

PROJECT ABSTRACT

Master of Chaplaincy

Adventist University of Africa

Theological Seminary

Title: CAUSES OF SPIRITUAL DECLINE AMONG ADVENTIST STUDENTS
IN SELECTED PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES AT ELDORET KENYA

Researcher: Wilson Kipkosgei Birgen

Primary Adviser: Rei Kesis, PhD

Date: March 2025

This study investigated the factors influencing Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) students' attendance of church services in selected public universities, focusing on students at the University of Eldoret, Moi University campuses located in Eldoret. The two campuses are Annex Campus and the School of Medicine at Moi Teaching and Referral Hospital. The study objectives were to identify the causes of spiritual decline among Adventist students in institutions of higher learning. Second, to recommend the strategies of retaining, maintaining spirituality of the public institutions of learning in Eldoret, Kenya

Random sampling was employed to obtain a sample of 196 Adventist students who participated, with data collected through questionnaires and analyzed using descriptive statistics. The findings revealed that most participants were male, aged

18-22, in their second year, and had been baptized three years ago or more during the time of the study. While the majority of SDA students in public universities were baptized at home churches and had prior church responsibilities.

Although 92% of respondents reported attending church regularly, key reasons for absenteeism included lack of motivation or termed laziness and competing social activities on the Sabbath. Additionally, peer pressure and lack of mentorship contributed to non-attendance among students' friends. Notably, 60% of participants acknowledged spiritual decline due to irregular church attendance, with 51.9% perceiving similar effects among their peers. However, university experiences such as church of environment from home to university did not significantly impact church attendance, while discipleship programs such as mentorship were found to enhance spiritual growth.

The study recommends that chaplaincy ministries implement structured mentorship programs tailored for SDA students since this program enhance attendance, hence spiritual decline. Addressing peer pressure is one way of reducing spiritual decline, addressing this during discipleship programs enhanced church attendance. Chaplaincy should advise students during mentorship programs to abstain from worldly Sabbath activities. Strengthening discipleship programs, increasing engagement in church activities, and fostering a supportive spiritual environment can help SDA students maintain their faith while balancing academic and social demands.

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AT ELDORET KENYA

A project

presented in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree
Master of Chaplaincy

by

Wilson Kipkosgei Birgen

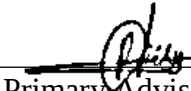
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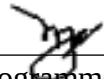
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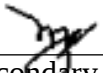
APPROVAL BY THE COMMITTEE:



Primary Adviser
Rei Kesis, PhD



Programme Director
Mahlon Juma, PhD



Secondary Adviser
Mahlon Juma, PhD

Dean, Theological Seminary
Feliks Ponyatovskiy, PhD

Adventist University of Africa

Date: June 2025

Glory be to God

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First and foremost, I thank God for granting me the strength, wisdom, and perseverance to undertake and complete this research. His grace has been my source of inspiration throughout this journey.

I extend my sincere appreciation to the Adventist University of Africa for its academic support, which made this study possible. My heartfelt gratitude goes to my supervisors, Prof. Rei Kesis and Dr. Mahlon Juma, for their invaluable guidance, encouragement, and constructive feedback. Their expertise and mentorship were instrumental in shaping the direction and quality of this research.

I am also deeply grateful to my wife Irene Birgen, my daughters Abigail, Caren, Ruth, Joy and my sons Peter and Ken for their unwavering support, prayers, and encouragement, which kept me motivated during challenging moments. Special thanks to my friend's Dr Willy Kemboi, Pr Jonah Lelei, Pr John Kemboi and colleagues who offered their insights, assistance, and motivation along the way.

Furthermore, I acknowledge the participants and institutions involved in this study for their cooperation and willingness to contribute, making this research possible.

May God bless you all abundantly.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The Background of the Study

Spiritual decline among university students is a worrying trend in this generation. The Adventist young people leaving the church while attending institutions of higher learning should be a concern of ministers. The life experiences of these young adults, as expressed by Derrico,¹ is a life of identity crisis, independence, intimacy, and impulse major attributes that influence the minds of fresh and continuing students in the university. While commenting on research on spirituality among young adults in institutions of higher learning, Waggoner bearing in mind that current spiritual needs go with the trend of new technology and innovation, added that an implementation plan on the spiritual growth of students on campus needs to be restructured to accommodate their wholistic lifestyle.²

This is in tandem with Plante³ who suggested for further research on spiritual nurture towards the lives of university students. The same view is shared by Colburn⁴

¹ Cindy M. Hatch Derrico, “Thriving on Campus: The Role of Residency Type in First-year College Students” (PhD diss., Azusa Pacific University, 2020), 5.

² Michael D. Wagoner, “Spirituality and Contemporary of Higher Education,” *Journal of College and Character* 17, no. 3 (2016): 147, <https://doi.org/10.1080/2194587x.2016.1195752>.

³ Thomas G. Plante, “Review of Spiritual Developmental Transformation among College Students,” *Religions* 11, no. 7 (2020): 333, <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel11070333>.

⁴ Jonathan J. Colburn, “Student Perceptions on the Community of Spiritual Formation at a Faith-based University” (DEd diss., George Fox University, 2018), 34, <https://digitalcommons.georgefox.edu/edd/122>.

that further research on how to improve the spiritual formative experience in lives of university students along with their mentors, need to be considered in the future.

A survey done by national study of youth and religion in America in the year 2016⁵ found out that, young adults declined from 58% to 28% in matters related to Christian beliefs and church attendance. This was a significant decline which has been reflected time and again in other research since 1960. Smith adds that 30.9% young adults of age 18-23 years attend church regularly, while 54.6 % do not attend at all.⁶ It is undeniable fact that the largest single demographic group in the church are young people. Bong observed that 40% to 50% of the mid-teens leave the church by the time they are 20's, while 60% of the Adventist young people leave church at the same time but the fact is that 75% of the Korean American young people leave the church as they grow up.⁷

The most recent research done by Ward which is more specific to Adventist students indicate that the Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) Church is losing more than 50% of the young people in the church.⁸ On the positive note, Bong further revealed that 73% of college students developed their identity due to spiritual space provided in college, 74% alludes that spiritual affirmation gave them strength, support and guidance, while 67% agree that their lives gained meaning and purpose through

⁵ Thomas E. Bergle, "Mapping the Missional Landscape of Emerging Adulthood." AYM Annual Meeting, October 2016, <https://www.aymeducators.org/wp-content/uploads/Bergler-Mapping-the-Missional-Landscape-of-Emerging-Adulthood.pdf>.

⁶ Christian Smith, with Patricia Snell, *Souls in Transition: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of Emerging Adults* (New York: Oxford University Press 2009), 112.

⁷ Wonyoung Bong, "Toward Improving the Effectiveness of Campus Ministry at University," *Asia-Africa Journal of Mission and Ministry* 7 (2013): 29, <https://africansdahistory.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/Toward-Improving-Effectiveness-of-Campus-Ministry-by-Bong.pdf>.

⁸ Scott R. Ward, "Public Campus Students: Sabbath School for the 70%," accessed 12 June 2023, <https://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1043&context=cye-pubs>.

spirituality. Investing in young people in colleges and universities is to be strategically planned as a means of spiritual growth.

There are many issues facing young adults on campus. Barton, Cadge, and van Stee⁹ revealed that issues facing students in higher institutions of learning are mental, social justice, community life, religious differences, and coping with the campus environment, they further questioned the skills, awareness, and understanding of chaplains, as to whether they have conceptualized their contributions towards such issues.

A study on the power and effects of faith-based religion in America as suggested by Grim and Grim indicates that youth who are spiritually active, participate in a faith community and invest in a prayerful relationship with their God, are less likely to use or abuse drugs, alcohol and related criminal activity. Faith act as powerful deterrent even when controlling other contributory factors.¹⁰ The same observation was noted in Israel and Arab adolescents, where issues of identity are paramount. It was reported that young people who experience joy, finding meaning of life, forgiving others are connected with higher spiritual power through meditation and prayer. In comparison with other countries, the perceived level of spiritual decline was insignificant.¹¹

The effect of spiritual decline can be identified through one's behavior. Good behavior manifests a sense of peace, hope, faith and comfort which increase levels of

⁹ Rebecca Barton, Wendy Cadge, and Elena G. van Stee, "Caring for the Whole Student: How Do Chaplains Contribute to Campus Life?" *Journal of College and Character* 21, no. 2 (2020): 67-85.

¹⁰ Brian J. Grim and Melissa E. Grim, "Belief, Behavior, and Belonging: How Faith Is Indispensable in Preventing and Recovering from Substance Abuse," *Journal of Religion and Health* 58 (2019): 1715, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10943-019-00876-w>.

¹¹ Valerie Michaelson et al., "Developmental Patterns of Adolescent Spiritual Health in Six Countries," *SSM- Population Health* 2 (2016): 294-303.

happiness and satisfaction in life. Spiritual wellbeing is associated with better college adjustment, and better quality of life,¹² On the contrary students who engage in drug abuse as revealed by Adeyemo at the university of Ibadan in Nigeria found out that students who abuse drugs mainly came from poor parenting and peer pressure. About 46% of them have abused drugs, coffee and alcohol were the most abused 36.8% and 29.6% respectively while 6.5% abuse cocaine.¹³

A survey, done at the coastal universities in Kenya to find out the prevalent behaviors among students, observed that substances abuse was likely to cause risky sexual behavior, encourage multiple sexual partners, increase sexually transmitted diseases, inability to make wise decision and increase chances of rape cases.¹⁴

Commenting on the need of spiritual care at Moi university school of medicine, Nyongesa et al. attribute the poor-quality health care to have been contributed by disrespectful and abusive treatment by health care providers.¹⁵ They found out that human health entails biomedical, psychological, socio-cultural and spiritual facets. They observed that lack of spiritual care providers has resulted in maternal and neonatal deaths caused by unspiritual care givers and untrained chaplains. Most of the hospitals in Kenya have no chaplains and the few who do, have

¹² Grim and Grim, "Belief, Behavior, and Belonging," 1713-1750; Omar Ismael Alorani and Mu'taz Fuad Alradaydeh, "Spiritual Wellbeing, Perceived Social Support and Life Satisfaction among University Students," *International Journal of Adolescence and Youth* 23, no. 3 (2018): 291, <https://doi.org/10.1080/02673843.2017.1352522>.

¹³ Florence Adeyemo et al., "Prevalence of Drug Abuse amongst University Students in Benin City, Nigeria," *Public Health Research* 6, no. 2 (2016): 31-37, <https://doi.org/10.5923/j.phr.20160602.01>.

¹⁴ G. Mbuthia et al., "A Qualitative Study on Alcohol and Drug Abuse among Undergraduate (University Students) in the Coastal Region of Kenya," *African Journal of Health Science* 33, no 1 (2020): 41.

¹⁵ Paul Nyongesa et al., "Integrating Spiritual Care into Maternity Care at a University Teaching and Referral Hospital in Eldoret, Kenya: Challenges, Lessons and Way Forward," *Health and Social Care Chaplaincy* 7, no. 2 (2019): 169, <https://doi.org/10.1558/hsc.37583>.

not been trained in clinical pastoral education. Research in spirituality and health care is scarce, and when undertaken, has focused mainly on patients with terminal illness.¹⁶

While serving as chaplain at the University of Eldoret and other sister institutions including school of medicine at Moi Teaching Referral Hospital, I observed a serious spiritual decline among the Adventist students more so among the senior students who were about to graduate. Their laxity in matters spirituality leaves a lot to be desired. And therefore, has necessitated the need for further research as recommended by Kipkoech and Kimutai at the university of Eldoret, that 57.6% of the leadership management believe that counseling and spiritual nourishment personnel were doing their job well, but a concern on spiritual decline specifically among Adventist students was not addressed.¹⁷

This study paid attention on the causes of spiritual decline and nurture of the young adults from selected public university in Eldoret Kenya, with the objectives of finding more ways of implanting and maintaining their spiritual growth. More concentration was given to Adventist students in public Universities in Eldoret: The University of Eldoret, Moi University, School of Law Annex campus, School of medicine and Health Science campus in Moi Teaching and Referral Hospital, and the University of Eldoret Town campus.

¹⁶ Nyongesa et al., "Integrating Spiritual Care into Maternity Care at a University Teaching and Referral Hospital in Eldoret, Kenya," 168.

¹⁷ Mercy Kwambai and Sammy Kimutai Kipkoech. "Effects of Staff Capacity Development on Organizational Effectiveness: Case of University of Eldoret Kenya," *International Journal of Economics, Commerce and Management* 6, no. 1 (2018): 163.

Statement of the Problem

The influx of new members at the beginning of every academic year is always very encouraging, but maintaining the membership throughout the duration of the academic years remains to be a thorn in the flesh of a chaplain and church leadership in the university environment. How do we address the students' spiritual decline? what causes spiritual decline among these students? The emerging question arises from the inconsistency of the spiritual growth of the young adults as reflected in their behaviors, church attendance and service participation more so towards the conclusion of their academic years of study.

Research Questions

What are the causes of spiritual decline among Adventist students in public institutions of higher learning and what strategies can be used to maintain their spiritual growth even as they experience new lifestyle in campus?

Objectives of the Study

The study had the following objectives. First, to identify the causes of spiritual decline among Adventist students in institutions of higher learning. Second, to recommend the strategies of retaining, maintaining spirituality of the public institutions of learning in Eldoret, Kenya.

Significance of the Study

This research was deemed significant to the following: First to Seventh-day Adventist public University students. They benefited from the strategies of maintaining spirituality while studying in institutions of higher learning. Secondly the Chaplain as spiritual team player in public institutions, appreciated the effort to shepherd the university flock. Besides, the causes of spiritual decline informed the

Chaplain's strategies in the Spiritual Master Plan for the individual campus. The chaplain was empowered to utilize the approaches for public campus ministry namely the theology of presence and the theology of evangelism to nurture the students.

Seventh-day Adventist Conference leadership would make informed decisions in the need to train chaplains for public campus ministries. Besides, the leadership would deploy suitable chaplains who can assist in mitigating causes of spiritual and related challenges in the public arena chaplaincy and those that understand the three points - Character, Collaboration, and Challenge of campus ministry.

Moreover, the leadership put an accent mark on spiritually equipping these students as are uniquely qualified to help the church fulfill its mission in the world and that by keeping in touch with them while on campus, many benefits accrued upon completion of their studies. Furthermore, by spiritually engaging the university students, the fruits were moral manpower to the church and nation at large.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this research was to identify the causes of spiritual decline and to recommend strategies for retaining and maintaining the spirituality of Adventist students in institutions of higher learning in Eldoret, Kenya.

Justification of the Study

The young adults in campus if properly understood and nurtured would not only maintain their spiritual growth, add more value to the membership of the church, be peer spiritual mentors, raise effective leaders but would also create flourishing wholistic families for healthy growth of the future church. The findings may assist the SDA Church to reduce the up-surging low attendance more so in public campus. It

affirmed basic Fundamental concepts of spiritual growth and smooth transition of church leadership from one generation to the other.

Delimitation

This study specifically considered public universities in Eldoret as the main research institutions of higher learning. The study mainly targeted the SDA young adults beginning with first years to the finishing class. The population and the sample size were taken from the students in the church sitting who identified themselves as SDAs.

Methodology and Procedure

The research utilized a quantitative method using a questionnaire. The questions were based on the literature review. The Principal Investigator (PI) followed the ethical guidelines in dealing with university students.

Chapter one covered the background of the study, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, justification, delimitation methodology and the expectations.

Chapter two focusses on the biblical foundation of spiritual decline, the nurturing God in the old testament and the new testament, spiritual decline in the E, G, White writings and the need of nurture in campus environment. The theological foundation and extensive Christian literature determined the program design and its implementation.

Chapter three made use of literature writer's view on campus experiences, methods of nurture, the outcome of other research on campus experience and spiritual decline. What entails campus ministry on spiritual decline and what is wrong or right in campus experience.

Chapter four was the description on the methods used in the field of research. This touched on research design, target population, sample size, sampling procedure, research instruments and tools, validity and reliability of the research instruments, data collection and data analysis.

Chapter five was the summary of the research development as reflected in chapter four. This included the evaluation outcome, the implementation plan, conclusion and recommendation. The recommendation can be used by the local conference and the university management where possible.

Chapter six dealt with the summary of the entire study, drawing practical strategy that could unveil the campus experience and spiritual growth as a resolution of the study. It also elaborates the lessons learned and importance of the study.

Expectations

The expectation of the study was to enhance an effective spiritual growth format that can be very much practical and suits the campus environment, through comprehensive quantitative study. This encouraged hopeless persons realize the value of life and get to pursue the lost dreams. It further changes the life style and create some motivation through self-empowerment from the consistent presence of a chaplain, education and available material support.

CHAPTER 2

BIBLICAL VIEW OF SPIRITUAL DECLINE

This chapter discusses the biblical view of the spiritual decline as seen in the lives of young men in the Bible and Ellen W. White's books.

Spiritual Decline in the Old Testament

The idea of schooling according to Jewish economy started way back in the household settings.¹ The schools consisted of disciples gathering around the master and getting instructions and teachings in a specific format to the satisfaction of the master. This later on resulted in rabbinic Judaism.² They believed that education could transform the individual and the nation, hence fulfill her divine task. This education was not limited to Torah even though Torah formed the centrality of their religious values and oral laws. Ahuvia expands the context of the Rabbinic schools to include “Ethical issues relating to parents and children, violence and its preventions, martyrdom and the sanctity of life, individuals and society, male and female relations.”³ “But if the man finds the girl who is betrothed in the field, and the man seizes her and rapes her, then only the man who raped her shall die” (Deut 22:25).

¹ Alexei M. Sivertsev, *Households, Sects, and the Origins of Rabbinic Judaism* (Leiden, The Netherlands: Koninklijke Brill, 2005), 3-4.

² Ibid., 5.

³ Mike Ahuvia, “Analogies of Violence in Rabbinic Literature,” *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 34, no. 2, (2018): 59-74.

It is very clear that in the Jews economy, education on morality was very essential to wholistic life. This does not mean that the opposite could not be seen in the lives of the young people. The story of Dinah and Shechem as narrated in Genesis 34, depict a serious moral decay. The rape has been done, the father is mute, and the young men are taking over. What was the result? A massacre. Musa Dube, commenting on the narrative, highlights three important factors informing a father's decision on marriage.⁴ The first, fathers always have vested interest on the virginity of their daughters. Secondly, fathers have authority to broker marriages of their daughters, and thirdly forming alliance between people through the exchange of marriage.

The picture seen in Genesis 34 is a disrupted arrangement which has come as a result of social degradation of a society. The end result was confusion because there was a spiritual decline in families which was reflected in the behaviors of these young people.

Spiritual decline view, is not a new phenomenon in the biblical narrative. It is reflected in many passages in the Bible. Zarzycka and Zietek define spiritual decline in psychology as religious coping elicited by life stressors, dispositions, negative emotions, interpersonal conflicts or spiritual forces of evil.⁵ Negative emotions come as a result of how words are spoken. White asserts: "the seeds of distrust are sown because one thinks that he ought to have been favored but was not. Those who fret

⁴ Musa W. Dube, "Dinah (Genesis 34) at the Contact Zone: 'Shall Our Sister Become A Whore?'" in *Feminist Frameworks and the Bible: Power, Ambiguity, and Intersectionality*, ed. L. Juliana Claassens and Carolyn J. Sharp (New York: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2019), 45.

⁵ Beata Zarzycka and Pawel Zietek, "Spiritual Growth or Decline and Meaning-making as Mediators of Anxiety and Satisfaction with Life during Religious Struggle," *Journal of Religion and Health* 58, no. 4 (2019): 1072, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10943-018-0598-y>.

and scold shut out the angels of heaven and open the door to evil angels.”⁶ Some parents who are careless lead their children into a conducive environment for the devil to work on them. The faithful and untiring parents always brought their children back to spiritual realms. White affirms that, “the power of the evil angels may be broken and sanctifying influence shed upon the children. Thus, the power of darkness will be driven back.”⁷ In *Dealing with Demonic in the African Context*, Onongha states that, “for most parts of Africa it is strongly believed that nothing happens without a cause” and that “cause usually has a spiritual origin.”⁸ It is very clear that the spiritual decline in this context can be caused by careless Christians. To ascertain this, the story of Elisha and the young boys elaborate it well, “Then Elisha went up from Jericho to Bethel. On the way, young boys came out of the city and mocked him and said to him, “Go up, you baldhead! Go up, you” (2 Kgs 2:23).

The children mentioned here were the infidels or idolatrous young men. They belonged to a city which was the center and principal seat of apostasy, “Beth Aven.” Why were these young boys rebels and what made this city a city of apostasy? Bethel was a city named by Jacob as a place of worship (Gen 28:19) Beth Aven was adjacent to this city. Jeroboam introduced idolatry in this city by erecting a golden Gulf. By the time of Hosea, it had been named a city of iniquity (Hos 10:5-8). Amos called it “the high places—a place of great wickedness” (Amos 5:4-6). From this narrative, one can see the full picture of the place where these rebellious young boys came from. If the

⁶ Ellen G. White, *The Adventist Home* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1952), 441.

⁷ White, *Counsels to Teachers’ Parents, Teachers and Students*, 118.

⁸ Kelvin Onongha, “The African Worldview and Belief in the Demonic,” in *Dealing with Demonic in the African Context*, ed. Kelvin Onongha and Bruce L. Bauer (Berrien Springs, MI: Lithotech, 2019), 42.

entire Israelites were rebellious before God, how would one expect children coming from such environment to be obedient to God? Pardosi attributes these upheavals to have originated from the cities of Bethel, Gilgal, and Beersheba, which were initially the cities of worship but had turned into places of social evils and centers of injustices to the people.⁹ The shouting to the man of God by these young boys was not a trial. The society had degenerated to an extent that anybody bearing the name of God was considered a mockery, one can predict the unethical behavior exemplified by their parents.

