counselling program in Methodist Church Kaaga Synod has been fairly effective on the character formation of the youths in the Synod. The findings also show that 19(2.4%) of the church youth members were unsure whether the guidance and counselling program has been effective in the character formation of the youths. The findings also show that 8(2.4%) of the church youth members asserted that the guidance and counselling program was ineffective in moulding the youths' characters in Methodist Church Kaaga Synod.

Oketch (2014) found that prevention programs like guidance and counselling can be helpful for individual who experiences problematic alcohol and drug use. Typically, the counsellor offers assessment, brief counselling, and referral to more extensive care. This study, therefore, established that the guidance and counselling program in Kaaga Synod is very effective in ensuring that youths are able to shun away from drug abuse. The youths can be able to attend guidance and counselling sessions in the youth department so that they can enhance character formation among the youth in the Synod.

Table 4: Seminars and Workshops

Level of satisfaction	Frequency	Per cent
not effective	26	7.9
fairly effective	165	50.0
not sure	31	9.4
Effective	80	24.2
very effective	28	8.5
Total	330	100.0

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The results of this study indicated that 165(50%) of the church youth members averred that seminars and workshops programs are fairly effective in character formation among the youth in Kaaga Synod, Methodist church. Further, the findings indicated that 80(24.2%) of the church youth members acknowledged that seminars and workshop programs in Methodist Church Kaaga Synod are effective in character formation among the youths in the church. The research also shows that 28(8.5%) of the church youth members asserted that seminars and workshop programs effectively promote character formation among the youth in Kaaga Synod Methodist church.

However, the study also established that 31(9.4%) of the youth church members affirmed that they were not sure of the effectiveness of seminars and workshops in character formation among the youths in Kaaga Synod, Methodist Church. The findings also indicate that 26(7.9%) of the church youth members averred that seminars and workshops are not effective in character formation among the youths. Therefore, this research established that the majority of church youth members affirmed that seminars and workshop programs are effective in character formation among church youth members.

Table 5: Bible Studies

Level of satisfaction	Frequency	Per cent
Not Effective	34	10.3
Fairly Effective	35	10.6
Not Sure	12	3.6
Effective	89	27.0
Very Effective	160	48.5
Total	330	100.0

Research shows that a large number of church youth members, 160(48.5%) in Kaagaa Synod Methodist Church, asserted that the bible study program is very effective in character formation among the youths in the church. The findings indicate that 89(27.0%) of the church youth members aver that the bible study program has been able to build the characters of various church you members at Kaaga Synod, Methodist Church. Further, the findings of the study indicate that 35(10.6%) of the church youths members argued that the bible study program in Methodist Church Kaaga Synod is fairly effective in the formation of characters among the youths in the church.

The study also shows that 34(10.3%) of the church youth members asserted that the bible study program in Kaaga Synod, Methodist Church, is ineffective in character formation among the youths. The research also indicates that the church youth members 12(3.3%) were not sure whether the bible study program was effective in character building among the youths in Methodist Church Kaaga Synod study was more analytical with emphasis on interpretation, especially in the contemporary world.

Mathai (2019) argues that youth who develop this spiritual habit of Bible study develop a Biblical worldview that would enable them to recognise the truth about the scriptural teachings with regard to

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alcohol and substance abuse. Therefore, this study established that Bible study programs are very effective in enhancing character formation among the youth in Kaaga Synod.

Table 6: Talent Shows and Open Forums

Level of satisfaction	Frequency	Per cent
Not Effective	30	9.1
Fairly Effective	7	2.1
Not Sure	55	16.7
Effective	82	24.8
Very Effective	156	47.3
Total	330	100.0

The research indicates that the majority of the church youth members (156%) averred talent shows and open forums are very effective on character formation among the youth in youth ministry at Kaaga Synod, Methodist Church. The study also indicates that 82(24.8%) of the church youth members argued that talent shows and open forums in Methodist Church Kaaga Synod are effective in character building among the youth in the youth department.

Further, the research indicates that 55(16.7%) of the church youth members are unsure whether talent shows and open forums are effective in character formation among the youths. In addition, 30(9.1%) of the church youth members asserted that talent shows and open forums are ineffective in character formation among the youths. The study also established that 7(2.1%) of the church youths members at Methodist Church Kaaga Synod opined that talent shows and open forums for the youths are fairly effective in building the youths' characters in the church.

Table 7: Retreats, Educational Tours, Athletics and Games

Level of satisfaction	Frequency	Per cent
Not Effective	12	3.6
Fairly Effective	16	4.8
Not Sure	15	4.5
Effective	94	28.5
Very Effective	193	58.5
Total	330	100.0

The findings of this study indicate that the majority of church youth members, 193(58.5%), affirmed that retreats, education tours, athletics and games programs in Kaaga Synod Methodist church are very effective in enhancing character building among the youths in the church. The research findings also show that church youth members opined that retreats, education tours, athletics and games are effective in character formation among the youths in the church.

The study further shows that 15(4.5%) of some church youth members indicated that retreats, education tours, athletics and games programs were not sure whether they were effective in building the characters of the various youths in the church. The findings also indicated that church youth members 16(4.8%) asserted that retreats, education tours, athletics and games programs, which were established by the youth department, are fairly effective in character formation among the youths in the SynodSynod. The research findings further indicate that the church youth members 12(3.6%) averred retreat, education tours, athletics and games are not effective in character formation among the youths in the youth ministry in the church.

Table 8: Rallies and Crusade

Level of satisfaction	Frequency	Per cent
Not Effective	37	11.2
Fairly Effective	30	9.1
Not Sure	10	3.0
Effective	109	33.0
Very Effective	129	39.1
Total	315	95.5
Missing System	15	4.5
Total	330	100.0

The research findings above indicate that 129(39.1%) of the church youth members affirmed that rallies and crusade programs for the youths effectively enable them to build their character among the youths in the church. The research further shows that 109(33.0%) of the church youth members are effective in enhancing character formation among the church youth member in Kaaga Synod. The findings also indicate that 37(11.2%) of the church youth members asserted that rallies and crusades are ineffective in forming characters among the youths in the youth department of the church.

The findings also show that 10(3.0%) of the church youths members argued that they were not sure whether rallies and crusades were effective in building the characters of the youths in the church. Other church youth members, 30(9.1%) averred that rallies and crusades at Kaaga Synod Methodist Church are fairly effective in the character formation of the various youths in the youth department.

Table 9: Alcohol and Drug Education

Level of satisfaction	Frequency	Per cent
Not Effective	43	13.0
Fairly Effective	161	48.8
Not Sure	18	5.5
Effective	39	11.8
very effective	69	20.9
Total	330	100.0

The research findings show that church youth members 69(20.9%) asserted that alcohol and drug education are very effective in building the characters of the youths in the church. Research findings indicate that 39(11.8%) of the church youth members averred that alcohol and drug education programs in the church are effective in the formation of characters of the youths in Kaaga Synod. The study also shows that church youth members 18(5.5%) opined that they are not sure whether the alcohol and drug education program established in Kaaga Synod Methodist Church was effective in building the characters of the youths in the church.

5.0 CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, this study established that the youth church members are engaged in various programs. The study further concluded that Kaaga Synod, Methodist Church youth department, has implemented various youth ministry programs. The research concluded that these programs in the youth department of Kaaga Synod Methodist Church have been able to enhance efficient and effective character formation among the youths in the church.

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