Jeremiah was also mocked even to an extent of being thrown into the pit (Jer 5:7). Jeremiah while chosen from his mothers' womb was called to prophetic office as young man. He was a man of equivocal character, a solitary beacon and a lofty tower in a dark night.¹⁰ He was never shaken from his foundation, the public felt that they were being cheated by the prophet who, as they perceive was too harsh and that they were not prophesying the truth. They finally dared Jeremiah time and again that they would not abide by his messages. The cause of rebellion was false prophecies and teachings thought by false prophet against straight testimony from the man of God.

Moses was called to lead the children of Israel from Egypt to Canaan. The children of Israel saw the hand of God delivering them from pharaoh's hand, and they saw God leading them through the wilderness and finally in the land of Canaan. They also saw how God fought pharaoh to the bitter end. But despite all this, rebellion manifested itself in the lives of the leaders and the congregations.

⁹ Milton Thorman Pardosi, "The Understanding of the Words to 'Seek God' and to 'Live' in Amos 5:4-6," *Social Sciences* 6, no. 6 (2017): 183, 184, <https://www.sciencepublishinggroup.com/article/10.11648/j.ss.20170606.16>.

¹⁰ Mary Chilton Callaway, *Jeremiah through the Centuries* (New York: Willey Blackwell, 2020), 25.

And the mixt multitude that was among them fell a lusting: and the children of Israel also wept again, and said, who shall give us flesh to eat? 4 Now the rabble that was among them had a strong craving. And the people of Israel also wept again and said, "Oh that we had meat to eat!" (Num 11:4).

White adds that it was God's purpose to give them good food which replaced the food they ate in Egypt. God's intention was to remove the perverted appetite cherished from contaminated food offered to idols in Egypt.¹¹ It was food that made the first parents rebel against God in the Garden of Eden, and it was food that the devil used to tempt Jesus in the wilderness. The devil, cunning as he is, was also very clever; he knew that Jesus had spent forty days without food. This same food is still the same cause of rebellion in the families and church at large.

Abiram, Dathan, and Korah had different reasons. White puts Korah was dissatisfied with his position, though he was cousin to Moses.¹² Abiram, Dathan, and Korah claimed that civil authority belonged to them and the feeling on the ground supported the idea of these gentlemen. They believed that it was Moses who did the mess and not God. So, they led rebellion amongst the Israelites. This rebellion ignited the anger from God which led them to be submerged and perish. Again, the cause is fully displayed: the yearning for power.

The Secret of the Hebrew Young Men

The four young men were taken to captivity by the Babylonians and they found themselves in a strange land. These young men, taken into Babylonian captivity, distinguished themselves through their commitment to God, integrity, and

¹¹ Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1890), 205.

¹² *Ibid.*, 395.

discipline. Their secret to success lays in their steadfast faith, adherence to divine principles, and reliance on God's guidance.

Children in whom was no blemish, but well favored, and skillful in all wisdom, and cunning in knowledge, and understanding science, and such as had ability in them to stand in the king's palace, and whom they might teach the learning and the tongue of the Chaldeans (Dan 1:4).

These men despite being taken to captivity were chosen by the king because they had uniqueness in their lifestyle with no issues of integrity. They had wholistic education but still were taken for further training in public institution. Here they were subjected to the programs of the institution of learning as per the orders of the king. Ellen White comments that “In all this, the king considered that he was not only bestowing great honor upon them but securing for them the best physical and mental development that could be attained”¹³ Daniel and his friends were severely tested. Being in a foreign land, young as they were, they made a deliberate decision not to indulge themselves in foods that could ruin their minds and character. Again, food is featured to be one of the main causes of character development or vice versa. What could be in food that can ruin character? Where did the four men get their wholistic education which enabled them stand still in time of trouble?

A research was done on food choices on children, the findings indicate that an overweight child have negative effects on physical and psychosocial wellbeing, increase chance of joint problem, sleep apnea, asthma, high blood pressure, reduce social skills and lower academic success.¹⁴ One can conclude that the four young men made the right choice in abstaining from injurious food which would have affected

¹³ Ellen G. White, *The Sanctified Life* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1881), 19.

¹⁴ Bridget Leonard, Margaret C. Campbell, and Kenneth C. Manning, “The Impact of Licensed Characters on Food Choice and Consumption,” *Journal of Public Policy and Marketing* 38, no. 2 (2019): 214.

their character. They would not have exerted great influence in Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom.

A small study on the background of Daniel and his friends gives a true picture of the reason why the four men shined in foreign land. Very little is known about the history of the other three, but Daniel as shown in his book was born in a royal family, (Dan 1:3). He was born during the reign of Josiah the great reformer (2 Chr 34,35). The atmosphere of spiritual revival and reformation in the land of Juda got these men at the age of 15-17 years. They had developed a very serious spirit of devotion and soul searching as promulgated by Josiah the king. Unfortunately, the king died and they were later on taken to Babylon as captives.¹⁵

The strength of the young men, therefore, is based on (a) the dedicated lifestyle they received from their childhood, (b) their spirit of temperance and self-control, (c) their ability to make precise and informed decision, (d) their complete trust in God regardless of whether they are saved or not, and (e) the fact they were men of integrity and prayer and they always inquired from their God before taking any action.

Spiritual Decline in the New Testament

When Jesus was at the mount of olives as narrated in Matthew 24 and 25, he predicted many signs that would take place before his second coming, verse 12 is specifically giving the reason why there would be spiritual decline: "And because lawlessness will abound the love of many will grow cold." In this passage, two statements speak very much aloud: First, the abounding of false teachers. Second, the abatement of Christian zeal.

¹⁵ Zdravko Stefanovic, *Daniel: Wisdom to the Wise: Commentary on the Book of Daniel* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 2007), 16-17.

What does the two statement mean? It means that the beginning of spiritual decline is caused by false information that would be consumed by Christians. This false information is seen from the very beginning when the devil said to Eve, the moment you eat of this fruit they knew what is good and evil (Gen 3:5). Who were the false teachers in the time of Jesus and what was His prediction in this perspective.

There were several teachers with different doctrines and beliefs; major groups included the Herodians who believed in rituals, festivals, mythologies, idol worships and regarded Christ as a revolutionary fanatic, the Sadducees who did not believe in resurrection, the Pharisees who were the conservative guardians of the oral law, and others which included the Zealots, the Sanhedrin and the Levites.¹⁶ False prophets did rise deceiving the people and great numbers into the desert, magicians did miracles and drew people after them to the mountain.¹⁷ It was clear that what Jesus predicted even during his time got fulfilled and people who received this message at the mount of olives saw with their own eyes and would happen again the second time in the last days.

Abatement means reducing, subsiding or ending an action due to external pressure.¹⁸ It could also be equated with the seed that was planted inside the thorns and when it germinated, the thorns suffocates its growth (Matt 13:7). What was reduced here was the love of one another and the love of the truth. This text has dual interpretation, it is talking about what happened then and the eschatology.

¹⁶ Alessandro Galimberti, ed., *Herodian's World: Empire and Emperors in the III Century* (New York: Brill, 2021).

¹⁷ Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1898), 631.

¹⁸ *Fowler's Concise English Dictionary*, Wordsworth Edition (1989), s.v. "Abatement."

Eschatology is the study of death, judgement and end time events.¹⁹ The focus of Christ was to tell the true picture of what would transpire in the end of days before his second coming, when the love of many shall grow cold. “But watch yourselves lest your hearts be weighed down with dissipation and drunkenness and cares of this life, and that day come upon you suddenly like a trap” (Luke 21:34).

When the heart is weighed down, it implies that external pressure is exerted more on one’s life until the focus is lost. This is very true more so when children grow into adolescence and teens. Peer pressure tend to overcome them, the texts talk of dissipation, drunkenness, and cares of this life. These are the pressures that force young people to do otherwise. Understanding peer influence towards teenagers is very critical, peer could easily affect self-esteem of students and their behaviors either negatively or positively.²⁰

The second phase of the discourse is the parable of the ten virgins. The Jewish literature according to Andreas shows that the bride, aged 13-16 and bridegroom age 18-20, were the main target of the ceremony as per their customs.²¹ Jesus used a custom and a parable that could be understood very well. The subject of the parable definitely could not mean marriage as such, but the deeper significance as put by White, shows that the two classes of watchers represent believers who profess to be waiting for their Lord. They are called virgins because they profess pure faith.²² She

¹⁹ Fowler’s *Concise English Dictionary*, Wordsworth Edition (1989), s.v. “Abatement.”

²⁰ Vangie M. Moldes et al., “Students Peer Pressure and Their Academic Performance in School,” *International Journal of Scientific Research Publication* 9, no. 1 (2019): 301.

²¹ Andrea Stutz, “The Historical Background of the Parable of the Ten Virgins in Matthew 25:1-13,” accessed 23 March 2024, https://www.academia.edu/42843062/The_Historical_Background_of_the_Parable_of_the_Ten_Virgins_Matt_25_1_13_.

²² Ellen G. White, *Christ’s Object Lessons* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1900), 406.

goes on to say the oil is the symbol of the holy spirit and those without the oil represent believers who have not yielded themselves to the holy spirit. The indwelling of the Holy Spirit is shown to be the outflowing of heavenly love.²³ The two classes of believers, are young unmarried women. All were virgins, they were all waiting for their bridegroom, all had their lamps lit and all slept. The difference was the extra oil that the other five had. When crisis come, the test of one's relationship with God is proven whether it is grounded on God or human sophistries. The two chapters display the major causes of spiritual decline in the lives of Gods people in general.

The story of the prodigal son is vivid picture of spiritual decline and resilience. The younger son decides to live an independent life from the parents. He boldly dares his father and ask for his inheritance. According to the Jewish custom, the firstborn receives two third of the father's property while last born receives just but a third.²⁴ It was the father's prerogative to disburse inheritance at his own discretion. The younger son had manifested defiant behavior and proved to be a disobedient boy to his father. Never the less the father being a gracious man decided to hearken to the demands of his son. The Jerusalem Talmud indicates that among the Jews of that era, a boy who lost the family property to gentiles would be punished by public ritual cutting him from the family. It was an insult to the Father²⁵ As a lesson to many young people, this parable shows how one can leave faith and squander life in foreign places. The questions arise how did the young man know the kind of life he wanted out there? And what made him realize his mistake? It was compassionate love of the father that

²³ White, *Christ's Object Lessons*, 408-419.

²⁴ Daniel K. Eng, "The Widening Circle: The Honor, Shame, and Collectivism in the Parable of the Prodigal Son," *The Expository Times* 130, no. 5 (2018): 193.

²⁵ Ibid., 195.

constrained this young man to yearn for his home.²⁶ Young people after going astray would only be brought back to the fold through compassionate love.

The Bible addresses the young people in different approaches yet with one objective, that they may be spiritually successful. “My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin... I am writing to you, little children, because your sins are forgiven for his name's sake” (John 2:1, 12).

The two texts are not addressing children on the same platform though spoken by the same person. The first one is addressing sin problem while the second one is addressing forgiveness of the same sin. Some argue that the little children, refer to new converts who are young in faith. The word which appear in the letters of John is the same as used by Jesus in the gospels.

But Jesus called them to Him and said, “Let the little children (παιδιά) come to Me, and do not forbid them: for of such is the kingdom of God. Assuredly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child (παιδιά) will by no means enter it” (Luke 18:16-17).

John was therefore addressing three groups of people in the church. He was addressing children, youth and the fathers. As an elder, he is using the paternal authority, love, and concern. All the words employed in this chapter speaks against committing sin or that sin need to be abolished. John is also introducing Jesus to his members as the advocate who intercedes for them (1 John 2:1), the righteous judge and the propitiator of their sins and the sins of whole the world (1 John 2:2). According to John, young people will only remain strong if they confess their sins (1 John 1:9), take Jesus as their advocate (1 John 2:1) and acknowledge him as the savior of mankind hence have the hope of eternal life (1 John 2:25).

²⁶ Joel W. Huffstetler, *The Parable of the Prodigal Son and Reconciliation* (New York: University Press of America, 2008), 16.

Having expressed the basis of spiritual growth in the lives of the young people, he was also quick to caution them of the dissents.

Dear children, this is the last hour: and as you have heard that the antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come. This is how we know it is the last hour. They went out from us, but they did not really belong to us. For if they had belonged to us, they would have remained with us: but their going showed that none of them belonged to us' (1 John 2:18-19).

Why did they leave them and where did they go? John is concluding that they did not belong to their group. How did they join the group then? The bottom-line of the facts is that they were dissents from the group and very deceitful and dangerous to their spirituality.

Paul in his letter to Galatians also talked of people who started with the spirit and were anticipating to finish with the flesh. I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you to live in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel. Which is really no gospel at all. Evidently some people are throwing you into confusion and are trying to pervert the gospel of Christ" (Gal 1:6-7).

The message in this passage shows some people who left the truth, threw people into confusion and pervasion from spirituality. Paul is not addressing young people here but the same spirit seen in Galatia could be replicated in the lives of the young people as well.

Spiritual Decline in the Early Church

Peter is among those in forefront in denying his close relationship with Jesus. Initially, Jesus had spent time praying that they might not retract from their faith. Mark among synoptics seems to be the first to give Peter's account of denial. According to Marcan sources, Jesus was at the mount of olives after the Passover, Peter had vowed to die for Jesus even if the rest denied him. The public pressure was heating up on him and he seemed to be wilting; he was trying to attach himself to

Jesus yet incognito. He was targeted, humiliated, but he did not quit.²⁷ Peter meant whatever he was saying, every word of it. He did not know about himself. Yet hidden in himself were the elements of evil.²⁸ It was in sleeping, when Jesus bade him to pray that he prepared the day for his great sin.²⁹ This man who denied Christ three times is seen with the mission of Christ again. Extra biblical sources indicate that Peter was crucified upside down by Nero as per his request.³⁰ He came back despite his recantation of Christ at the cross when temptation was heavy on him. His coming back to his senses is a sign of recognition of his weakness and accepting Christ as a sustainer of his spirituality.

The early church started with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost. Peter stood, moved by the powers of the Holy Spirit gave the right direction even when confusion was looming up.

They all joined together constantly in prayer, along with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers. In those days Peter stood up among the believers (a group numbering about a hundred and twenty) (Acts 1:14).

Christ had initially promised them of the helper and the receiving of power (John 16:7). The disciples were gathered in the upper room for fear of the unknown following the brutal killing of Christ at the cross. They had even decided to go back for fishing (John 21: 3). But Christ followed them after his resurrection. They had fished overnight and got nothing. It was when they received the new direction to be the fishers of men, that they gained strength (John 21:6). While addressing Thomas

²⁷ Rayan Lobo, *The Three Denials of Jesus by Peter: An Exegetical Study of Luke 22:54-62* (Rome: Rome Biblicum 2016), 9.

²⁸ White, *Desire of Ages*, 713.

²⁹ Ibid., 714.

³⁰ David L. Eastman, *The Many Deaths of Peter and Paul* (New York: Oxford University Press 2019), 6.

who had some doubt, white says, Christ example shows how we should treat those whose faith is weak and make prominent their doubt.³¹ Thomas who seems to have lost hope was brought back to the fold.

At Jerusalem the prosperous church encountered some internal conflict as new faith saturated into people with different backgrounds. “The apostles and elders came together to consider this matter” (Acts 15:6). After much dispute Peter calmed the situation and the church was brought into oneness again. The journey of the believers in the early church is seen to have encountered a lot of encumbrance. Some of them encountered false teachings and lead to the division of the believers while some faced the persecution, hence were murdered and even some were imprisoned.

Spiritual Decline in the Writings of Ellen G. White

White wrote extensively about young people. Her messages touch all spheres of life. She addresses parents as well as children and the youth at large. This included letters to her children while she was far away for mission. When addressing her children, she cautions them as such: First, to learn where they have failed. Second, to commence the work of reform earnestly. Third, to appreciate the value of order. Fourth, to set hours for physical activities. Fifth, to set hours to improve their reading habit and improve the mind. Sixth, not to neglect the season of prayer.³²

The admonition given by a mother to her children gives a reflection of what parenting means. She continues to assert that “the Lord has decreed that the family shall be the greatest of all educational agencies. It is in the home that the education of

³¹ White, *Desire of Ages*, 808.

³² Ellen G. White, *An Appeal to the Youth* (Battle Creek, MI: Seventh-day Adventist Publishing Association, 1861), 45.

the child is to begin, lessons of obedience, respect, reverence, self-control, and decision making.” She further gives the caution that “it is a sad fact, almost universally admitted and deplored that the home education and training of the youth of today have been neglected.”³³ “Lawlessness dissipation, corruption, evil surmising hypocrisy, emulation strife, and betrayal of sacred trust is sweeping the families like an overwhelming tide. The whole system of principles seems to be tottering mass ready to fall to ruin.”³⁴ A major factor that has contributed to the spiritual decline of the Adventist students is the unavailability of home background education.

Whereas this shortfall might have contributed more towards the spiritual degradation of the young people, more so those in college, the blame upon the parents may not guarantee their spiritual decline. There is personal responsibility that must be taken by individuals. They must be taught to think and act from conscientious principle.³⁵ The strongest temptation cannot excuse sin. However great the pressure brought to bear upon the soul, the transgression is our own act.³⁶ It is therefore clear that every young person has to maintain standards that would sustain their Christianity despite the fact that there are factors which cause their downfall. In her book *Messages to Young People*, E. G. White has enumerated a number of factors that contribute to young Adventists’ spiritual decline. They can be summed as intrinsic and extrinsic factors. Intrinsic are causes emanating from individual’s heart while

³³ White, *The Adventist Home*, 183.

³⁴ Ellen G. White, *Mind, Character, and Personality* (Nashville, TN: Southern Publishing Association, 1977), 2:625.

³⁵ Ellen G. White, *Messages to Young People* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1930), 579.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 62.

extrinsic are the social influences from outside one's self. Some of them are highlighted in the sections below.

Intrinsic Causes of Spiritual Decline

Indulgence: This is the appetite and sensual pleasures at an expense of physical, mental and moral powers. Passions and affections: living wayward life, bold and daring, disobedient to parents. Passion if misused would lead one's life into havoc and miseries without hope or God. Skepticism: An attitude of doubting even the very truth that one claims to have known. Intemperance: It is the violation of physical laws hence lead to physical suffering, mental and moral feebleness.

Extrinsic Causes of Spiritual Decline

First is the unwholesome reading and watching: The effect of reading wrong literature enfeebles the mind, awaken wrong imagination against reality and vilify the desire to read the scriptures. Watching unconsecrated movies deprives the mind, the ability to make right decisions.

Second is Influence of associations and choice of friends: This is seen in one's company of choice, the habits formed, principles of life adopted all these leads to a destiny here and in the future.

Thirdly, Unholy infatuation: When two young person's falls in love and are absorbed to each other very much, the ability to reason is blinded, proper judgement is overthrown, they can't submit to any advice and they insist on having their own way regardless of consequences.

Fourth, the wrong music: Genuine Christian will not desire to enter any place of amusement which one cannot ask the blessings of God. Fifth is the wrong form of courtship: Firmness and integrity of purpose should be cultivated. Integrity of soul

will not be swayed from the right, one will be loyal and true to God and sixth is. Dress code. Every dress has its meaning. Some dressing may be seductive hence attract unnecessary temptation in one way or the other

Caring God in Time of Spiritual Decline

The question "Where are you?" was the first voice to be heard by the first human beings (Adam and Eve) after hearkening to the temptation of Satan at the garden of Eden (Gen 3:9). This question testifies the nature of God throughout all generations. He continually seeks to initiate reconciliation between Himself and His fallen creation and by so doing, God was demonstrating the practical nature of Care and restoration. "God demonstrated His nature by sending His one and only Son into the world).³⁷ While encamped at Mount Sinai, the elders of Israel were invited by God to the mountain where they 'beheld God, and they ate and drink' with God (Exod 24:11).

The psalmist portrays God as perpetual host when he said, "You prepare a table before me." And just as Abraham's guest promised to return, the psalmist declares, "I will return to the house of God forever" (Ps 23:5-6). Hughes states that "God's role as host extends far beyond Israel and God welcomes into his care all of humanity, the animals and even the plants"³⁸ (Ps 104:10-21). He gives "drink to every beast of the field" (v. 11) and a dwelling place for the "birds of the heavens" (v. 12). He provides grass for the "cattle" (v. 14) and he gives "vegetation," "wine," "oil" and "food which sustains man's heart." The Christian foundation for the practical Gospel ministry based on the book of Luke 3:36 in the Bible reads "Be ye therefore merciful,

³⁷ C. J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God* (Leicester, England: Inter-Varsity Press, 2006), 43.

³⁸ D. Hughes, *God of the Poor: A Biblical Vision of God's Present Rule* (Cumbria, UK: Authentic Books, 2017), 234.

as your Father also is merciful.” The Christian ministry is accomplished through a Christian witness of word and deed by meeting the spiritual, social, physical, and mental needs of the people it serves.

Chaplains are to care for people as Christ cared for His sheep (humanity).³⁹ Jesus cared for His flock and assured them not to fear (Luke 12:32). Luke presents the necessity of visiting a family following childbirth and at death. This model of care during the birth of Jesus was exemplified by the shepherds when they visited Jesus (Luke 2:8-20). Jesus visited and comforted the bereaved widow at Nain (Luke 6:17-7:23) when Lazarus died (John 11:19). Chaplaincy is having the heart of Christ. Christ method is the best way to bring back the backslidden.

Conclusion

Spiritual decline is vividly displayed in the entire Bible and it is expounded by Ellen G. White’s writings. The beginning of the down fall of Christian values of the young adults start from the parents. It is also true that families that are Christ centered are likely to retain their children in faith. The families that are egocentric are likely to lose their children. Children to a greater extend, even if they backslide at some age, when they come back to their senses, can reinstate their original faith and Christian lifestyle.

Persecution and temptation from the very beginning has been a major challenge in the lives of young people and the entire membership in general. But God has never left His people unattended.

³⁹ Lyne Stevens, *A Practical Approach to Gender-based Violence: A Programme Guide for Health Care Providers and Managers* (New York: United Nations Population Fund, 2010), 59, https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/resource-pdf/genderbased_eng.pdf.

When young people get subjected to confused environment they tend to get lost easily. Peer pressure is always elephant in the room when growing one's spirituality. Intrinsic and extrinsic allurements take center stage as the young people orient themselves in new environments. Social activities found in social amenities such as parties, dancing games, talent shows, relationships are heavily impacting upon the young people on a serious note. Direct disobedience and boldness with deaf years more so when they are submerged into a relationship is only resolved with a lot of regrets and disappointment.

Young people who are firmly grounded on the word of God and are devotedly dedicated to Him in prayers, have emerged as heroes of faith. Their light has never been dismissed even when going through all manner of temptation and trials. 'Every good tree bears good fruits, but a bad tree bears bad fruits,' these are the words of Jesus 'that you shall know them by their fruits' (Matt 7:17,20). What are the fruits of spiritual decline. This can be known by their behavior such as church attendance, breaking of Sabbath, cohabiting, drug abuse and use of alcohol. All these are outward appearance which depict the inward problem. Church attendance cannot guarantee spiritual maturity but consistent failure to attend church services is an indicator of a spiritual problem if it is not on health reasons.

This study explores measurable behaviors such as church attendance, Sabbath observance, cohabitation, and substance abuse as indicators of spiritual decline among young adults. It examines underlying causes, family-centered spirituality, and effective faith retention strategies, providing evidence-based insights for church leadership and families to strengthen spiritual commitment amid modern societal challenges.

CHAPTER 3

LITERATURE REVIEW

Background of the Study

This chapter discusses the causes of spiritual decline among the Adventist students in public universities in Eldoret Kenya. The literature was sourced from related studies. The broad view from other higher institution of learning gave a true picture of the causes of spiritual decline. The topics covered include students experience on campus, Money as Means of Communication on Campus, The Essence of Student's Spirituality in Campus, Spiritual Integration in Campus Life, Challenges Facing Student's Spirituality in Campus, Spirituality and Mental Health, Spirituality and Party Culture, Spirituality and Sexology, Campus Students and Alcoholic Challenges, Student's Spiritual Alienation, Students' Feelings of Rejection, Discipleship as a Remedy, Discipleship Coupled with Mentorship, Guiding Students, and Peer Mentoring.

Student's Experience on Campus

This segment examined the experience of students as they enter into public campus and their spiritual journey during the academic period as was unveiled by the available literature. It was further highlighted that current trend of behaviors leads to the degradation of ethics and integrity among Adventist students in public campus. It challenged students to go through as they experienced the transitional life - social

aspects, life choices, the work mentors both in academic institutions and parental input to be considered.

More attention is given to Adventist students who leave the church as they advance their studies in public institutions of higher learning. How to sustain them in church fellowship as well as participating in spiritual activities is paramount to this study. What would be the role of chaplaincy in shaping and restraining the dissent spirit among the Adventist students. What are some of the measures applied by the leadership of the church to address this spiritual inconsistency in the lives of Adventist students in public campus. What happens when the youth enters university for the first time? What are the expectations and how would the students navigate this process successfully? Yust suggested the need to carefully explore a more creative and coherent approach to handling adolescent spirituality and education, the challenges, and the integration of new students.¹ As students enter into a new environment of study, their first impression is always the best. Mulrooney and Kelly described campus through different lens. Mulrooney and Kelly first addressed the physical space as an important component, this sets emotions of belonging or not, followed by social engagements, academic orientations, surroundings, whether secure and safe, and personal space.²

Addressing social and academic integration, Flores observed three areas of special emphasis. First, was Emphasis on academic and social integration. New students were introduced to peer mentors who helped them adjust to college by being

¹ Karen Marie Yust, "Adolescent Spirituality and Education," in *Spirituality across Disciplines: Research and Practice*, ed. Marian de Souza, Jane Bone, and Jacqueline Watson (New York: Springer, 2016), 81-93.

² Hilda M. Mulrooney and Alison F. Kelly, "The University Campus and a Sense of Belonging: What Do Students Think?" *New Directions in the Teaching of Physical Sciences* 15, no. 1 (2020): 7.

points of reverence in finding academic resources as well as being tutor mentors on social orientation. Second, is the emphasis on participation in campus activities. Students are encouraged to involve themselves in social clubs and intramural sports. Here, the students get connected with others, release stress and are helped to jumpstart their careers hence exemplify the right traits and habits. Third, is emphasis on sense of belonging and validation. The mentors help new students develop proper boundaries in order to ensure that respect is always a priority, feel more home, stay focused and forge forward in college life.³

There would be different reactions basing on what one gets as the first impression. Richs alludes: college counselors and advisers should immediately provide support to include outreach efforts via phone, email, texts as soon as they arrive in campus. This reduces emotions like anxiety shock, loneliness, intimidation and home sickness.⁴ There is nothing done about the physical structures whether good or bad. The response toward the same takes its direction. Prestigious structure elevates the ego of the young students and even the reputation of the institution.

Human beings are social in nature and whatever impresses the mind will always carry the day. Campus first impression is the physical structures, this changes the attitude and emotions negatively or positively, and identity comes in either to belong or reject. Silver and Clark explain that a scene is very intuitive in that out of it, one can coordinate behavior, recognize and differentiate what matters for things one

³ Griselda Flores, "Effects of a Peer-to-peer Mentoring Program: Supporting First-year College Students' Academic and Social Integration on Campus," *Journal of Human Service: Training Research And Practice* 3, no. 2 (2018): Article 3.

⁴ Jonathan R. Richs, "Transitioning to College: Experiences and Practices of Successful First-generation College Students," *Journal of Educational Research* 11, no. 1 (2019): 9.

cares about.⁵ Aaron further affirms that, sense of belonging is informed by three factors, How the campus community receives the student, the student's comfortability with the facility, the environment, and how the place is set. The second is academic quality, is the school, staff and management committed in her responsibility? The third one is social interaction between students. Further research was done on what makes students have sense of belonging as shown on the Table 1 below.

Table 1. Percentage of Students Who Experience Belonging in Each Realm

Facility	Number	Campus community belonging	Social belonging	Academic belonging
Public University	31	45.7%	41.9%	29.0%
Private University	36	75.0%	58.3%	61.1%

The above table show that the greater percentage is taken by campus community belonging, followed by social belonging and lastly academic belonging in public university. It is also noted that academic belonging takes the second highest percentage after community in private university. Student's campus community belonging aspect in each realm is higher in both types of institution but public institution's aspect of belonging is low in the three areas measured. The sense of belonging is wanting in public institution which is key to loneliness and rejection.

Glass, Glass, and Lynch add that college students develop expectations for engagement with diverse peers way long before they arrive in campus and continue

⁵ Daniel Aaron Silver and Terry Nichols Clark, *Scenescapes: How Qualities of Place Shape Social Life* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 2016), 2.

with the same by observing their peers' behavior.⁶ Students begin interaction immediately they step on campus. The kind of friends they associate with depends largely upon personalities and economic social status. Glass, Glass, and Lynch added further by expanding the social fabric to include social media, social technology, social systems and social life in financial perspective.⁷ Glass, Glass, and Lynch put the social aspect as one of the powerful means of shaping character either for good or bad.

Social media alone may take a different trajectory. A survey done in Malaysia by Alhazmi and Rahman revealed that 97.2% of the students use Facebook, 78.9% spent more than one hour every day on Facebook, while 36% use social media for academic purposes.⁸ Munyiva, Simiyu, and Too, observed that social media usage among students in the University of Eldoret helped in interactions, networking, entertainment and making new friends more than for academic purposes.⁹ The same social media can be used to enhance wholistic growth, as stated by Khadijah et al. They add that the social web is useful in finding emotional support during the period of stress; it is used to reduce stigma and assists in mental health treatment. Social

⁶ Kimberly Glass, Chris R. Glass, and Jason Lynch, "Student Engagement and Affordances for Interaction with Diverse Peers: A Network Analysis," *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education* 9, no. 2 (2016): 173.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Abdulsalam K. Alhazmi and Azizah Abdul Rahman, "A Framework for Student Engagement in Social Networking Sites," paper presented at the Pacific Asia Conference on Information Systems, Chengdu, China, June 18-22, 2014, <https://aisel.aisnet.org/pacis2014/50>.

⁹ Annet Munyiva, John Simiyu, and Jackson Too, "The Influence on Social Media Tools on Public Universities in Kenya," *International Journal of Advance Research, Ideas and Innovations in Technology* 6 no. 6 (2020): 42.

media can also be useful in reducing the risk of suicide among college students by providing adequate methods solving problems through counseling.¹⁰

Apart from positive contribution, social media can encourage cyber-crime, cause distraction and addiction.¹¹ One can therefore conclude that majority of the students are not using social networking for constructive functions as it should be. How else can students integrate campus life with their objectivity?

Money as Means of Communication on Campus

For students to access all the stated modes of communication, availability of money is a necessity that can never be avoided. Mesra, Erianjoni, and Eriyanti reveals that money is an instrument of early entry into the community, instrument of entertainment and mobility¹² This is a positive impact because it enables one to meet the needs of life. On the other end, money can create fake friends, it can cause debt and conflict which may lead to poor interaction with people. Mesra, Erianjoni, and Eriyanti further add that corrupt values, poor health, frustration, failing to meet daily needs of life can be attributed to money.¹³

This shows that money is a serious means of communication and interaction. Money can also shape the kind of friends one can choose. Those from well to do

¹⁰ Siti Khadijah et al., "The Influence of Web-based Spiritual Problem Solving on the Prevention of Suicidal Risk among University Students," *Jurnal Ners* 16, no 2 (2021): 124-147.

¹¹ Munyiva, Simiyu, and Too, "The Influence on Social Media Tools on Public Universities in Kenya," 41-44.

¹² Romi Mesra, Erianjoni, and Fitri Eriyanti, "The Social Meaning of Money in Social Interaction of Boarding Students," *Proceedings of International Conferences on Educational, Social Sciences and Technology*, Padang, Indonesia, February 14-15, 2018, 47, accessed 10 May 2024, <https://www.gci.or.id/assets/papers/icesst-2018-6.pdf>.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 48.

families may intimidate or control those from humble background hence they can redirect the behavior of some students. At some point, poor students can be the subject of the well to do students hence find themselves being the center of monopoly. In response to research done on the inequity of resources, Adams observed a big gap in money between groups of students which created disappointment, frustration and anger among them.¹⁴ Some failed to see the value of life having lived as poor students in campus all through.

The Essence of Student's Spirituality in Campus

The question of spirituality in campus is hardly considered as one of the means that can influence the positive behavior of the student. Idoate et al. noted three major challenges in campus. First is the limitation in individual capacity to make decision. Second is the unreadiness among campus community leaders to sensitize students on spirituality. Third is the lack of community knowledge about spiritual wellness.¹⁵

Arajli poses important questions on the subject of spirituality in campus. He wanted to know the essence of a university in relating to being, reason, purpose, meaning and mission. His perspective on the objectives of a University education is to find connections, nurture, disciplinary cooperation which will produce a better adult. He further alludes that cooperating or reviving spirituality in higher education helps in achieving these objectives. If a school mission is to enable students earn a living, pay

¹⁴ Sara B. Adams, "Inspiring Empathy and Policy Action in Undergraduate Students: Monopoly as a Strategy," *Journal of Nursing Education* 58, no. 5 (2019): 298-301.

¹⁵ Regina Idoate et al., "Promoting Spiritual Wellness on College Campus through Community Based Participatory Research," *International Journal of Transpersonal Studies* 38, no. 2 (2019): 92.

back fees spent, this then will mean that the university's ontological destination would have been lost.¹⁶

The essence of spirituality in higher education is the concept of integrity. Integrity is the recognition that it is the responsibility of the teacher to instill this quality in student's life.¹⁷ Defining integrity, Wong, Lim, and Quinlan put that the etymology of integrity denotes completeness of a large quality of wholeness of character that goes beyond class room and embraces social responsibility.¹⁸ A study of 177 students in one of the universities on students' affairs professionals indicated that 66% of them considered themselves as spiritual persons while 54.8% of them considered the objective to integrate spirituality into their lives as extremely important.¹⁹ There is a distinction between spirituality and religiosity. Rookstool observed that men were more religious while women were more spiritual. Spirituality has more qualities of individualism and involve the focusing on the here and now, while religiosity has more of communalism and is focused on the future.²⁰

Today's world requires character formation in addition to competence. Building character is imparting core values such as respect, tolerance, prudence, self-discipline, compassion, cooperation among other virtues. This should be started at an

¹⁶ Dunia A. Arajli, "Spiritual Well- Being of Business School Faculty," in *The Palgrave Handbook of Workplace Well-being*, ed. Satinder K. Dhiman (New York: Palgrave Macmillan. 2021), 617.

¹⁷ William Rookstool, "The Interrelationship of Socialization, Integration, and Spirituality among Students at a Historically Black College" (PhD diss., Walden University, 2018), 41.

¹⁸ Sara Shi Hui Wong, Stephen Wee Hun Lim, and Kathleen M. Quinlan, "Integrity in and beyond Contemporary Higher Education: What Does It Mean to University Students?" *Frontiers in Psychology* 7 (2016): 1.

¹⁹ Jenny L. Small, ed., *Introduction to Making Meaning: Embracing Spirituality, Faith, Religion, and Life Purpose in Student Affairs* (London: Routledge, 2023), 2.

²⁰ Rookstool, "The Interrelationship of Socialization, Integration, and Spirituality," 45.

early age, according to Hariyanti and Sudjito, by building intentional morality at the family setting and through literature;²¹ well-built character manifests itself immediately they join higher institution of learning. When Adventist in campus receive the new students, they should be integrated into Adventist circles. Caring for first generation students as they step in campus is the most needed component of Christian virtues. Chaplaincy and Adventist student leadership must focus on the new students with attractive programs to enable them see the sense of joining them.

Spiritual Integration in Campus Life

Spiritual integration in campus life is a process of assimilating new members into faith-based activities and allow them participate so as to enhance their spiritual growth and belonging. It is a movement from head to the heart, from concept to practical. It is self-actualization.²² Sample summarizes his findings on campus spiritual integration into four specific areas.

First is friendship and relationship building. As soon as first-generation students arrive, the senior students should take their time to interact with them and assist them in orientation programs. Social events to be introduced at the beginning of the academic year. Social events consist of the complex social processes through which individuals become integrated and through which groups develop social structures. In this way the negotiation of competition and egalitarianism produces social reality.²³

²¹ Tatit Hariyanti and Sudjito, "Sustained Character Building through Literature for College Students in Indonesia," *Jurnal Dinamika Hukum* 18, no. 1 (2018): 111-112.

²² Zachary D. Sample, "Developing the Whole Student: Campus Ministry's Impact on Spiritual Development" (MA thesis, Eastern Illinois University, 2016), 34-48.

²³ Rookstool, "The Interrelationship of Socialization, Integration, and Spirituality," 45.

Secondly, is leadership and organization of campus ministry. This means weekly, semester and annual plans to be made in such way that it continued attracting and sustaining students in the ministry. The planning must include weekly programs, social activities, outreach activities and intensive in-reach studies. This enabled new students to have confidence in the group and advance as a united front. Intensive spiritual studies on the other hand encourages the students to be firm in faith.

Thirdly is the personal impact involvement in campus ministry organization. Youth ministry embraces the spirit of compassion, where community-based activities are developed. This include free counselling sessions, free medical camps, attending individuals in time of need and providing support where necessary and where possible.

Fourth is faith development. The availability of the minister carries more weight in this direction. The minister or chaplain must be very creative and introduce methods and ways that made every student be reached easily. How to effect small groups, answer pertinent questions raised by students and winning their confidence is paramount.

Challenges Facing Student's Spirituality in Campus

Students who are well trained and uplifted in the university environment, in building bridges, building community and tending the souls to a better realm of Christ, their spiritual growth is inevitable

Campus life always begins with a lot of positive expectations, but as students navigate through university life, challenges are inevitable. These challenges affect the spiritual growth of students as reflected by church attendance and the church services. As to whether church attendance has some effect on the behavior of the students,

Buchtova et al.²⁴ did a research in Czech Republic, the most secular country in the world with 8% Christian, the findings indicate that those who did not attend church regularly and participate in church activities engaged in the use of alcohol, cannabis, binge drink and early sexual intercourse than those who attended church regularly.

This view was also supported by Rivera and Lauger who also affirmed that those students who attend church regularly and participated in prayer groups, Bible study and scripture reading reduced the risk of unwanted behaviors.²⁵ The challenges depend upon the direction one takes with the peers and the confidante while other challenges may emanate from different sources. These challenges affect social physical academic and spiritual aspect of the students. Other challenges are self-inflicted while others are engineered by the environment and unplanned choices.

Spirituality and Mental Health

To understand the relationship between spirituality and mental health, one would consider number of factors, and to be more specific, if mental illness can be the cause of spiritual decline, how then can spirituality suppress mental depression. According to journal of American college health, a research done on 2601 students on health issues touching their lives, one-third were found with medical health (36%), one-third with mental health (33%), those with substance use were (14%), other

²⁴ Marie Buchtova et al., "Religious Attendance in Secular Country Protects Adolescents from Health-risk Behavior only in Combination with Participation in Church Activities," *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health* 17, no. 24 (2020): Article 9372.

²⁵ Craig Rivera and Timothy Lauger, "The Protective Effects of Religious Group Membership, Service Attendance and Scripture Reading on Binge Drinking among College Students," *Pastoral Psychology* 70 (2021): 125-140.

related health issues were (14%) while access to health was (3%) reported.²⁶ If the percentage of those with mental health and substance use are added, it gives a total percentage of 47%, which is quite alarming.

On the same issue, Scalora et al. were very precise on mental challenges. They indicated anxiety at 60.7%, depression 48.6%, distress 59.3%, binge drinking 39.3% illicit and substance abuse at 20.9%. She further stated that the rate of mental illness suicidal cases has doubled from the year 2012 to 2018.²⁷ The same research has recognized personal spirituality as the fourth dimension of health alongside social, emotional/mental and physical domain. This recognition integrates a two-way relationship between the superior high powers and living in sacred world. She found out that spirituality may have a long-term recovery from and prevention against the chronicity of recurrent psychiatric and behavioral conditions.

Verghesa posits that a loss of soul may cause depression, addiction, violence, hence he suggests spirituality as vital. A research done in Canada on 1204 psychiatrist and 157 psychiatric patients, found out that 54% of the psychiatrist were both religious as well as spiritual and 55% of them consulted the clergy for the management of the psychiatric patients while 24% of patients preferred religious psychiatrists.²⁸ The preference of religious over none religious psychiatrists is a clear evidence of the role of spirituality in the lives of human beings.

²⁶ Jennifer M. Gadigan, Jennifer C. Duckworth, and Christine M. Lee, "Physical and Mental Health Issues Facing Community College Students," *Journal of American College Health* 70, no. 3 (2022): 891, <https://doi.org/10.1080/07448481.2020.1776716>.

²⁷ Suza Scalora et al., "A Campus-based Spiritual-mind-body Prevention Intervention against Symptoms of Depression and Trauma: An Open Trial of Awakened Awareness," *Mental Health & Prevention* 25, no. 4 (2022): 200229, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.mhp.2022.200229>.

²⁸ Abraham Verghesa, "Spirituality and Mental Health," *Indian Journal of Psychiatry* 50, no. 4 (2008): 234.

The concept of spirituality verses religiosity has not been exhausted enough, however, a group of researchers led by Vitorino et al. found out that a high level of both spirituality and religiosity were associated with better outcomes than those who had one or none. Those with low in both spirituality and religion proved to be the least performing psychiatrist.²⁹ What has not been exhausted in this context is the scientific content of spirituality and religiousness. The truth revealed in these findings show that to a great extent spirituality has suppressed mental illness more so with the campus students, how it does still need more research. This can also mean that the absence of spirituality may cause mental challenges. Belief system, as stated by Khadijah et al., affects college students emotionally, physically, psychologically and behaviorally, the same spiritual belief prevents suicide among young people.³⁰ Spirituality is a power to reckon with in greater dimensions of life.

Spirituality and Party Culture

The social aspect of young adults in a university setup always undergoes some radical changes. These changes can be drawn from social events and daily interaction with the peers. Social amenities which are very many within most of the university environment has changed the lives of students negatively. Party themes, as explained by Vitorino et al., indicate that parties usually require women to wear scant, sexy clothing, hence placing women in a subordinate position to men.³¹ One can equate this scenario with Solomonic advise given to young man in the Bible “And behold,

²⁹ Luciano Magalhães Vitorino et al., “The Association between Spirituality and Religiousness and Mental Health,” *Scientific Report* 8 (2018): 1.

³⁰ Khadijah et al., “The Influence of Web-based Spiritual Problem Solving on the Prevention of Suicidal Risk among University Students,” 142.

³¹ Vitorino et al., “The Association between Spirituality and Religiousness and Mental Health,” 3.

the woman meets him dressed as a prostitute, wily of heart” (Prov 7:10). He was advised to run away from such a person. The same story is reflected in Genesis when Tamar took off her widows’ clothes and put on suggestive garment which confused Judah and finally led him into sexual activity (Gen 38:14-19). He later on realized when he was told that the daughter in law was pregnant, and according to custom was supposed to be stoned. One would question the motive of partying and the entire preparation. The kind of music, timing, dress code and the language of the day.

Spirituality and Sexology

What informs sex consent among students’ life is very complex in itself. Some institutions are coming up with policies that legalize sex consent among unmarried students. Other students find themselves in sex imbroglio, though willing to come out of it, but it is too much for them. The journal of sex research highlights a few complexities in students sex life.³²

First was creation of policy on legal consent to sex among students by developed countries like US and Canada. Many students enter college with limited knowledge about sex. They now have chance to know more about sex through dubious methods. Students have been exposed to abstinence programs only. In college, a revelation of the opposite takes place. But as they enter into a university, they are exposed to an environment where one is free to do as the conscience dictate.

Dissemination of condom and contraception has confused the whole meaning of sex life. New generation students have just come from high school where condoms and contraceptives were forbidden. At the university, they find it displayed and being

³² Charlene L. Muehlenhard et al., “The Complexities of Sexual Consent among Students: A Conceptual and Empirical Review,” *The Journal of Sex Research* 53, no. 4-5 (2016): 457-487.

promoted by health workers as means of preventing STDS and avoidance of pregnancy.

Students are not given enough space to address topics such as how to give, ask for, or infer sexual consent. There is a belief that men sexual performance is the evidence of masculinity. If a man develops no interest in sex, his masculinity is in question. They tend to pursue sex even if they do not want just to appear more masculine. There is also a belief that women might be forced to refuse sex they would have desired just to avoid social repercussion. This could also mean that their no means yes. The egoism builds on men who are praised to have gained social status by having numerous sexual partners hence gain labels such as “player” or “stud.”³³

The observation given by the researchers as shown above is a clear indication that sex seems to be part of life style in campus. The brief narrative of Setran and Kiesling on sexology goes way back to 1960’s; their findings is that sex has gone through metamorphic changes in four perspectives:³⁴

First is that virginity was the center of praises and celebration during a wedding ceremony. It was a gift given to husbands and premarital sex was charged harshly. Relationship was approved by parents.

Second, dating replaced the calling and parent’s approval. Young people go for outing and were free from the surveillance of the parents. They would visit a restaurant, a resort, dancing hall or any place of their choice. Dating took a different trajectory but still it was fair because meaningful relationship could be realized later.

³³ Michael S. Kimmel, *Guyland: The Perilous World Where Boys Become Men* (New York: HarperCollins, 2008), 95.

³⁴ David P. Setran and Chris A. Kiesling, *Spiritual Formation in Emerging Adulthood: A Practical Theology for College Young Adult Ministry* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2013), 162.

Third, reasons for cohabiting, living together with a romantic partner, could be love, companionship, financial constraints, loneliness, sex and peer pressure. This has resulted in single parenthood illegitimate children and degradation of marriage.

Fourth, sex for economic gains and leisure only. There is no intention for marriage and no intention to have children. Sexual abuse, committing suicide and losing one's dignity is the outcome.

In response to the above findings, Setran and Kiesling further expand on the biblical approach towards sex in new dimension. They said that: "The Greek philosophers view sex as a body physical realism "all things are lawful for me, but I will not be dominated by anything. Food is made for the stomach and stomach is for food" (1 Cor 6:12-13). Philosophers consider sex as a bodily exercise akin to sleeping or hunger.

The second school views sex as Platonism. They regard sex as defiling, tinged with evil and is there only for procreation. They practice strict abstinence and so the youth could find the church as repressing.

Christian view is in contrast with Platonism, hence considers sex as a good gift to family, "for this is the will of God, even your sanctification: that you abstain from sexual immoralities, that each one of you know how to control his body, in holiness and honor not in passion of lust like the gentiles who don't know God" (1 Thess 4:3-5). Sexual intimacy is meant to portray the covenant of love between Christ and his church."³⁵

Sexuality from the very beginning has been reserved for married only. "Drink water from your own cistern, and running water from your own well, should your own

³⁵ Setran and Kiesling, *Spiritual Formation in Emerging Adulthood*, 162-170.

fountain be dispersed abroad, stream of water in the streets? let them be only your own and not for strangers with you” (Prov 5:15-17). Any person outside marriage is a stranger.

How then can spirituality go in hand with immoral culture? What happens when students are lured into such life style? Setran and Kiesling continue to define spirituality from students’ perspective in three areas: (a) spirituality is internal congruence; (b) Spirituality is personal relationship with higher powers. One must choose to reject partying and premarital sex by belonging to a spiritual culture within the church; and (c) Spirituality is connectedness with other people, by attending church, being consistent in prayer life, reading the word of God regularly, listening to gospel music and meditation.³⁶ What happens when students cohabit, have sex with their friends and live careless life? They lose the value of Christianity and finally end up dropping out of church fellowship. One cannot cherish sin and remain a strong Christian because sex outside marriage is sin.

Oyetade believes that, “Any sexual relationship outside of marriage is a sin against God, against one’s future spouses, and against oneself.”³⁷ He carries on quoting Peter Green who said that, “when the author of Hebrews told his readers to keep the marriage bed undefiled he was using the word ‘bed’ ... as a euphemism for sexual intercourse.”³⁸ Paul was very emphatic when addressing the issue of sexuality outside marriage, “Flee sexual immorality, every sin that a man does is outside the body but he who commits sexual immorality sins against his own body” (1 Cor 6:18).

³⁶ Setran and Kiesling, *Spiritual Formation in Emerging Adulthood*, 162-170.

³⁷ Michael Oyebowale Oyetade, “Sanctity of Sexuality within Marriage: An Exegetical Study of Hebrews 13:4,” *KIU Journal of Humanities* 3, no. 2 (2018): 146.

³⁸ P. Green, *Alexander of Macedonia* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1990), 45, quoted in Oyetade, “Sanctity of Sexuality within Marriage,” 146.

The effect of sexuality within the student's environment, not only degrade the sanctity of marriage but more than that cultivate evils that affected the entire future generation. The behavior can also be formed by identity matrix's ideology. Gender influence how people perceive the world around them and how they believe. Young people develop their own ideas, information, decision making, interests, attitudes, traits and appearance.³⁹

Campus Students and Alcoholic Challenges

Alcoholic intoxication amongst students in colleges is viewed as one of the challenges that is threatening not only the spirituality of the young adults but is proving to be a serious health hazard. An estimated 42% of college students who use binge drinks and alcohol drinks are not only a factor for STI/HIV, but additionally increase sexual harassment, sexual victimization, sexual drive and un-intended pregnancy.⁴⁰ Partying is also one of the main causes of alcoholic culture "Overall adolescent alcohol use has been found to negatively affect cognition, brain structure and function"⁴¹ It has been observed also that "Lower levels of religiosity were associated with higher likelihood of engagement in alcohol behaviors (long duration, large amount, and high frequency of drinking)."⁴² This tells much on how spirituality

³⁹ Jelena Badjanva, Annit Pipere, and Dzintra Ilisko, "Gender Identity of Students and Teacher's Implication for Sustainable Future," *Journal of Teacher Education for Sustainability* 19, no. 2 (2017): 138.

⁴⁰ Jennifer L. Brown, Nicole K. Gause, and Nathan Northern, "The Association between Alcohol and Sexual Risk Behaviors among College Students: A Review," *Current Addiction Reports* 3, no. 4 (2016): 349-355.

⁴¹ Briana Lees et al., "Effect of Alcohol Use on the Adolescent Brain and Behavior," *Pharmacology Biochemistry and Behavior* 192 (2020): 172906.

⁴² Walid El Ansari, Abdul Salam, and Sakari B. Suominen, "Is Alcohol Consumption Associated with Poor Perceived Academic Performance? Survey of Undergraduates in Finland," *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health* 17, no. 4 (2020): 13.

can sustain good morals and health stability among college students and how adversely the opposite happens to the users of alcohol.

Why Adventist Students Leave the Church in Public Campus

Some of the youth stop attending church at some point in time. As they grow into young adulthood and as they are exposed to new but free environment from parental surveillance, laxity of going to church begin to be seen. This can be ascertained as Abuya affirms some of the reasons to include “alienation, irrelevance, intolerance, convenience and other issues like church discipline, feeling rejected and interpersonal conflicts, about 51% of those who left the church had indicated lack of mentorship as the main reason.”

Student’s Spiritual Alienation

It is possible for a student to feel alienated in one way or another. In research done by Alkauri et al., they found six types of alienation. These include social, religious, psychological, economic and political alienation.⁴³ Among the dimensions given, self-alienation ranked the leading cause. The beginning of a person’s alienation starts from separating from realities of life and inability to transform one’s environment. Alkauri et al. explain that signs of alienation start with the feeling of withdrawal from the society, rejectionist stage, including disregard to the rule of law hence psychological alienation. Further explanations indicate that alienation is the conflict between self and civil controls; one generates feelings of anxiety and distress when confronted with pressure and complications of life.⁴⁴

⁴³Zaid A. Alkauri et al., “Psychological Alienation Among College Students,” *Journal of Positive School Psychology* 6, no. 6 (2022): 2516.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 2518.

Students Feelings of Rejection

Students at times feel rejected in the new environment, the reasons could be economic value, academic capabilities, inferiority complex. Morrow had a different view on the causes of spiritual decline among the young adults. He observed that the causes could be: “Fragmentation of the family, parents have less than forty minutes to be with the family because of the economic pressure. The remaining time the child is either with the teacher or in social media platform watching movies that would eventually shape their future negatively. Separated families and single parenting may have adverse effect on the life of the student. Missional drift of the church, churches merely entertain the church members, if the church fails to introduce life transformation at a formative age, she will fail in a major part of her mission. Secularization of culture, scandals in recent decades have let young people lack trust in churches and other sectors of life.⁴⁵ The impact of the three major observations has reduced drastically the spirituality of the young people in the church. This means some young people leave the church when they fail to get close range shepherding. Signs of spiritual decline.

A study was done by Zarzycka and Zietek to find out the positive and negative effects on spirituality on six areas:

Divine (negative emotion centered on beliefs about God or a perceived relationship with God), *Demonic* (concern that the devil or evil spirits are attacking an individual or causing negative events), *Interpersonal* (concern about negative experiences with religious people or institutions), *Moral* (wrestling with attempts to follow moral principles; worry or guilt about perceived offenses by the self), *Religious doubt* (feeling troubled by doubts or questions about one’s spiritual beliefs), and *Ultimate Meaning* (concern about not perceiving deep meaning in one’s life).⁴⁶

⁴⁵ Randall Mark Morrow, “Young Adult Attrition in The American Church: The Suspected Causes and Suggested Cures” (DMin diss., Southeastern University, 2023), 37.

⁴⁶ Zarzycka and Pawel Zietek, “Spiritual Growth or Decline and Meaning-making,” 1076.

The outcome indicated that for demonic, moral and religious doubt, spiritual growth and decline was significant. It was also found out that spiritual decline can increase anxiety. In the relationship between interpersonal and anxiety, spiritual decline was significant.⁴⁷ The overall observation shows that spiritual decline can be assessed and the causes can be identified. This view was shared by Crete et al. when they observed in their research that “those with high level of spiritual decline had a greater effect on traumatic events such as post-traumatic stress disorders.”⁴⁸

To measure, assess and quantify the quality of spiritual growth versus decline, may require time and consistency. However, the Bible gives some few observable tenets. “you will know them by their fruits” (Matt 7:16), and the works of the flesh are: “adultery, fornication, uncleanness, dissensions, heresies” (Gal 5:20) while the fruit of the spirit is “love, joy, peace, longsuffering, goodness faithfulness, gentleness and self-control” (Gal 5:22-23). The stated biblical view is observable but can never be measured accurately by any available instrument. Hukkinen, Lutz, and Dowden acknowledge that “measuring tools are typically founded on assumptions about spiritual growth, each tool and Christian tradition have unique assumptions. Many tools assess spirituality by gauging outward participation in Christian activities but it is difficult to universally measure and chart Christian spiritual growth in all situations, traditions and conclusions or predictions be drawn from this.”⁴⁹ *The Seventh-day*

⁴⁷ Zarzycka and Pawel Zietek, “Spiritual Growth or Decline and Meaning-making,” 1078, 1079.

⁴⁸ Abigail Crete et al., “Spiritual Decline as a Predictor of Posttraumatic Stress,” *Religions* 11, no. 11 (2020): 9-14.

⁴⁹ Esa Hukkinen, Johannes M. Lutz, and Tony Dowden, “Assessing Research Trends in Spiritual Growth: The Case for Self-determined Learning,” *Religions* 14, no. 6 (2023): Article 809.

Adventist Church Manual explicitly shows some of the characteristic of a person who is assumed to have declined spiritually as:

1. A person who has stopped attending church service and probably disregard the fourth commandments.
2. The person who has stopped reading the Bible and Christian literature hence become apostate.
3. A person who has lost the interest of prayer and fellowship and may misrepresent the church.
4. A Person who has coarse relationship with fellow members which leads to disunity.
5. Intentionally disregard Gods commandment and moral behaviors.
6. Embraces sinful acts whether openly or secret.
7. Develop open criticism and despise the leadership of the church.⁵⁰

All these are some of the symptoms that can measure one's spiritual growth as well as spiritual decline.

The doctrine of one body of Christ as shown in 1 Corinthians 12:12-31, Romans 12:5-8 displays the unity of the church. This church is composed of members with different gifts that is essential for worship and her edification. Paul admonished the church to "consider one another in order to stir up love and good works not forsaking assembling together" (Heb 10:24-25). This is where the essence of church attendance with active participation come into effect, by attending church and participating in various activities, the value of talents is consumed by members but at the same time spiritual growth is enhanced. what is done by one person affects the

⁵⁰ General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual*, 19th ed. (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 2015), 62.

whole group. What prompts consistent absenteeism in church fellowship lacks biblical merit.

Discipleship as a Remedy

Discipleship as defined by Činčala in the religious context is mentoring someone in their faith. It is about teaching people to obey the commands of Jesus, teaching the head, mentoring the heart and modeling the hands for mission.⁵¹ Jesus addressed the reality of discipleship in the synoptic as well as the gospel of John. “Come follow me” (Matt 4:19); the term to follow is attached to the person of Jesus by totally breaking the past. The true disciple is called to share the destiny of the teacher, carry his cross, drink his cup and finally to receive from him the kingdom.⁵² “Do you know what I have done to you”? “if you know these things, blessed are you if you do them” (John 13:12,17); This was his discourse in the upper room. “Abide in me and I in you as a branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me” (John 15:4).

The reality of true discipleship starts with following Jesus as an example. This is accompanied by a serious commitment to his teaching and spending time with him in the word as a disciple before extending it to others. Tsegaw noted that true discipleship touches on “worship, fellowship and witnessing.”⁵³ These three are the core values of discipleship, and for these to be implemented. Tsegaw added that “discipleship strategic plan needs to be put in place, this involve the active role of a

⁵¹ Petr Činčala, “Holistic Community: The Key to Real-Life Discipleship,” *Pan-African Journal of Theology* 1, no. 1 (2022): 45-63, <https://journals.aua.ke/pajot/article/view/163>.

⁵² Ani Ghazaryan Drissi, “What Is Transforming Discipleship?” *The Ecumenical Review* 71, no. 1-2 (2019): 219.

⁵³ Melak Alemayehu Tsegaw, “Refocusing on Discipleship: The Heart of the Commission and the Hub of All Local Church Ministries,” *Ministry*, April 2019, 9-11.

chaplain in this case, the church board, commitment to training programs by the members and leadership of the church.”⁵⁴

How can worship make a disciple? The word worship carries the weight of spirit of prayer, personal devotion, scripture reading, elevating music, involvement in giving and developing working units for close range personal touch. This design is implemented by “social movements characterized by collective actions, actors, dense informal networks, and collective identity.”⁵⁵ The importance of worship is mainly to nurture individuals’ disciple so that they may be disciple makers. One cannot be a disciple maker until he is made a disciple.

The Bible introduces the word fellowship in Acts of the Apostles as an event that took place after a mass baptism out of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. “They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer” (Acts 2:41-42). This was the time when the church was birthed. In this sense spiritual growth from infancy needed the warmth of the community of believers. Fellowship from the word “koinonia,” is often rendered “communion” it properly denotes “having things in common, or participation, society, friendship, or anything which may be possessed in common, or in which all may partake.”⁵⁶ It is something we do with and for our fellow believers.

The gospel of Jesus Christ written by John, begin by narrating the role of the apostle John. “There was a man sent by God, whose name is John, He came as a

⁵⁴ Tsegaw, “Refocusing on Discipleship,” 10.

⁵⁵ Laurence G. Burn, “Discipleship Structures, Movements, and the Role of Multipliers,” *Journal of Adventist Mission Studies* 12, no. 2 (2016): 194-219.

⁵⁶ Brian A. Schulz, “The Spiritual Discipline on Fellowship: It’s Reality and Necessity,” accessed 23 June 2024, <http://kentchristian.org/The%20Spiritual%20Discipline%20of%20Fellowship%20-%20Term%20Paper.pdf>.

witness, to bear witness about the light that all might believe through him. He was not the light but came to bear witness about the light (John 1:6-8). John did not have unique qualities that made him to be chosen as a witness of the light. To witness in this context is just to tell what you have seen or what you have heard. “come, see a man who told me all that I ever did. Can this be the Christ?” (John 4:29) and this was translated as a testimony (John 4:39). The blind man in John 9 gives a testimony of what Jesus has done in his life. It is very clear that every true disciple is born into the kingdom of God as witness. He who receives will also give. What does it take to be a witness?

1. One must have had contact with Jesus either by seeing, touching or heard of Him.
2. It does not need any training to be a witness, just give what you have.
3. A transformed person has no choice but to witness in his/her own life style.
4. Witnessing is always spontaneous and has no cost implication.
5. One must receive the empowerment of the Holy Spirit
6. One must receive the inner call and be compelled by the love of God to do His will.

There are other ways one can apply when witnessing by volunteering to:

7. Create small groups for Bible study and invite friends.
8. Have compassionate ministry, meeting the needs of the needy in hospitals prisons and scene of disasters.
9. Share a testimony to a friend on what the lord has done
10. Explaining scriptures to a none believers on personal and in friendly manner.

11. Conducting a public evangelism campaign as means of witnessing.
12. Social media evangelism which currently is the most convenient way of witnessing

In relation to the stated facts about discipleship, it is evident that discipleship is practical Christianity which can be seen or felt.

Discipleship Coupled with Mentorship

The two terms “mentorship and discipleship” as Hukkinen, Lutz, and Dowden have one objective—to make mentee to be like their mentor. They approach it in three perspectives: First is intensive mentoring which includes discipling, guiding or coaching. The second is occasional mentoring, which deals with counselling, teaching and to sponsor. The third is passive mentoring, being the role model.⁵⁷ While Hukkinen, Lutz, and Dowden’s approach include coaching as one way of mentoring, Mullen and Klimaitis on the other hand arguably state that coaching or even training is not mentoring. They assert that coaching enhances performance on standards using formative assessment.⁵⁸ Kuhl defines mentorship as an “intentional relationship, spiritually focused in which one individual is empowered toward the purpose of God through investment and life experiences of another as they journey together.”⁵⁹ In support of Dr Kuhl’s view, D. White added, “A good mentor is a person of both

⁵⁷ Hukkinen, Lutz, and Dowden, “Assessing Research Trends in Spiritual Growth,” Article 809.

⁵⁸ Carol A. Mullen and Cindy C. Klimaitis, “Defining Mentoring: A Literature Review of Issues, Types, and Applications,” *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences* 1483, no. 1 (2021): 19-35, <https://doi.org/10.1111/nyas.14176>.

⁵⁹ Rob Kuhl, “The Aspects of Quality Spiritual Mentoring,” accessed 12 May 2024, <https://www.youthworker.com/the-aspects-of-quality-spiritual-mentoring/#:~:text=Spiritual%20Focus&text=In%20order%20to%20have%20excellence,%2C%20challenge%2C%20edification%20and%20transformation.>

credible experience and integrity, the act of mentoring allows the mentee to impact the life and journey of the mentor in return. It is this teaching that causes the mentee to grow up and develop their identity, and guides them through the rest of the journey.”⁶⁰

Guiding Students

As stated by D. White, students need to be guided by the mentors. The spiritual mentor in this context is the chaplain of the institution of learning, senior parents or teachers. Commenting on equipping and training mentors, Mthokozisi Dube disclosed in his research among high school students in Bulawayo that “it has never been easy for students to access the spiritual help when they need it because of the lack of qualified spiritual mentors and issues of trust, 50% said they might not fully disclose every detail of their challenges.”⁶¹ For students to be guided well in spiritual journey, the mentors must be above reproach and be fully committed to their duty. Mthokozisi Dube asserts that while there is a need to grow the aspect of mentorship to greater height, there is in proportion a growing skepticism among many as to the validity and need for professional chaplaincy.⁶² A skilled chaplain, while undertaking the ministry of care and guidance beyond denominational boundaries and personal competencies or having wealthy of theological background, need to know

⁶⁰ David E. White, “The Student Lived Experience of Mentoring as it Relates to Spiritual Formation in an Ethnically Diverse Christian College Environment: A Phenomenological Study” (PhD diss., Johnson University, 2021), 30.

⁶¹ Mthokozisi Dube, “A Wholistic Mentorship Program to Meet the Spiritual Needs of Students at Bulawayo Adventist High School, Zimbabwe” (MA thesis, Adventist University, 2020), 86.

⁶² Ibid., 53.

that mentoring is neither imposing one's views or advices.⁶³ Mentors need to secure in their belief, a personal theology with understanding that humanity is made in the image of God.⁶⁴

Peer Mentoring

Peer mentoring is a supportive relationship which enables students to engage in more meaningful and friendly conversations. It is also adding knowledge around academic operations with a feeling and awareness of belonging to group of individuals with similar ideas, needs, goals and experiences.⁶⁵ The importance of peer mentoring provide social grounds for various groups of people to interact and share experiences together. The togetherness embraced bears fruits of retention and belonging. Those who benefit most from this peer mentorship interactions are the first-generation students.⁶⁶ The first-year students who have just joined college are referred to as first generation. Peer mentors make deliberate decision to be good examples to the mentees in all dimensions of life.

Electronic Mentoring

This is a culture that is developed through e-mentoring especially the internet communication. This mentoring relies mainly on mentee. It supports the marginalized

⁶³ Dube, "A Wholistic Mentorship Program to Meet the Spiritual Needs of Students at Bulawayo Adventist High School, Zimbabwe," 52.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 52.

⁶⁵ Elizabeth Oddone Paolucci et al., "An Exploration of Graduate Student Peer Mentorship, Social Connectness and Well-being across Four Disciplines of Study," *Studies in Graduate and Postdoctoral Education* 12, no. 1 (2021): 73.

⁶⁶ Sara Connolly, "The Impact of Peer Mentoring on the Mentors," *Journal of Applied Research in Higher Education* 9, no. 2 (2017): 256.

population by transcending barriers such as hostile working environment.⁶⁷ The disadvantage of this type of mentoring is the absence of face to face communication. But majority of the students can be reached through this type of mentoring if the mentor is deliberate.

Role Model Mentoring

A role model mentor is a person who sets an example for another individual to imitate, a person who can act as advisor, a trusted counselor, and a force for social learning.⁶⁸ Such a person can change the decision matrix from worse to better living standard more so for the first-generation students. The mentor must have ethical template, symbol of special achievement and a nurture of special educational services.⁶⁹

Intense Relational Mentoring

A survey was done by four professors (Aune, Peacock, Guest, and Law) to find out the best approach a chaplain can use to enhance and influence students build good relational atmosphere. The empirical evidence showed that students prefer a chaplain who is always present to attend their needs. They simply needed the availability, accessibility and visibility of a chaplain. They further found out that a good chaplain must be approachable, confidante, friendly companion, with religious

⁶⁷ Mullen and Klimaitis, "Defining Mentoring," 19.

⁶⁸ Melissa S. Kearney and Phillip B. Levine, "Role Models, Mentors, and Media Influences," *The Future of Children* 30, no. 1 (2020): 83.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 85.

integrity and trusted by whole range of people.⁷⁰ A chaplain of this standard can be accessed and approached by students whenever they need. These are some of the best methods of building good intentional relationship with students. The magnitude of relationship should be intensive enough.⁷¹ This kind of relationship is highly valued, it enhances confidence and self- empowerment. The level of intensity is contributed by frequent contact and consistent communication.

Group Mentoring

Whereas types of mentoring ranges from formal to informal, mentoring as one of the oldest approaches which has survived the test of time, because it attracts flexibility, inclusiveness, shared knowledge, interdependence, broader vision of the organization, and widened network⁷² Group mentoring is very effective in campus setting because it takes care of all the objective of academic as well as spiritual aspirations.

Conclusion

The literature review has confirmed that some young people's spirituality at the university campus can be challenged by so many intruders in their Christian journey. As they leave high school where they have been confined with some school and parental restrictions and as they begin life in new environment with sufficient freedom, their spiritual and social life style also begins to dwindle.

⁷⁰ Kristin Aune et al., "University Chaplaincy as Relational Presence: Navigating Understanding of Good and Effective Chaplaincy in UK Universities," *Journal of College and Character* 24, no. 3 (2023): 197, <https://doi.org/10.1080/2194587x.2023.224573>.

⁷¹ Mullen and Klimaitis, "Defining Mentoring," 25-26.

⁷² Ibid., 27-28.

This can be seen through their absence in serious nourishing programs like Bible study and prayer groups, church attendance, reduced participation in outreach services and unbecoming visible behaviors. The Bible states very clear that “And have no fellowship with unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them. Things that are exposed are made manifest by the light, for whatever makes manifest is light” (Eph 5:11,13). What is significant in the entire chapter is prayer, and spiritual discipline in one’s daily live.

A spiritual person’s work is seen both in the church activities and in daily living. One cannot claim to be a spiritual person and manifests the opposite of the common expectation. The reluctance in church attendance and church activities is a sure sign of declined spirituality. This can also be attributed to poor parenting upbringing, insufficient inculcation of Adventist fundamental beliefs in their previous institution of learning, and overwhelming university peer pressure.

The social life and its traits of influence in a university setting as revealed in the literature and more so the social media, is turning to be a disaster in the lives of young people. The partying, engagement with alcohol and financial constraints continue to confuse some of the Adventist students, hence affect their spirituality negatively. Drug abuse in all its phases is becoming a menace, social amenities and private corners in some designated places have been reserved for these social evils. This has elicited rampant mental disorders.

Premarital sex, or cohabiting, is almost becoming a campus lifestyle. This kind of life is disintegrating the integrity, ethical ethos, cultural norms, values of society and human dignity. Social media seems to be the forefront propagator of these evils. Weak parents and children are the results of this behavior. The future of students whose morality is questionable is growing bleak and dark. The spiritual and academic

pursuits are at times dwarfed or even crippled completely. Incompetent personnel are soon becoming the prospects of leadership both in the church and the secular world.

There is a need for strong and viable programs for motivation, instilling of Christian faith, role modeling, discipleship and mentorship. These programs need to be adoptive, sustainable and consistent. Skilled chaplain who offered and facilitate mentorship professionally is the answer to most of the challenge's students are facing. If students are rightly instructed and parents take their Christian parenting as entailed in (Deut 6:4-7), a promising future is apparent. The literature highlights challenges affecting young people's spirituality on campus, including newfound freedom, peer pressure, and social media influence. However, there is a gap in structured, sustainable mentorship programs that reinforce Christian faith, discipleship, and parental guidance. Effective chaplaincy and faith-based interventions remain underexplored in addressing these spiritual crises.

CHAPTER 4

METHODOLOGY

This chapter covers the research design, the sampling procedure, data gathering procedure, the criteria used, the research instrument, validation and reliability of the instruments, and data analysis.

Research Design

Research design was “the conceptual structure within which research was conducted.”¹ Quantitative descriptive research was the most appropriate and in order to be more precise, this research delved in cross-sectional survey design. This type of research is used to “quantify attitude, opinions, behaviors, and other defined variables and generalized results by the way of generating numerical data.”² The design earmarked the ontology, attitude, behavior and the opinion of the student as to why the interest on church services became a relaxed priority of faith even as they navigate their studies at the university. The rationale behind this type of research is that it allowed the researcher to have control over the study on variables, environment and

¹ C. R. Kothari and Gaurav Garg, *Research Methodology: Methods and Techniques* (London: New Age International Publishers, 2019), 29.

² Haradhan Mahajan, “Quantitative Research: A Successful Investigation in Natural and Social Science,” *Journal of Economic Development, Environment and People* 9, no. 4 (2020): 52.

research questions. It was used to determine the relationship between variables and outcomes and it also predicted the future by studying the trend.³

Population Sampling Procedure

A sample design is a definite plan for obtaining a sample from a given population. It is the procedure the researcher adopted in selecting items for sample as shown in Table 2 below.

Table 2. The Sample Size

	Higher Institution	Students	SDA	Sample
	Of Learning	Population	Students	Size
1	University of Eldoret	14000	700	50
2	Moi University	52,000	1200	60
3	School of Health Science Moi Teaching Referral Hospital (Moi university)	2000	120	20
4	Moi School of law Annex	1700	118	20
	Total	69700	1058	150

Purposive sampling was used to select from a population of 1058 Adventist students in public campus in Eldoret city. The researcher used random start basing on the members present by formulating an appropriate fraction, this fraction depended on the total population present verses the sampling number needed. More than 150 students participated. The selection criteria were as follows: (a) Undergraduates, (b) Any gender, (c) Any academic discipline, and (d) Adventist baptized members who had completed one semester in campus.

³ Shannon Rutberg and Christina D. Bouikidis, "Focusing on the Fundamentals: A Simplistic Differentiation between Qualitative and Quantitative Research," *Nephrology Nursing Journal* 45, no. 2 (2018): 209, <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/328250766>.

Data Gathering Procedure

The study used the following procedures. First, the Principal Investigator (PI) secured an approval from the Adventist University of Africa Institutional Science Ethics Review Committee (ISERC). Secondly, the PI applied for Research permit from National Commission of Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI). Thirdly, the PI requested for Permission from the management of the four institutions for research. Fourth obtained individual permission, by use of informed consent. Fifth, the researcher made arrangement with the Adventist Chaplain, elders and deacons of those institutions for briefing on when and how the collection of data was to be done. Sixth, all the members were invited and encouraged by the chaplain to participate voluntarily in this exercise. At agreed time, the prepared questionnaires designed, were distributed to the members and were collected on the same day for use.

Research Instrument

These are the tools used to get information on the ground. The researcher mainly used a questionnaire based on the, literature.

There were three types of questionnaires. The first questionnaire covered the demographic details. These included age, sex, year of study, church membership, and church responsibility. The second research questionnaire addressed the possible causes of spiritual decline. Closed-ended questions asked the relational practicability of the theory displayed in the literature review. The third research questionnaire addressed discipleship as possible means of sustaining the student's spiritual growth.

Instrument validity and reliability. This refers to the accuracy of the instrument. The research questionnaire experts from AUA assessed the face and content validity their input incorporated. The researcher conducted pilot study in one

of the public universities using 30 sample questionnaires, the data coded into SPSS version 25 and reliability based on Cronbach's alpha of equal to or greater than 0.69 was considered the most reliable. The Likert scale (Table 3) was used to measure the opinions of the students concerning spiritual decline. Reliability for experience on a Public campus was 0.721 and Discipleship in public campus was 0.782, hence the instrument was reliable and was used to obtain the data as stated in research objectives.

Table 3. Scale, Scoring, and Verbal Interpretation

Numeric scale	Scale response	Numeric Likert scale average weight	Scale Verbal interpretation
4	Strongly Agree	3.50-4.00	Very high
3	Agree	2.51-3.49	high
2	Disagree	1.50-2.49	Low
1	Strongly Disagree	1.00-1.49	Very low

Data Analysis

The data was collected from the students through a questionnaire. The scripts coded, cleaned up, and sent as an Excel spreadsheet to the statisticians for data analysis. SPSS was utilized in the analysis. Pie charts, tables and bar graphs were used to describe the data. Descriptive statistics were used to get the mean and standard deviation and finally make the conclusion.

CHAPTER 5

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This segment presents the results and discusses them based on the literature. Additionally, it interprets the analyzed data. Descriptive statistics were employed for the analysis, with the results presented in the form of pie charts, bar graphs, and tables.

Demographic Data of the Respondents

Figure 1 shows the ages of the study's respondents. The figure reveals that most participants were between 18 and 22 years old at the time of the study. This age group is capable of making informed decisions about their spiritual lives. They are eligible for baptism and can take part in various church activities.

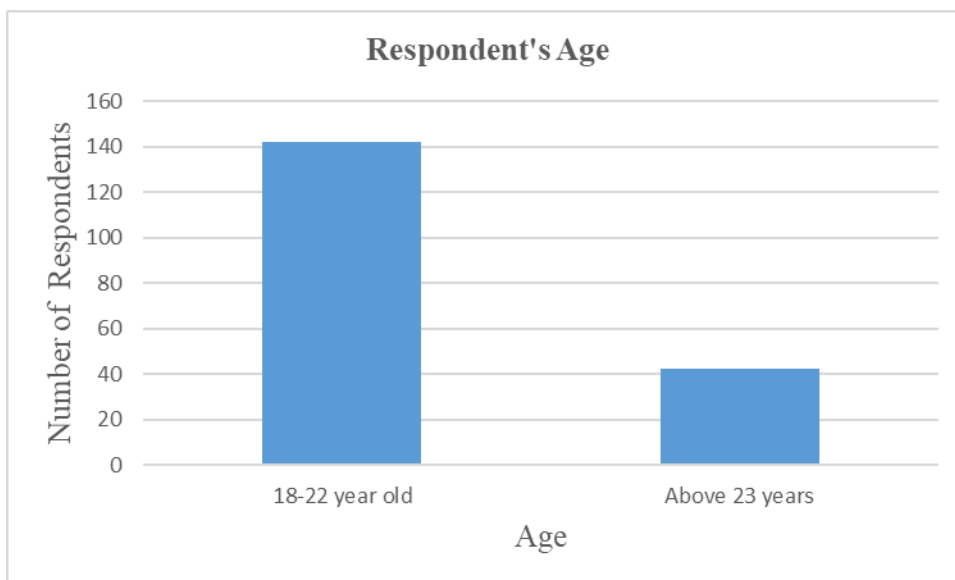


Figure 1. Respondents' Age

Most respondents in this group are likely less reliant on parental guidance and more influenced by peer pressure. They are also keen to explore the world and engage in peer activities such as partying and traveling on weekends after a busy week of school. Emerging adulthood (18-25 years) is a critical period for identity exploration, which includes spiritual beliefs.¹ Bryant, Choi, and Yasuno describe this phase as one of "self-focus" and exploration, where individuals reassess inherited beliefs and potentially develop new ones, on the other hand,² and observe that students often experience a drop in religious participation and spiritual practices during their college years, which can be linked to the search for autonomy and personal identity.

Respondents' Gender

Figure 2 illustrates the gender distribution of the respondents, showing that most of them are male.

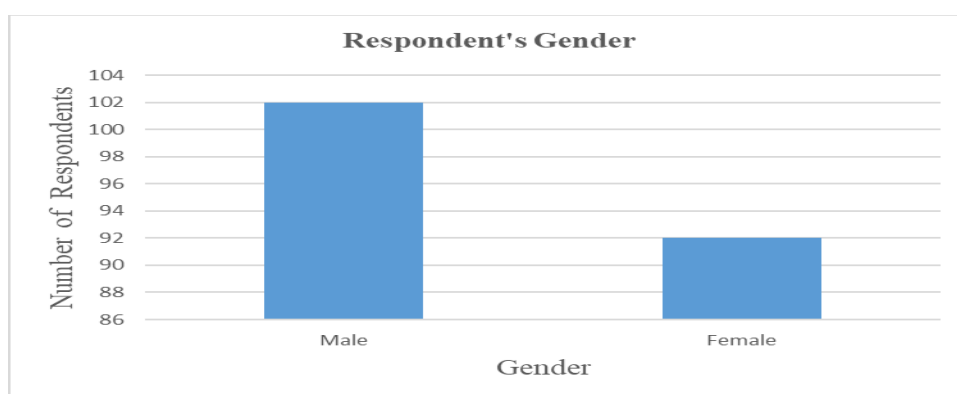


Figure 2. Respondents' Gender

¹ Alexander W. Astin, Helen S. Astin, and Jennifer A. Lindholm, *Cultivating the Spirit: How College Can Enhance Students' Inner Lives* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2010), 45-47.

² Abraham N. Bryant, Jinyoung Choi, and Mitsuru Yasuno, "Understanding the Religious and Spiritual Dimensions of Students' Lives in the First Year of College," *Journal of College Student Development* 44, no. 6 (2003): 723.

This aligns with the age group data presented in Figure 1. The implication is that a majority of SDA students in the sampled public universities are male. This may be due to parents preferring to send their daughters to private institutions for protection. It is important to consider that this gender distribution could affect the study's results, as male students in their teens and early twenties are generally more interested in sports, which often occur on weekends or during Sabbath time. Looking at the studies conducted earlier revealed that women generally report higher levels of religious involvement and spiritual activities than men. For instance, Bryant's longitudinal study found that female college students were more likely to participate in religious services and engage in spiritual practices such as prayer and meditation compared to their male counterparts. This difference was attributed to socialization patterns that encourage emotional expression and relational aspects of spirituality more common in women.³

The relationship between a student's gender and their spiritual development during university years has garnered significant academic interest. Both male and female students often experience a decline in spiritual engagement during their university years. This trend has been linked to the transition to a more secular environment, increased academic pressures, and exposure to diverse worldviews that challenge previously held beliefs.⁴ However, the rate and nature of this decline can differ by gender. Studies show that male students are more likely to disengage from religious practices altogether, while female students may shift towards more individualized and non-traditional forms of spirituality.

³ Alyssa N. Bryant, "Gender Differences in Spiritual Development during the College Years," *Sex Roles* 56, no. 11-12 (2007): 835.

⁴ Alexander W. Astin, "Why Spirituality Deserves a Central Place in Liberal Education," *Liberal Education* 90, no. 2 (2004): 34.

Participants' Year of Study

Referring to Figure 3, it is clear that the majority of respondents are in their second year of study, followed by third-year students. Sixth-year students constitute the smallest group.

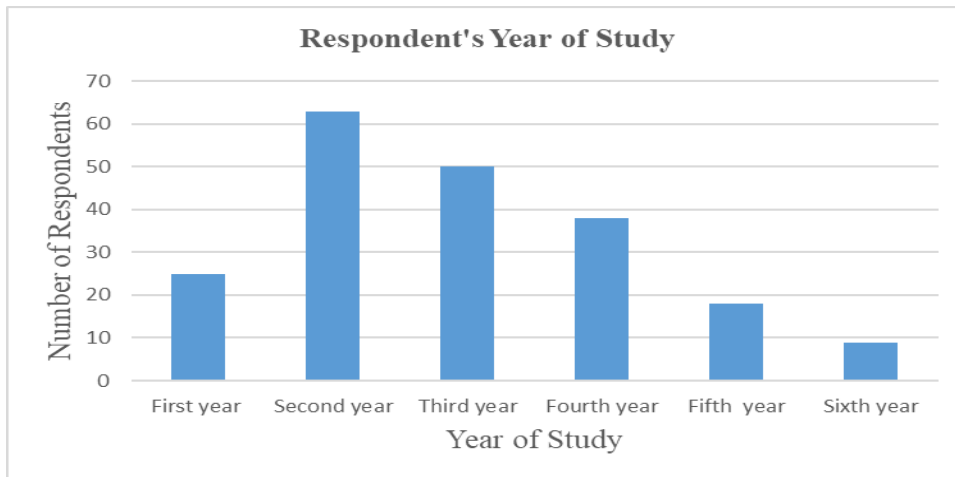


Figure 3. Year of Study

There is a distribution of participants across all six years of study. The study sample includes students from every academic level at public universities. This study posits that first and second-year students might be the most affected spiritually, as they are still adjusting to the newfound freedom in the university environment. Nonetheless, the sampling distribution represents all levels of study.

The transition from high school to university life represents a significant shift in many students' lives, often marked by increased autonomy and exposure to diverse perspectives. This period of adjustment is not only academic but also personal and spiritual. Published studies have suggested that as students' progress through their university years, there is a notable decline in their levels of spirituality. Spirituality in the context of higher education encompasses a broad range of beliefs and practices related to personal faith, meaning, and purpose. It is distinct from religiosity, which

often pertains to formal religious affiliation and practices. Bryant, Choi, and Yasuno describe spirituality among college students as a dynamic process that includes existential questioning and the search for purpose and meaning in life.⁵ Astin, Astin, and Lindholm conducted a longitudinal study revealing that students' spiritual quest and religious engagement tend to diminish significantly by their senior year.⁶ This decline is attributed to increased academic pressures, exposure to diverse worldviews, and a decrease in structured religious activities. The increasing academic workload and time constraints faced by students as they progress in their studies can limit their engagement in spiritual practices. It has been established that the demands of academic life often leave little room for spiritual reflection and activities, contributing to a gradual decline in spiritual engagement.⁷

Table 4 shows years since the participants were baptized. Majority of the respondents (79.6%) were baptized three years and above during time of the study. These are respondents who understands the fundamental principles of SDA church. They can participate in church activities which can help them to grow spiritually.

Table 4. Participants' Year of Baptism

Years	Frequency	Percent
One month to two years	71	20.4
Three years and above	125	79.6
Total	196	100.00

⁵ Bryant, Choi, and Yasuno, "Understanding the Religious and Spiritual Dimensions of Students' Lives in the First Year of College," 724.

⁶ Astin, Astin, and Lindholm, *Cultivating the Spirit*.

⁷ Ibid.

Respondents' Place of Baptism

Referring to Figure 4 above, it is depicted that majority of the participants were baptized at home (37%), this is followed closely with those who were baptized at high school, then those who baptized at the university where they are currently studying. These findings concur with the present study's findings that majority of the respondents were baptized three years and above this is because majority were baptized in high school, at home church, high school, primary school cumulatively making over 80%.

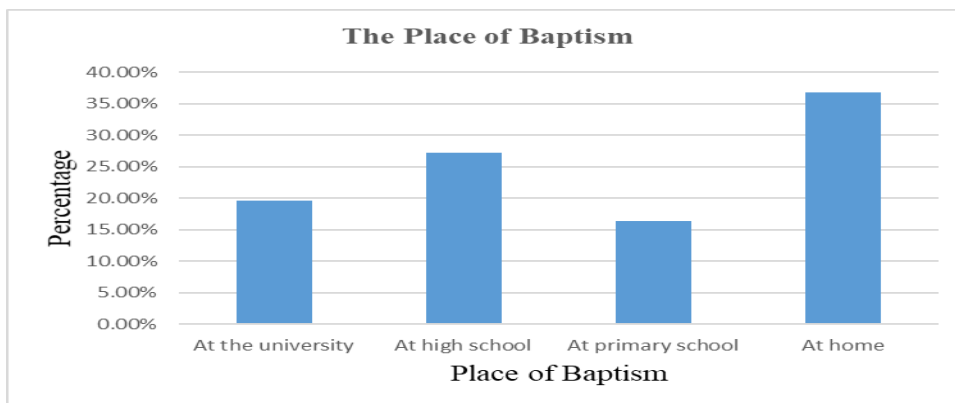


Figure 4. Place of Baptism

The transition to university life often involves significant changes in social support systems. Many students move away from home and their familiar religious communities, which can lead to a decline in spiritual practices and beliefs. The lack of a supportive religious community in the new environment is a crucial factor. Research indicates that social support, including religious support, plays a significant role in maintaining life satisfaction and academic engagement among university students.⁸

⁸ Xiangju Meng and Zhenfang Hu, "The Relationship between Student Motivation and Academic Performance: The Mediating Role of Online Learning Behavior," *Quality Assurance in Education* 31, no. 1 (2023): 167.

Furthermore, the academic pressures and the new social environment of universities often prioritize secular over religious or spiritual activities. This shift can lead students to deprioritize their spiritual life in favor of academic and social engagements. A study on the relationship between student motivation and academic performance suggests that the intense focus on academic success can diminish the time and energy students allocate to spiritual activities.

This study addresses the responsibility of church involvement among university students. The researcher aimed to determine the level of participation in church activities by students at their respective public universities. Table 5 presents the frequencies and percentages of the analyzed data.

Table 5. Church Responsibility

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Yes	105	53.6	53.6
No	91	46.4	46.4
Total	196	100.0	100.0

The results indicate an almost equal ratio between those who participate and those who do not, with 53.6% of students participating in church activities at their universities, while 46.4% do not. Despite a majority of the respondents being baptized, nearly half do not engage in church activities. One item in this study explores the reasons for this lack of participation. This issue is particularly concerning for the SDA Church, given the significant youth population in universities and their importance to the church community. Furthermore,⁹ it has been emphasized that the positive effects of leadership roles within church settings on young adults' spiritual

⁹ J. K. Bergen and D. O. Moberg, "Leadership and Spiritual Growth among College Students," *Journal of College and Character* 18, no. 3 (2017): 215.

growth. Parker and Stone found that university students who held leadership positions in their churches exhibited higher levels of spiritual engagement and resilience against spiritual decline. Similarly, underscored the importance of maintaining a healthy balance between church involvement and other aspects of university life. They observed that students who prioritized their church responsibilities above their academic and social needs were more susceptible to experiencing a decline in spirituality over time.¹⁰

Church Responsibility before Joining University

Figure 5 reveals that despite almost equal ratio of participate and non-participants in church, 67.4% of the participants in this study were participating in church activities before joining universities.

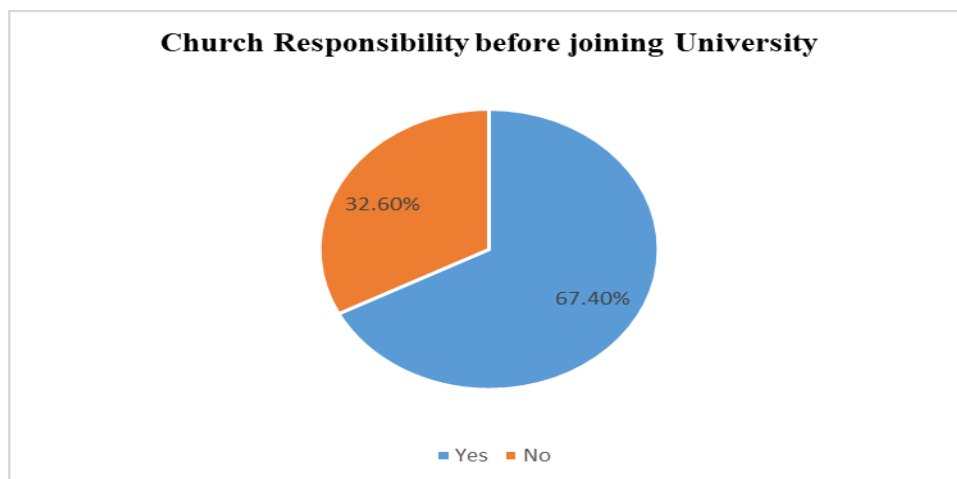


Figure 5. Church Responsibility before Joining University

¹⁰ J. D. Parker and A. M. Stone, "Navigating the Spiritual Landscape: The Influence of Religious Involvement on College Student Spiritual Development," *Journal of College Student Development* 60, no. 6 (2019): 711.

In reference to table two, it shows 46.4% do not participate in university level, while 67.4% used to participate before joining university, hence 20% of the participants have stopped participating. There is a reason why this percentage has stopped participating. The findings in the next sections of this study shall answer the question. Studies suggest that the rigorous academic demands of university life often leave students with limited time and energy to engage in religious activities.¹¹ As students prioritize their academic pursuits, they may neglect their previous church responsibilities. The decline in student church responsibility poses challenges for religious communities seeking to engage young adults. Churches may need to adapt their outreach strategies and programming to better meet the needs and preferences of university students.¹² The social environment of university campuses can exert a significant influence on students' religious behaviors. Research indicates that peer interactions and peer norms play a role in shaping students' attitudes towards religion, potentially leading to decreased church involvement.¹³

Figure 6 shows that 92% of the participants attend church at the university regularly, a small percentage attend twice a month and once per semester. Despite being regular attendees, 20% of the participants have stopped participating in church. In a faith that participants were sincere in responding to the item, this study was concerned with the evidence that almost all SDA youth in public universities attend church at the university.

¹¹ Robert Smith, "Balancing Act: Academic Demands and Religious Commitments among University Students," *Journal of College Student Development* 42, no. 3 (2017): 345.

¹² Alice Brown and James Smith, "Navigating the Transition: Strategies for Churches to Engage University Students," *Journal of Religious Studies* 45, no. 2 (2020): 213.

¹³ Karen Jones and Michael Brown, "Peer Influence and Religious Behavior: A Longitudinal Study of University Students," *Journal of Youth and Adolescence* 24, no. 1 (2019): 89.

Attendance of Church Service at the University

According to Figure 6, the finding reveals that those who were baptized in primary school, secondary school, and even at their respective universities have not stopped attending church services. A small percentage of around 8% stopped attending church. Even if it is one, two or three, the church is concern as to why they stopped attending church. The SDA Church is also concern about their participation despite the evidence that they used to participate at home churches.

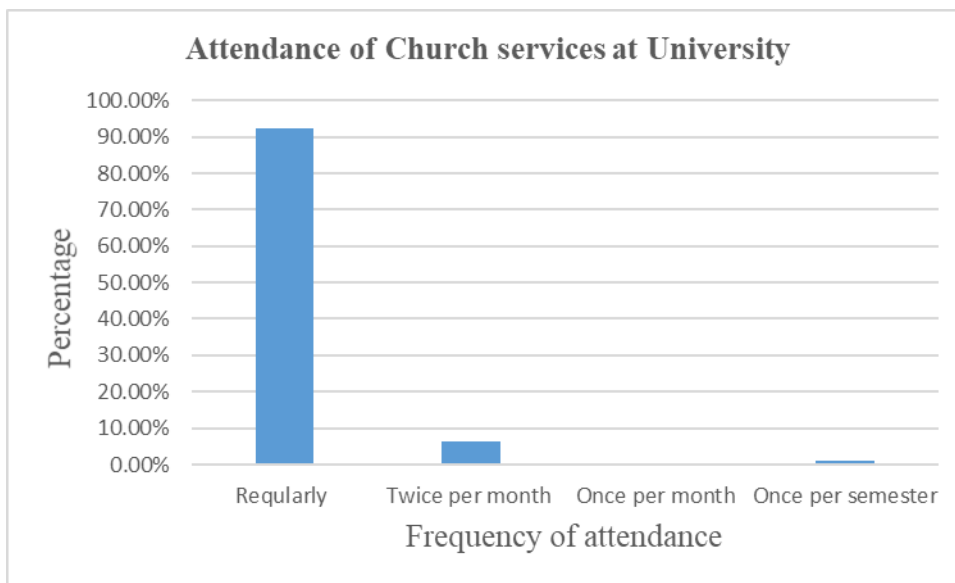


Figure 6. Attendance of Church Services at University

Makori explored the influence of family background on church attendance among Kenyan university students. Findings indicate a significant correlation between parental religious affiliation and students' likelihood of attending church. The study suggests that familial religious socialization plays a crucial role in shaping students' religious behaviors.¹⁴ Study have investigated socioeconomic determinants of church

¹⁴ J. M. Makori, "The Role of Family Background in Determining Church Attendance among University Students in Kenya," *Journal of Religious Studies* 12, no. 2 (2017): 45-58.

attendance among students in Kenyan public universities. The study reveals that students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds are less likely to attend church regularly compared to their counterparts from higher socioeconomic statuses. Financial constraints and time commitments to employment emerge as significant barriers to church participation.¹⁵

Respondents' Reasons for Not Attending Church Service at University

Previous findings from this study indicated that 20% of participants who had been attending church services at home have since ceased their attendance. Consequently, one of the objectives of this study is to investigate the reasons behind their decision to stop attending church services. To achieve this, respondents were asked to select their reasons for non-attendance from a provided list. The results of this inquiry are presented in Figure 7.

¹⁵ P. M. Nyambura and G. Odhiambo, "Socioeconomic Factors Affecting Church Attendance among Public University Students in Kenya," *International Journal of Sociology and Anthropology* 11, no. 3 (2019): 78.

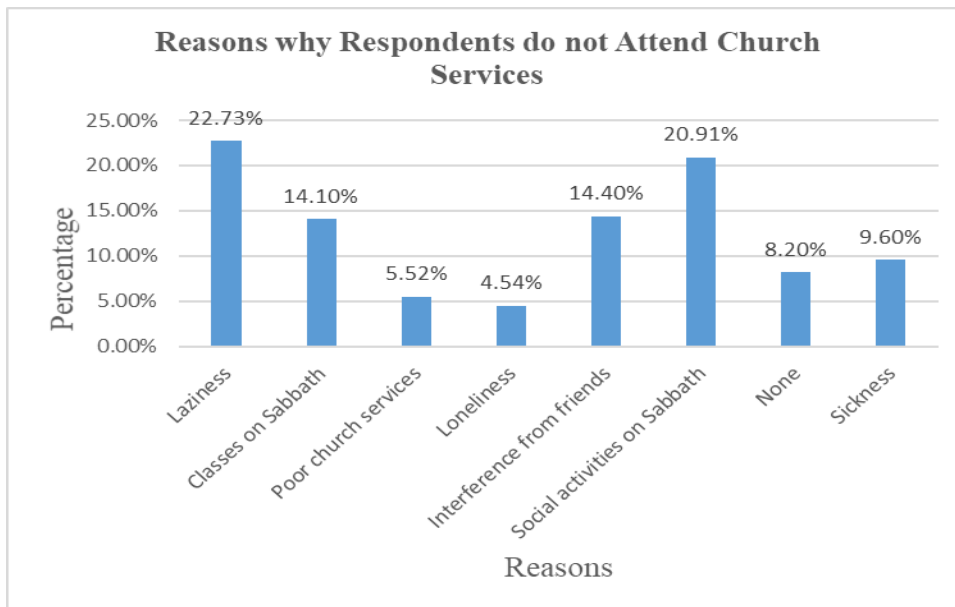


Figure 7. Reason for Not Attending Church Services

The majority group attributed laziness to failed church service attendance. They may be feeling tired due to much school work in the course of the class days. Another group, making a total representation of 20.91% attributed their failure to attend church services to university due to social activities which takes place during Sabbath. They preferred attending university social activities over church services. A significant 14.10% of the students do not attend church services because they have classes during church services. Because participants have to choose between classes or church services, this percentage chose classes over church services. Due to peer pressure or interference from friends, another 14.40% of the respondents do not attend church services. However, 8.20% of the participants do not have any reason as to why they do not attend church services. They just find themselves not attending church services. About 9.6% of the respondents do not attend church services due to sickness. This is quite concern to the present study because they may be willing to attend church if there is someone to help them attend church services. In response to the item, 5.5% of the participants do not attend church services because of poor church

services. They may have attended a few times but they found church in university poor, hence they do not attend. The study also found out that some participants (4.54%) do not attend church services at the university because they are lonely. Either this group find themselves lonely in church or at school, or they do not have any company to attend church services together. This could be a social, or a mental problem which need more address beyond the present research.

Referring to Figures 1 and 2 showing the age of the participants and gender respectively, it is evident that majority of the participants are between the age of 18-22 years old and most of them are male. This implies that they are prone to participate in games activities which take place during church days. The percentages concur that it is the same 20% male, same 20% who do not attend church because of social weekend activities. They may require a spiritual guidance from their chaplain. Additionally, the chaplain should look into the reason that the participants do not attend church services because of sickness and try to help the members in problems.

The decline in church attendance among university students can be partly attributed to broader secularization trends. Many university students view organized religion as out-of-touch with their values and concerns. Traditional religious institutions may be perceived as rigid, judgmental, and exclusive, failing to resonate with the diverse and inclusive ethos of contemporary youth culture.¹⁶ As a result, students seek alternative forms of spirituality and community outside traditional religious structures.¹⁷ Peer relationships play a significant role in shaping students'

¹⁶ Smith, with Snell, *Souls in Transition*, 211.

¹⁷ Michele Dillon and Patrick Wink, "Religious and Spiritual Struggles," in *APA Handbook of Psychology, Religion, and Spirituality*, ed. Kenneth I. Pargament, James J. Exline, and James W. Jones (New York: American Psychological Association, 2015), 1:459.

attitudes and behaviors regarding religion. The decline in church attendance among university students can be partly attributed to social norms within peer groups that prioritize secular activities over religious ones.¹⁸ Additionally, the perception of religious affiliation as socially stigmatizing or unfashionable among peers further diminishes the appeal of attending church services.¹⁹

In view of the research findings and literature review, this study observes that the reasons for the declining attendance of church services among university students are multifaceted, stemming from broader societal trends, intellectual challenges to religious beliefs, busy lifestyles, perceptions of institutional irrelevance, and social influences. Understanding these factors is crucial for religious organizations seeking to engage young adults and adapt their outreach strategies to the evolving needs and preferences of contemporary university students

What is the main reason why your friends do not Attend Church Services?

The study also wanted to find out why the respondent's friends do not attend church services at public universities in Kenya. Figure 8 shows that respondents perceived that their friends do not attend church services at the university mainly because of lack of mentorship in a free public university world (39.80%), and due to peer pressure (38.20%).

¹⁸ Matthew J. Mayhew et al., *How College Affects Students: 21st Century Evidence that Higher Education Works* (Hoboken, NJ: Jossey-Bass, 2016), 67.

¹⁹ Jeremy E. Uecker, Mark D. Regnerus, and Margaret L. Vaaler, "Losing My Religion: The Social Sources of Religious Decline in Early Adulthood," *Social Forces* 85, no. 4 (2007): 1667.

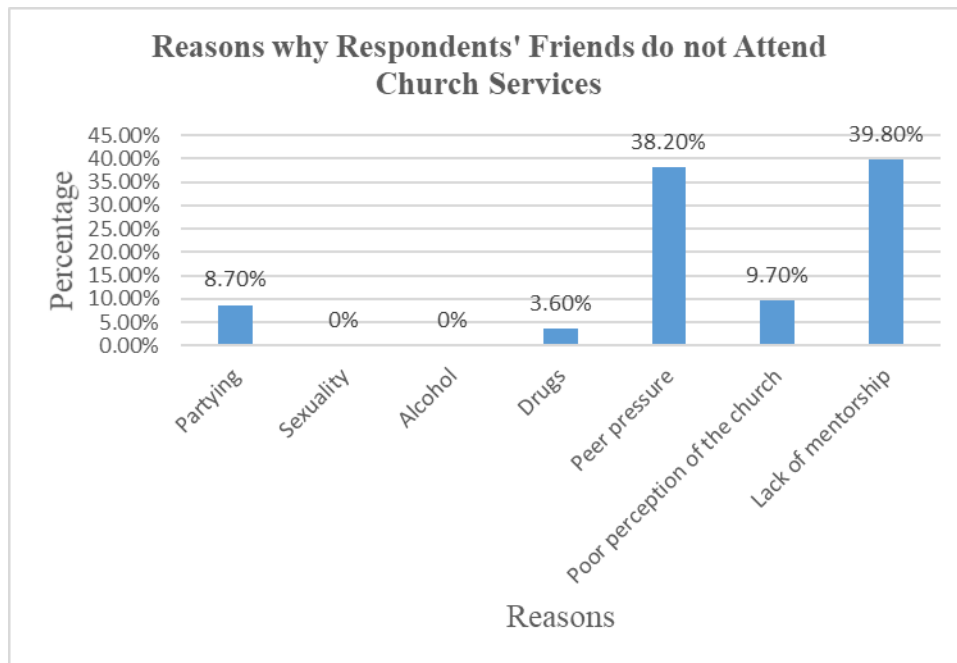


Figure 8. Reasons Why Friends Do Not Attend Church Services

These are the main reasons as perceived by the respondents. The is true according to previous figures depicting the age and the gender of the most of the respondents. The age group is prone to peer pressure. The trending percentage of 9.70% attributed that it is because of poor perception of the church. This is another expression of the poor church services claim the Figure 7. Partying is another factor, 8.70% of the participant's friends do not attend church services because they are out partying during Sabbath or mid-week prayers. None of the SDA student do not attend church services because of sexuality and alcoholism, this could be due to some units offered in the university about the effects of sexuality and alcoholism on health. Nonetheless, it is positive to find out that those who go out partying do not end drinking alcohol and sexual affairs, this would have been expressed by the participants. It was also found out that 3.60% of the SDA students in public universities have ended up drugs, this has made them to fail attend church services.

This is a small number but spiritually is very important. Mentorship worked a great deal in helping them come out of drugs.

In Kenya, religion plays a significant role in society, with Christianity being the predominant faith. However, despite this cultural backdrop, there is a noticeable trend of university students, particularly in public universities, abstaining from regular church attendance. One of the primary reasons for non-attendance among university students is the intense academic pressure they face.²⁰ With demanding coursework, assignments, and exams, students often prioritize academic commitments over religious activities. Additionally, the limited time available due to academic workload and extracurricular activities further deters students from attending church regularly.²¹

The influence of peers plays a significant role in shaping students' behavior, including their religious practices.²² In a university setting, students may feel pressured to conform to the norms of their social circle, which may or may not prioritize religious activities. Moreover, the influence of secular ideologies and lifestyles among peers can contribute to the decline in church attendance among university students.²³ The culture and ethos of universities can also impact students' religious behaviors.²⁴ In some cases, universities may lack supportive religious

²⁰ J. Nyabwari, "Academic Pressure and Non-Attendance of Religious Services among University Students in Kenya," *Journal of Academic Stress Management* 8, no. 2 (2017): 110-125.

²¹ K. Njoroge and L. Njenga, "Time Management Challenges and Church Attendance among University Students: A Case Study of Kenyan Public Universities," *Journal of Time Management Studies* 15, no. 1 (2018): 30.

²² P. Musau, "Peer Influence and Religious Participation among University Students in Kenya," *International Journal of Adolescence and Youth* 21, no. 3 (2016): 345.

²³ M. Kageema and F. Kibui, "Peer Influence on Religious Behavior among University Students in Kenya," *Journal of Religion and Society* 21, no. 2 (2019): 87-104.

²⁴ S. Obaje, "Institutional Factors Affecting Religious Participation among University Students: A Case Study of Kenyan Public Universities," *Journal of Institutional Studies* 22, no. 4 (2019): 78.

communities or facilities, making it challenging for students to engage in religious activities on campus. Additionally, the secularization of higher education institutions may contribute to the marginalization of religious practices among students.²⁵

Apart from finding out the factors that contribute to SDA students not attending church services at public universities, the study found out the spiritual effect on students. Figure 9 shows whether there are spiritual effects on students and their friends. The study was concerned on only whether there is an effect but not specifically specifying the effects.

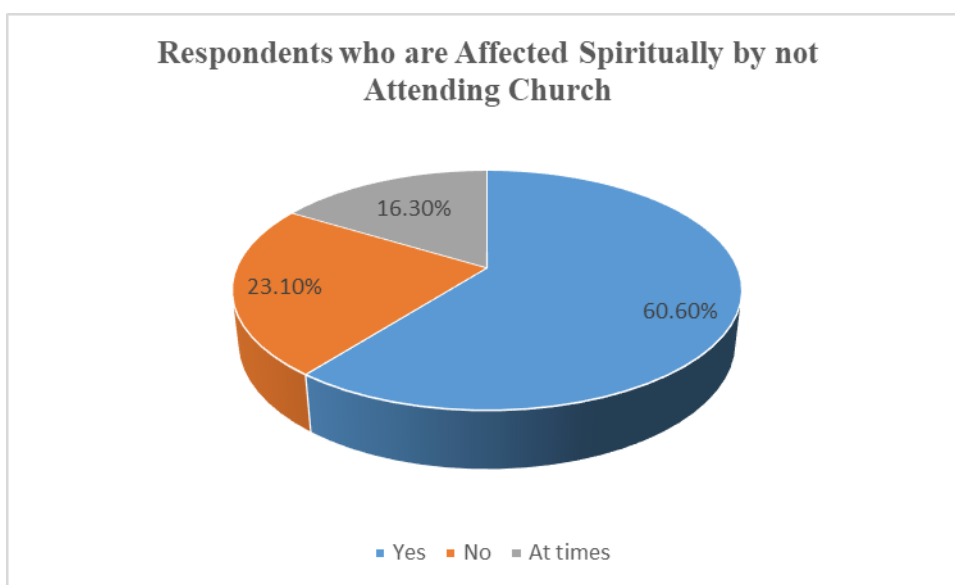


Figure 9. Spiritual Effect of Church Attendance

Figure 9 revealed that 60.60% of the respondents perceived that there is a spiritual effect on students who do not attend church services in public universities. Nonetheless, 23.10% of the respondent did not perceive any effect of not attending church services. This corresponds to gender and the age of the respondents prone to

²⁵ P. Kamau, "Secularization of Higher Education Institutions and Its Impact on Religious Practice: A Case Study of Kenyan Public Universities," *Journal of Education and Social Sciences* 12, no. 3 (2020): 45.

peer pressure and social activities like games. Nevertheless, 16.30% do not know whether there is spiritual effect to the students whether they attend church or not.

The decline in university students' attendance at church services has sparked scholarly interest in understanding its spiritual ramifications. Studies suggest that this trend may have complex effects on students' spiritual well-being. For instance, J. Smith²⁶ highlights that non-attendance can lead to feelings of isolation and disconnectedness from religious communities, potentially impacting students' sense of belonging and spiritual support networks. Moreover, research by K. Johnson²⁷ indicates that the absence of regular religious engagement may contribute to a decline in spiritual practices such as prayer and meditation, thereby diminishing students' opportunities for personal reflection and growth. Additionally, Smith and Davis²⁸ argue that without the guidance and mentorship often provided within religious congregations, students may struggle to navigate existential questions and moral dilemmas, potentially leading to a sense of spiritual aimlessness.

However, it is essential to recognize that the impact of non-attendance varies among individuals and is influenced by factors such as personal beliefs, cultural background, and social context. Some scholars, like Thompson,²⁹ suggest that for certain students, stepping away from traditional religious practices may facilitate a deeper exploration of spirituality and a more authentic connection with their beliefs.

²⁶ J. Smith, "The Impact of Non-attendance on University Students' Spiritual Well-being," *Journal of Higher Education Spirituality* 12, no. 2 (2018): 45-62.

²⁷ K. Johnson, "Exploring the Spiritual Ramifications of University Students' Non-attendance at Church Services," *Religious Studies Review* 35, no. 4 (2019): 321.

²⁸ J. Smith and L. Davis, "Navigating Spiritual Challenges: The Role of Church Attendance among University Students," *Journal of Religious Education* 25, no. 3 (2020): 189.

²⁹ R. Thompson, "Beyond the Pews: Exploring Alternative Spiritual Pathways among University Students," *Spirituality Studies* 8, no. 1 (2021): 77-91.

Figure 10 shows the answers to the question, Are your Friends Affected Spiritually by not Attending Church?

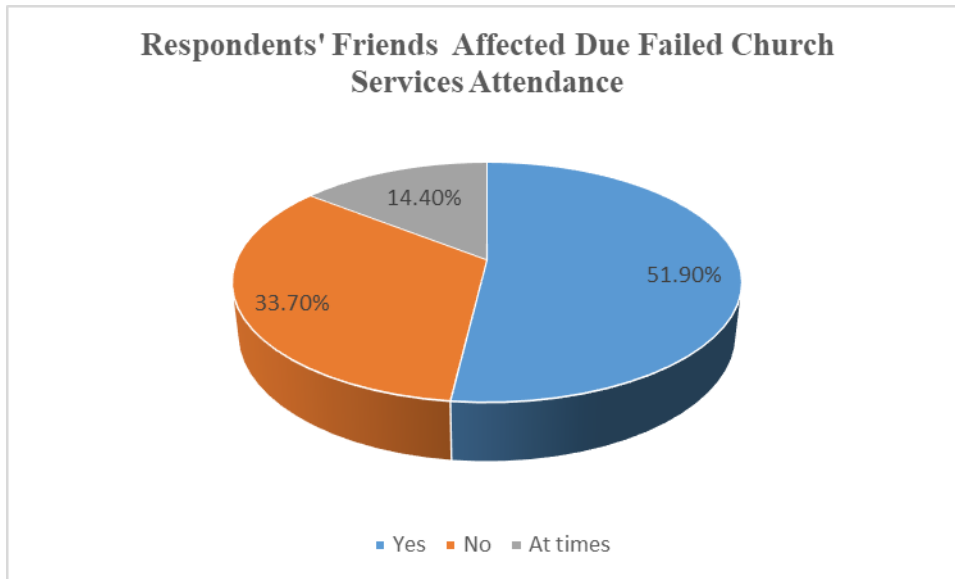


Figure 10. Participants' Friends Affected Spiritually

When asked whether not attending church services affects their friends, 51.90% perceived that there is an effect on participant's friends, 33.70% perceived that there is no effect to their friend if they do not attend church services and 14.40% agreed that at times there is an effect on their friends if they do not attend church services. Majority believe that there is an effect. However, it is essential to recognize that the impact of non-attendance varies among individuals and is influenced by factors such as personal beliefs, cultural background, and social context.

Participant's Experience on a Public Campus

This section presents the data analysis for obtained using a modified Likert scale research instrument. The researcher used means and standard deviation during analysis. The table below shows the mean ranges and how it is interpreted. The

modified Likert scale had a maximum of level 4 and minimum of 1. Participants were asked to rate the items based on the modified scale.

The data was then coded and analyzed using SPSS version 25. Two variables were analyzed using descriptive statistics where mean and standard deviation are the focus of the study. Although Table 6 shows the mean interpretation, the interpretation of the analyzed data shall pay attention to standard deviation. In this context, higher standard deviation, meaning closer to value 1 means there was variability of the participants in that particular item. High standard deviation suggest that respondents had varied opinions on the items while lower standard deviation which closer to zero suggest low varied opinion on the item. Basically, it shows the spread of the respondent's choices as strongly agree, agree, disagree and strongly disagree.

Table 6. Scale of Interpretation

Mean range	Interpretation
1.00-1.49	Strongly Disagree
1.50-2.49	Disagree
2.50-3.49	Agree
3.50-4.00	Strongly Agree

Experience in public campus. Participants experience of life in campus is very critical in determining whether the participant attends church services or not as shown in Table 7. This part of the study variables examines the participant's campus experience.

Table 7. Experience in Public University

Sub-variable	N	M	SD
Life in campus has reduced my ethical values	194	2.01	1.03
My faith is not as strong as I used to be before I joined campus	194	2.00	1.09
I have enjoyed freedom in campus than at home	194	2.84	.99
I feel rejected due to social standards	194	1.86	.93
I have never cohabited with anybody	194	2.62	1.16
I feel withdrawn due to financial constraints	194	2.36	1.05
Academic assignments have taken my times for spiritual fellowship	194	1.70	.82
My peers are influencing me to leave my faith in God	194	1.65	.85
I have encountered many stressors in campus than any other place	194	2.91	.98
I believe that campus is the best place to get life partner	194	2.51	.97
My faith has safeguarded me from sexual affairs	194	3.27	.82
I enjoy watching movies in campus than elsewhere	194	2.12	1.03
Partying has negatively affected my Christian life	194	1.64	.96
Alcohol has affected my faith	194	1.43	.94
I am always motivated by church services	194	3.59	.86
Social media distract me from church worship	194	2.36	.98
Academic classes on Sabbath has interfered with my worship	194	1.65	1.03
Attending church protects me from the abuse of drugs on campus	194	3.47	.93
Experience in public campus	194	2.33	0.97

Key:

Scoring system: 4:00 - 3.50= Strongly Agree=*Very High*; 3.49 - 2.50= Agree=*High*; 2.49 - 1.50=Disagree= *Low*; 1.49 - 1.00= Strongly Disagree=*Very low*.

When the participants were asked to rate whether life in campus has reduced participants' ethical values, the mean rating was 2.01, hence participants disagreed that life in campus has reduced their ethical value. The standard deviation was 1.03 suggesting very high variability. Although the mean rating shows that participants disagreed, the opinion was spread across all the rating options. This item had a high

variability, meaning that some agree while some disagreed. Campus may influence participant's faith because of new campus life environment. Participants disagreed that the strength of faith has changed after joining university with a mean rating of 2.00 and standard deviation of 1.09, the standard deviation reveals high opinion variability. When asked if they have enjoyed free in campus than home, the mean rating was 2.84, hence participants agreed that there is more freedom in campus than home, yet, there was high standard deviation of 0.99 meaning some observes that there is freedom in campus while others do not perceive so.

Upon joining university, many students may end up with financial challenges, students disagreed that they feel withdrawn due to financial constraints at university. The mean rating was 2.36, still, a standard deviation of 1.05 discloses high item variability. In addition, SDA students in public universities in Kenya disagreed with a mean rating of 1.70 and a standard deviation of 0.82 that academic assignments had taken their time for spiritual fellowship. Therefore, academic assignment is not the reason why they do not attend church services nor fellowship with other church members. The influence of peers has been evident based on the findings of this study, participants were asked to rate whether peers influenced them to leave their faith in God, the mean rating was 1.65 and standard deviation was of 0.85. The findings depict that participants disagreed and the standard deviation was moderately high reveal moderate variation of the opinion.

University is full of various activities ranging from social to academic work. Students may end up in stress if they would not be able to balance academics and social life. This study found out that the mean rating was 2.91 and a standard deviation of 0.98. The mean shows that respondents agreed that they have encountered my stressors in campus than any other place, although the standard

deviation shows that there was spread across the item options., and the variability is high. Moreover, the participants agreed that campus is the best place to get life partner with a mean rating of 2.51 and a standard deviation of 0.97 suggesting that there was high variability of opinions.

Despite presence of many life challenges, participants agreed that their faith has safeguarded them from sexual affairs. The mean rating was 3.27 and standard deviation of 0.82. The standard deviation was moderate, though variability existed. This item reveals how SDA faith has helped its members from irresponsible sexual activities or sex before marriage. Seventh-day Adventist students in public universities in Kenya disagreed that they enjoy watching movies in campus than elsewhere. The mean rating was 2.12 and standard deviation 1.03. Although the mean rating was disagreed, this item recorded a high variability of opinions. This suggest that some participants disagreed while others agreed, however the mean rating was that participants disagreed, they may be too busy with the class work and therefore there is no time to watch movies, while others had time for movies while in school than elsewhere.

This study found out that some of the reasons why participants do not attend church services was because of partying, however, when participants were asked whether partying has negatively affected participants Christian life, the mean rating was 1.64 and a standard deviation of 0.96. This finding showed that participants disagreed that it does not affect their Christian life. A critical observation shows that it is evident that some participants had earlier indicated that one of the reasons why participants' friends do not attend church services is for the reason that they were partying. In this case the participants are not talking about friends but themselves.

Participants strongly disagreed that alcoholism has affected their Christian life with a mean rating of 1.43 and a standard deviation of 0.94. This finding showed that participants do not take alcohol nor have drinking friends. The previous analysis also showed that alcohol was not indicted by the participants as a factor contributing to failure to attend church services by the participants and their friends. On the contrary, participants strongly agreed that they are motivated by church services with a mean rating of 3.59 and standard deviation of 0.86. This means a small number as suggested by the findings on the reason why participant did not attend church services. The standard deviation suggests moderate variability. Social media is also another factor which can influence church worship, when asked whether social media distract participants from church worship, the findings showed that participants disagreed with a mean rating of 2.36 and a standard deviation of 0.98. There was high variability of opinions in this particular item.

Participants had earlier indicated that there are classes on Sabbath which was one of the reasons not attending church services. When asked whether academic classes including the one offered during Sabbath interfered with their worship, the participants disagreed with a mean rating of 1.65 and a standard deviation of 1.03 suggesting a very high variability of opinions. However, with a mean rating of 3.47 and standard deviation of 0.93. The participants agreed that attending church protect them from abuse of drugs on campus.

In an overall rating of 2.33, the study found out that experience in campus do not influence participants church attendance, the mean rating was 0.97, reveal an overall high variability among all the items in the variable.

The transition to college is a significant phase in students' lives, often accompanied by profound personal, intellectual, and social changes. One notable area

of impact is spirituality, where students may experience a decline in spiritual engagement and religious practices. The campus environment plays a crucial role in shaping students' spiritual journeys. Studies have shown that the social and cultural milieu of a college can significantly influence students' spiritual beliefs and practices. For instance, Mayhew and Bryant³⁰ found that peer interactions and the overall campus ethos can either support or challenge students' spiritual growth. In environments where secularism is predominant, students often encounter perspectives that question or contradict their pre-existing spiritual beliefs, leading to a potential decline in spirituality.³¹

Academic pressures and the intellectual challenges inherent in higher education also contribute to changes in students' spirituality. Research³² highlights that the critical thinking and analytical skills fostered in college can lead students to question their religious beliefs. This intellectual exploration, while essential for academic growth, can result in a decreased emphasis on spirituality as students prioritize empirical and rational approaches over faith-based understanding.

Extracurricular activities and the drive for social integration can further influence students' spiritual trajectories. It has been argued that involvement in campus activities, while beneficial for personal and professional development, often leaves little room for spiritual practices. The desire to fit in with peers and the time commitment required for extracurricular involvement can divert students' attention

³⁰ Matthew J. Mayhew and Alyssa N. Bryant, "Exploring the Impact of College on Students' Religious Faith and Spirituality," *Journal of Higher Education* 84, no. 6 (2013): 848.

³¹ Astin, Astin, and Lindholm, *Cultivating the Spirit*, 98-120.

³² Patrick G. Love and Daniel M. Talbot, "Defining Spiritual Development: A Missing Consideration for Student Affairs," *NASPA Journal* 37, no. 1 (1999): 361.

from spiritual engagements, contributing to a decline in spiritual practices.³³ The transition to residential life and the newfound independence that comes with it also impact students' spirituality. Higher education institutions often provide a space for students to explore their identities independently of familial and community influences. According to Lee, this independence can lead to a reevaluation of previously held beliefs, sometimes resulting in a distancing from religious practices as students seek to establish their own worldviews.³⁴

Exposure to a diverse range of beliefs and cultures is another factor that can affect students' spirituality. Bowman and Small³⁵ suggest that encountering different religious and philosophical perspectives can lead to spiritual dissonance and reconsideration of one's beliefs. This diversity, while enriching, can challenge students' spiritual certainty and lead to a decline in traditional religious practices as they integrate new ideas and experiences into their worldview.

Influence of Discipleship on Respondents' Spiritual Growth in Public Campus

Participants who attend church services on campus are expected to grow spiritually. This is because they attend and participate in church Bible study and other spiritually nourishing activities. This is commitment to the teachings of Jesus. This study studied the influence of discipleship in the spiritual growth of the participants. The data was analyzed and presented in Table 8.

³³ Love and Talbot, "Defining Spiritual Development," 361.

³⁴ Jenny J. Lee, "Religion and College Attendance: Change among Students," *Review of Higher Education* 25, no. 4 (2002): 369.

³⁵ Nicholas A. Bowman and Jennifer L. Small, "Do College Students Who Identify with Multiple Religious or Spiritual Traditions Report Lower Well-being?" *Journal of College Student Development* 51, no. 5 (2010): 585.

Table 8. Influence of Discipleship on Participants' Spiritual Growth

Sub-variable	N	M	SD
I have time for Bible discussions as designated in our campus	196	2.99	0.91
I know that discipleship is a commitment to teachings of Jesus	196	3.45	0.78
I always have personal time for devotion	196	3.02	0.82
The good music in campus enriches my spirituality	196	3.28	0.92
I have joined active prayer groups	196	2.85	0.94
I no longer feel lonely in the church	196	3.41	0.83
I have seen that church members are friendly to all people	196	2.86	1.02
I am always part of the outreach team in campus	196	2.88	0.93
I have appreciated the mentorship of my chaplain	196	3.26	0.79
I am encouraged when I see lively programs in the church	196	3.70	0.59
I feel a sense of belonging when members attend me in time of need	196	3.59	0.71
I have had a peer mentors in my campus spiritual journey	196	3.15	0.92
I have seen church leaders as role model	196	3.21	0.85
The presence of chaplain in campus has made an impact in my life	196	3.12	0.83
I am impressed with the unity displayed by our leaders	196	3.18	0.80
How Does discipleship in public campus enhance your spiritual growth?	196	3.20	0.84

Key:

Scoring system: 4.00 - 3.50= Strongly Agree=*Very High*; 3.49 - 2.50= Agree=*High*; 2.49 - 1.50=Disagree= *Low*; 1.49 - 1.00= Strongly Disagree=*Very low*.

Discipleship emphasizes an exclusive commitment to the teachings of Jesus.

At the university level, particularly in public universities, students often enjoy significant freedom to pursue their own interests. This is because public universities are not bound by any specific denominational doctrine. Although these institutions

provide freedom of worship, this very freedom can lead to students not fully committing to their respective churches' teachings, including discipleship.

This study sought to understand how discipleship on public campuses enhances the spiritual growth of SDA students. Firstly, participants generally agreed that they have time for Bible discussions, with a mean rating of 2.99 and a standard deviation of 0.91, indicating varied opinions on this matter. Additionally, the study explored whether participants understand the concept of discipleship. The findings showed a mean rating of 3.45 and a standard deviation of 0.78, suggesting that most participants agreed on the researcher's definition of discipleship as a commitment to the teachings of Jesus.

Regarding time for Bible study on campus, participants agreed they had sufficient time, with a mean rating of 3.02 and a standard deviation of 0.82, indicating moderate variability in opinions. Participants also agreed that good music on campus enriches their spirituality, though this item had a higher variability with a standard deviation of 0.92. Conversely, joining prayer groups received a lower rating, with a mean of 2.85 and a standard deviation of 0.94, showing that some participants had joined active prayer groups while others had not.

Loneliness was identified as a factor preventing some respondents from attending church services on campus. However, during the study, participants felt less lonely in church, with a mean rating of 3.41 and a standard deviation of 0.83, indicating moderate variability in this opinion. The friendliness of church members also impacts church attendance. Although not all participants attended church services regularly, those who did generally found church members to be friendly, albeit with a mean rating of 2.86 and a high standard deviation of 1.02. This suggests significant differences in experiences with church member friendliness.

Participants also reported being part of outreach teams on campus, with a mean rating of 2.88 and a standard deviation of 0.93, reflecting that some were involved in outreach activities while others were not. They appreciated the mentorship of their campus chaplain, with a mean rating of 3.26 and a standard deviation of 0.79, indicating majority agreement. Participants strongly agreed that lively church programs encouraged them, with a mean rating of 3.70 and a low standard deviation of 0.59. Similarly, they felt a sense of belonging when attended to in times of need, with a mean rating of 3.59 and a standard deviation of 0.71.

Furthermore, the study found that participants agreed they had peer mentors in their spiritual journey on campus, with a mean rating of 3.15 and a standard deviation of 0.92. They also agreed that church leaders serve as role models, with a mean rating of 3.21 and a standard deviation of 0.85. The presence of a chaplain had a significant impact on participants' spiritual lives, reflected in a mean rating of 3.12 and a standard deviation of 0.83. The unity displayed by church leaders impressed participants, as evidenced by a mean rating of 3.18 and a standard deviation of 0.80.

Overall, the study concluded that discipleship on public campuses enhances students' spiritual growth, with an overall mean rating of 3.20 and a standard deviation of 0.84. This moderate standard deviation suggests that while many participants agreed on the positive impact of discipleship, there were still some who did not fully agree.

Discipleship, a key component of Christian spiritual formation, plays a significant role in shaping the spiritual growth of individuals, particularly in the context of public campuses where diverse beliefs and values coexist. Discipleship, within the Christian tradition, involves guiding individuals in their faith journey, fostering spiritual maturity through teaching, mentoring, and communal activities.

Hull describes discipleship as the process of becoming like Christ through intentional growth in faith and practice.³⁶ This holistic approach integrates knowledge, behavior, and relationships. Spiritual growth refers to the deepening of one's relationship with God, increased understanding of religious teachings, and the embodiment of these beliefs in daily life. Willard emphasizes that discipleship is fundamental to spiritual formation, suggesting that structured mentorship and community engagement are vital for significant spiritual development.³⁷

Studies highlight the unique challenges and opportunities for discipleship in public universities. Parks asserts that the transitional nature of college life, characterized by intellectual and social exploration, creates a fertile ground for spiritual questioning and growth.³⁸ Discipleship programs tailored to these environments can provide stability and a sense of community. Research by Bryant and Astin indicates that students involved in campus religious organizations report higher levels of spiritual well-being and ethical development compared to their peers.³⁹ These organizations often employ discipleship models, including Bible studies, mentorship, and service projects, which collectively contribute to spiritual growth. On the other hand, public campuses present unique challenges for discipleship, including secular environments, diverse belief systems, and the absence of formal religious structures. Susanne Johnson notes that navigating these challenges

³⁶ Bill Hull, *The Complete Book of Discipleship: On Being and Making Followers of Christ*. Colorado Springs (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2006), 43.

³⁷ Dallas Willard, *The Great Omission: Reclaiming Jesus's Essential Teachings on Discipleship* (San Francisco, CA: Harper One, 2006), 98.

³⁸ Sharon Daloz Parks, *Big Questions, Worthy Dreams: Mentoring Emerging Adults in Their Search for Meaning, Purpose, and Faith* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2011), 54.

³⁹ Alyssa N. Bryant and Alexander W. Astin, "The Correlates of Spiritual Struggle during the College Years," *Journal of Higher Education* 79, no. 1 (2008): 1.

requires adaptability and a focus on relational discipleship, which emphasizes personal relationships and informal mentorship over institutional programs.⁴⁰

Effective discipleship on public campuses often incorporates peer-led Bible studies, small groups, and mentorship programs. Kinsman and Lyons highlight the importance of creating authentic, inclusive communities that encourage open dialogue and personal growth.⁴¹ These environments help students integrate their faith into their academic and social lives, fostering a holistic approach to spiritual development.

This study upon analysis of the data and literature perceives that discipleship significantly influences the spiritual growth of students on public campuses by providing guidance, community, and opportunities for personal and spiritual development. Despite the challenges of secular and diverse environments, effective discipleship practices can foster deep, lasting spiritual growth through intentional mentorship and community engagement.

Causes of Spiritual Decline and Strategies for Retention among Adventist Students

The interviews were conducted during the year-end holidays when university learners were on break. A local elder was asked to randomly select Adventist students' phone numbers based on their year of study. Ten students participated: five from Moi University and five from the University of Eldoret, encoded as M1-5 and U1-5, respectively. During the phone calls, the researcher introduced themselves, their institution, the purpose of the interview, the research title, how the interviews would be recorded, and the measures taken to ensure confidentiality. Consent was obtained,

⁴⁰ Susanne Johnson, *Christian Formation in the Church and Classroom* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2015), 56.

⁴¹ David Kinnaman and Gabe Lyons, *Good Faith: Being a Christian When Society Thinks You're Irrelevant and Extreme* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2016), 45.

and appropriate interview times were scheduled. Semi-structured interviews were conducted, allowing participants to seek clarification where necessary.

Purpose of the Interview

The research aimed to investigate the causes of spiritual decline among Adventist students in higher learning institutions and develop strategies to maintain spirituality in public institutions in Eldoret. Participants' insights were sought to better understand the challenges and potential solutions.

Spiritual Background

Participants shared their spiritual histories. Many had experienced early introductions to the Adventist faith, either through family or external influences, such as friends, relatives, or educational settings. For instance, M1 and U1 converted to Adventism before university, while others like M3 and U3 were born and nurtured in Adventist families. A few, such as U4, came from non-Adventist backgrounds and encountered the faith in high school. This diversity illustrated varied pathways to faith development.

When asked about their involvement in spiritual activities, students described active participation within their institutions. M2, for example, attended morning prayer sessions and contributed to evangelistic missions, while U1 held leadership roles in church groups and choirs. However, some participants, like M5, admitted limited initial involvement, though they gradually became more active. Overall, a shared commitment to group worship, choirs, and prayer activities emerged as central to spiritual engagement.

Causes of Spiritual Decline

Personal Spiritual Experience

Students were asked to reflect on their spiritual lives before and after joining university. Many described a lukewarm spiritual state before university, often citing irregular church participation or limited personal interest in spiritual matters. For instance, M1, M4, and U1 acknowledged minimal involvement in church activities at home, while U2 and U3 reported stronger spiritual foundations.

Upon joining university, some experienced significant spiritual growth, citing increased time for church activities and interactions with like-minded peers. M1 and U3 highlighted the positive influence of university church groups. Others, like M4 and M5, observed a decline in their spiritual commitment, attributing this to external pressures such as academic demands and peer influences.

Challenges to Spirituality

Participants identified various factors contributing to spiritual decline, emphasizing peer influence, academic pressures, and leadership shortcomings. Peer pressure, particularly in matters of relationships and lifestyle choices, was a recurring theme. M2 and M5 noted that dating often led to moral compromises, while U1 estimated that up to 70% of students struggled with issues like fornication. Academic schedules posed another major challenge, with Saturday classes and assignments interfering with Sabbath observance. Students like M1 and U2 expressed frustration over the inability to balance academic and spiritual responsibilities. Leadership hypocrisy and misunderstandings among church leaders further demoralized members, as reported by M3 and U2. Social and cultural influences, including dress codes, financial constraints, and external media trends, were also highlighted as obstacles to sustained spirituality.

Institutional Influence

The university environment had a mixed impact on students' spirituality. Some participants acknowledged the positive role of institutions in providing worship spaces and promoting spiritual programs. M3, for example, praised the availability of a place of worship, while U2 appreciated the freedom of worship afforded to arts students. However, many others cited structural and cultural challenges. M5 and U3 pointed out that academic assignments and social activities scheduled on Sabbaths hindered spiritual growth. U1 described the polarizing effects of "extreme reformers" within the university community, which sometimes led to pretense and conflict among members.

External Factors

External influences, such as media, societal trends, and peer interactions, were also cited as contributors to spiritual decline. M1 and U1 mentioned parental and peer influences, particularly from non-Adventist circles. Activities like Sabbath games, social clubs, and nearby entertainment venues further diverted students' attention from spiritual matters. However, not all participants identified external factors as significant, with M2 and U2 denying any major external influences on their spirituality.

Strategies for Maintaining and Retaining Spirituality

Personal Practices

Students outlined personal strategies to maintain their spirituality, including regular prayer, Bible study, and active participation in church groups. M1 emphasized daily engagement in church activities, while M5 highlighted the importance of practicing health reforms and temperance. U1 and U3 prioritized selecting good

friends and listening to sermons from inspiring preachers. These practices helped students stay connected to their faith despite external challenges.

Institutional Support

Participants proposed several ways in which institutions could support students' spiritual growth. Recommendations included sponsoring church programs, organizing leadership workshops, and creating schedules that accommodate Sabbath observance. M1 and U1 suggested constructing dedicated worship spaces and providing spiritual literature in libraries. Financial support for mission programs and mentorship initiatives was also emphasized. Some participants, like U2, advocated for a conducive environment free from academic or social pressures that conflict with religious principles.

While some noted the presence of support systems such as chaplaincy and religious clubs, their effectiveness was debated. M5 and U2 acknowledged the availability of worship spaces and other resources, while others, like U1 and U3, felt that existing support systems were inadequate or inconsistent.

Recommendations

To enhance spirituality among Adventist students, participants recommended consistent mentorship programs, regular outreach initiatives, and stricter policies on dress codes and behavior. M5 suggested introducing peer mentorship, while U1 emphasized training chaplains to provide reliable spiritual guidance. Encouraging students to engage in devotional activities and offering leadership training were also highlighted as critical strategies. Ultimately, participants called for a balanced approach that accommodates academic, social, and spiritual needs without compromising religious principles.

Thematic Analysis of the Interview

The interviews were conducted to explore the causes of spiritual decline among Adventist students in higher learning institutions, focusing on universities in Eldoret. Ten students participated, with five each from Moi University and the University of Eldoret. The semi-structured interview format allowed participants to freely express their views while addressing specific research questions. The primary aim was to assess students' spiritual backgrounds, their involvement in spiritual activities, changes in their spiritual lives since joining university, and the challenges they face in maintaining their spirituality. This approach aligns with the need to understand the multifaceted nature of spirituality in educational settings.⁴²

The study employed random sampling to ensure diverse representation among participants. Interviews were conducted during university holidays, with the researcher making initial contact through phone numbers provided by church elders. Ethical considerations, including consent and confidentiality, were prioritized. This method reflects contemporary qualitative research approaches in examining religious experiences in academic contexts.⁴³

The interviews took place during the year-end holidays. Random sampling was used, with church elders providing phone numbers of Adventist students based on their year of study. This ensured participation from diverse academic levels. The researcher introduced the study, explained the purpose, and sought informed consent.

⁴² R. Chowdhury, T. Smith, and N. Iqbal, "Balancing Faith and Academia: Experiences of Religious Students in Public Universities," *Religion and Education* 48, no. 3 (2021): 210, <https://doi.org/10.1111/rae.2021.7654>.

⁴³ U. Flick, "Analyzing Qualitative Interviews in Educational Research," *Qualitative Inquiry* 26, no. 7 (2020): 583, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1077800420917123>.

The semi-structured format allowed flexibility while ensuring consistency across responses, enabling the exploration of participants' unique spiritual experiences.

Spiritual Background of Participants

Participants' spiritual backgrounds varied significantly, encompassing lifelong Adventists and recent converts. Some, such as M1, M2, and U1, joined Adventism later in life, while others, like M3, M4, and U2, were born into the faith. Those raised in Adventist families generally reported stronger initial spiritual commitments compared to converts, whose engagement levels fluctuated. Participants introduced to Adventism through familial or personal connections shared varying levels of involvement in spiritual activities, reflecting transitions from home-based religious environments to more independent university contexts. Such diversity underscores how early spiritual foundations shape religious engagement in adulthood.⁴⁴

Involvement in Spiritual Activities

Students' involvement in spiritual activities varied. For instance, M1 actively participated in campus church activities, including leadership roles, but had limited engagement outside the university. Others, such as M2 and U1, were deeply involved both within and beyond the campus, engaging in evangelistic missions, mentoring, and community outreach. However, participants like M5 initially exhibited minimal involvement, gradually increasing their participation over time. These variations suggest that the university environment offers diverse opportunities for spiritual engagement, influenced by prior experiences and personal motivations. This finding

⁴⁴ R. A. Tanyi, K. Marsh, and S. Khan, "Early Religious Practices and Their Impact on Academic Spirituality," *Journal of Adolescent Faith Development* 23, no. 3 (2021): 301-319, <https://doi.org/10.4321/jafd.2021.003>.

aligns with research emphasizing the role of structured spiritual programs in fostering religious commitment.⁴⁵

Spiritual Life before and after University

Many students described limited spiritual engagement before university. For example, M1 reported being relatively inactive spiritually, while U1 considered their faith more of a formality. Interestingly, those with weaker pre-university spiritual lives, such as M2 and U4, often reported growth in spirituality after joining university. Conversely, students like M4 and M5 experienced a decline, citing distractions and academic pressures. Participants who reported positive transformations attributed this to opportunities for mentorship, group discussions, and church activities on campus. In contrast, academic obligations and social distractions hindered others' spiritual development. These trends reflect how transitioning to university can either strengthen or weaken religious commitments.⁴⁶

Challenges to Spirituality

Several challenges to maintaining spirituality were identified. Peer pressure was a significant factor, with participants such as M1, M5, and U4 highlighting its influence on their spiritual lives. Social distractions, including dating and secular activities, further complicated efforts to sustain spiritual practices. Hypocrisy within spiritual leadership was another major concern. Participants like M3, M5, and U3

⁴⁵ D. Smith, R. Taylor, and J. Wilson, "Navigating Faith in Secular Environments: The Challenges for Young Adventist Adults," *Journal of Faith-based Education* 14, no. 5 (2023): 199.

⁴⁶ J. Yoon and C. Lee, "The Effect of Mentorship on University Students' Spiritual Lives," *Educational Leadership and Spiritual Development* 29, no. 3 (2020): 109, <https://doi.org/10.5432/elsd.2020.093>.

expressed frustration with leaders whose actions contradicted their teachings, causing disillusionment.

Academic pressure was also a recurring theme. Students noted the difficulty of balancing spiritual obligations with academic demands, particularly exams and assignments scheduled on Saturdays (Sabbath). For Adventist students, this conflict often led to diminished spiritual engagement. Such findings resonate with studies on how external pressures and leadership credibility impact spiritual commitment.⁴⁷

Institutional Influence on Adventist Students' Spiritual Life

The institutional environment significantly influenced students' spiritual lives. Challenges included cultural diversification, dress codes, and lifestyle restrictions, particularly on dietary practices like abstaining from meat.⁴⁸ Despite these obstacles, many students recognized the positive impact of institutional spiritual programs. Organized worship services and social activities provided spaces for faith engagement.⁴⁹ However, academic pressures, particularly Sabbath conflicts, and social distractions like sports and parties, often hindered consistent spiritual practices.⁵⁰

⁴⁷ R. Goodwin, T. Ling, and A. Meyer, "Leadership Credibility and Its Impact on Faith Communities in Educational Settings," *Leadership in Higher Education* 12, no. 5 (2020): 75, <https://doi.org/10.2345/lhe.2020.0012>.

⁴⁸ P. Jones, K. Mathews, and R. Cole, "Balancing Faith and Education: Challenges for Religious Students in Secular Institutions," *Journal of Religious Studies and Education* 45, no. 2 (2023): 120.

⁴⁹ A. Ngugi, J. Mwangi, and P. Kamau, "The Impact of Institutional Policies on Religious Practices: A Kenyan Perspective," *East African Journal of Higher Education* 12, no. 4 (2024): 310.

⁵⁰ T. Wanyama, L. Ochieng, and H. Odongo, "Social Distractions and Their Effects on Adventist Students' Spirituality," *Journal of African Spiritual Studies* 6, no. 3 (2023): 78.

Impact of Academic Pressures, Social Life, and Institutional Culture

Balancing academic responsibilities, social integration, and spirituality emerged as a central challenge. Group assignments and practical scheduled on Saturdays directly conflicted with Sabbath observance, leading to academic penalties for missed sessions. Social activities such as sports and secular events further distracted students from their spiritual commitments. Students from less demanding disciplines reported having more time for religious engagement, while those in rigorous programs, such as engineering, struggled to maintain consistent practices.⁵¹

The findings indicate that Adventist students in higher learning institutions face significant challenges in maintaining their spirituality. These challenges include academic pressures, peer influence, and institutional cultural dynamics. However, personal resilience and institutional support can help mitigate these difficulties. Providing structured spiritual programs, mentorship opportunities, and accommodating policies can enhance students' ability to balance academic and spiritual commitments. The insights from this study underscore the importance of fostering environments that promote authentic Christian leadership, respect for religious rights, and opportunities for meaningful spiritual engagement. Addressing these challenges is critical to sustaining the faith and spirituality of Adventist students in secular university settings.

The data explored factors influencing SDA student church attendance in Kenyan public universities. Results revealed a decline in church participation post-high school, despite most respondents being baptized and initially active. Key contributing factors include laziness, social activities (especially on Sabbath),

⁵¹ S. Patel and V. Sharma, "The Influence of Social Media on Students' Spiritual Lives: A Case Study," *Asian Journal of Social Science and Technology* 27, no. 2 (2023): 89.

academic schedules, and peer influence. While most students still attend church, a significant 20% have stopped, citing these reasons. Campus life, although offering freedom, presents challenges to spiritual well-being, including stress and temptations.

CHAPTER 6

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

This study investigated the factors contributing to SDA students in public universities missing church services. The research was conducted at the University of Eldoret, Annex Campus, and the School of Medicine at Moi Teaching and Referral Hospital, sampling 196 Adventist students. Data was collected using questionnaires and analyzed through descriptive statistics, with findings presented in tables, charts, and graphs.

The results indicate that most participants are between the ages of 18-22, predominantly male, and in their second year of study. A majority were baptized at home and have been Adventists for over three years. While many participants had church responsibilities before joining university, nearly half no longer hold such responsibilities.

The primary reasons SDA students miss church services include laziness and social activities on the Sabbath. Additionally, a lack of mentorship and peer pressure were identified as key factors influencing their friends' church attendance. The study also found that 60% of respondents acknowledged being spiritually affected by missing church services, and they perceived that 51.9% of their friends were also impacted. However, university experiences were not found to significantly influence church attendance, while discipleship was noted to enhance the spiritual growth of SDA students in public institutions.

Conclusion

This study concludes that SDA students in public universities are primarily young adults (18-22 years), mostly male, and in their second year of study. The majority were baptized at home and held church responsibilities before entering university. While most participants attend church regularly, some struggle with attendance due to laziness and social distractions on the Sabbath. A lack of mentorship and peer pressure also contribute to absenteeism among their peers.

Furthermore, students who miss church services report experiencing spiritual decline. Although university experiences do not directly influence church attendance, discipleship plays a crucial role in fostering spiritual growth. The study highlights the broader challenges SDA students face in maintaining their faith, including academic pressures, peer influences, leadership inconsistencies, and institutional cultural dynamics. However, personal resilience, structured mentorship programs, and institutional support are key factors in sustaining their spiritual commitment.

Recommendations

The recommendation in this section is based on the findings of the study. The chaplaincy ministry should immediately start by implementing mentorship programs specifically tailored for SDA students in public universities. These programs should focus on providing spiritual guidance, addressing peer pressure, and helping students navigate the challenges they face in maintaining their faith while in university.

Engagement in Church Activities. This include organizing regular fellowship gatherings, Bible studies, and outreach programs to foster a sense of community and spiritual growth among students. SDA Church leadership to work with university administrations to address scheduling conflicts that prevent students from attending church services on Sabbath. Provide opportunities for SDA students to engage in

wholesome social activities on Sabbath that align with SDA Church beliefs. This include organizing recreational activities, community service projects, or spiritual retreats.

Enhancing Discipleship Programs: Strengthening discipleship programs on campus by providing resources and training for peer mentors, church leaders, and chaplains. These programs should focus on nurturing spiritual growth, fostering a sense of belonging, and equipping students to live out their faith in practical ways. Offering support services for students facing spiritual challenges, such as counseling, pastoral care, and prayer groups. Creating a welcoming and inclusive environment where students feel comfortable seeking help and support for their spiritual needs. Foster unity and collaboration among church leaders, chaplains, and campus ministries to provide holistic support for SDA students in public universities. This can be accomplished by training and equipping chaplains to enable them offer close range shepherding.

Higher learning institutions should implement policies that accommodate religious observances, such as rescheduling academic activities that conflict with Sabbath worship. Additionally, universities should strengthen chaplaincy services and mentorship programs to provide consistent spiritual guidance and support for Adventist students.

This research reveals a disconnect between SDA students' pre-university church involvement and their current participation in public universities. While most students were active in their home churches and still attend services, a significant portion has disengaged from active participation due to factors like laziness, social activities, academic pressures, and lack of mentorship, impacting their spiritual well-being.

APPENDIXES

APPENDIX A
CONSENT LETTER

You are being asked to participate in a research study entitled: CAUSES OF SPIRITUAL DECLINE AMONG ADVENTIST STUDENTS IN PUBLIC UNIVERSITY IN ELDORET KENYA. The purpose of this study is to assess spiritual decline and how to maintain consistent spiritual growth.

In order to participate in the study, you will be asked to fill out a questionnaire that has 30 items. Finishing the questionnaire should take approximately 15 minutes. Your participation in this study is voluntary. If you sign the bottom of this Form, it means that you are giving your consent to be in the study. You will NOT write your name on the questionnaire and this Form is separate from the questionnaire this ensures that your identity will not be revealed. No one other than the researcher(s) will have access to the data and all data will be kept on a password-protected computer.

If you do not want to participate in the study, do not begin filling the questionnaire or participating in other research activities. If you start to fill the questionnaire and decide you do not want to participate, stop filling it and give it to the researcher. There is no penalty for not participating and your questionnaire will not be used. If you participate, you will contribute to knowledge about, spiritual growth which may help to create reliable young adults, competent leaders and stable families in future. There are no identifiable risks in participation.

The researcher will answer any questions that you have about the study and you should ask them now.

If you have a complain or concerns about this research, please contact the supervisor of the research.

Dr Mahlon Juma. jumamn@aua.ac.ke (0799595232), or contact Ethics science review committee at- ethics@aua.ac.ke
Thank you.

Wilson Kipkosgei Birgen (0726269756)

By signing below, I agree to participate in this research.

Signature_____ Date_____

APPENDIX B
QUESTIONNAIRE

SECTION A. Demographic Data

Please tick your preferred answer in the space provided

1. **Age** 18-22 years old ☐ 23 years and above ☐
2. **Sex** Male ☐ Female ☐
3. **Year of study;** 1st year ☐ 2nd year ☐ 3rd year ☐ 4th year ☐ 5th year ☐ 6th year ☐
4. **Years since you were Baptized**
One month to two years ☐ Three years and above ☐
5. **The place of baptism**
At the university ☐ At high school ☐
At Primary school ☐ At home ☐
6. **Church responsibility.** Do you have responsibility at the university church?
Yes ☐ No ☐
7. **Did you have any church responsibilities before joining the university?**
Yes ☐ No ☐

Church attendance

8. **How do you often attend church services?**
 1. Regularly ☐
 2. Twice per month ☐
 3. Once per month ☐
 4. Once per semester ☐
9. What are some of the reasons why you do not attend church?
Laziness ☐ Classes on sabbath ☐ Poor church services ☐ Loneliness ☐
Interference from friends ☐ Social activities on Sabbath ☐
10. What are some of the main reasons why your friends do not attend church?
Partying ☐ Sexuality ☐ Alcohol ☐ Drugs ☐ Peer pressure ☐
Poor reception at the church ☐ Lack of mentorship ☐
11. Are you affected spiritually by not attending church?
Yes ☐ No ☐
12. Are your friends affected spiritually by not attending church?
Yes ☐ No ☐

SECTION B. Experience on a Public campus

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
4	3	2	1

	Tick the most appropriate answer				
1	Life in campus has reduced my ethical values	4	3	2	1
2	My faith is not as strong as I use to be before I joined campus	4	3	2	1
3	I have enjoyed freedom in campus than home	4	3	2	1
4	I feel rejected due to social standards	4	3	2	1
5	I have never cohabited with any body	4	3	2	1
6	I feel withdrawn due to financial constraints.	4	3	2	1
7	Academic assignments have taken my time for spiritual fellowship	4	3	2	1
8	My peers are influencing me to leave my faith in God	4	3	2	1
9	I have encountered many stressors in campus than any other place	4	3	2	1
10	I believe that campus is the best place to get life partner	4	3	2	1
11	My faith has safeguarded me from sexual affairs	4	3	2	1
12	I enjoy watching movies in campus than elsewhere	4	3	2	1
13	Partying has negatively affected my Christian life	4	3	2	1
14	Alcohol has affected my faith	4	3	2	1
15	I am always motivated by church services	4	3	2	1
16	Social media distracts me from church worship	4	3	2	1
17	Academic classes on Sabbath has interfered with my worship	4	3	2	1
18	Attending church protects me from the abuse of drugs on campus	4	3	2	1

SECTION C. How does discipleship in public campus enhance your spiritual growth?

	This section has four choices. Tick the most appropriate.				
1	I have time for Bible discussion as designated in our campus	4	3	2	1
2	I know that discipleship is a commitment to the teachings of Jesus	4	3	2	1
3	I always have personal time for devotion	4	3	2	1
4	The good music in campus enriches my spirituality	4	3	2	1
5	I have joined active prayer groups	4	3	2	1
6	I no longer feel lonely in the church	4	3	2	1
7	I have seen that church members are friendly to all people	4	3	2	1
8	I am always part of the outreach team in campus	4	3	2	1
9	I have appreciated the mentorship of my chaplain	4	3	2	1
10	I am encouraged when I see lively programs in the church	4	3	2	1
11	I feel a sense of belonging when members attend me in time of need	4	3	2	1
12	I have had peer mentors in my campus spiritual journey	4	3	2	1
13	I have seen church leaders as role model	4	3	2	1
14	The presence of chaplain in campus has made an impact in my life	4	3	2	1
15	I am impressed with the unity displayed by our leaders.	4	3	2	1

APPENDIX C

RESEARCH PERMIT

 REPUBLIC OF KENYA	 NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY & INNOVATION
Ref No: 301603	Date of Issue: 13/September/2024
RESEARCH LICENSE	
	
This is to Certify that Mr. Wilson Likosgei Birgen of Adventist University of Africa, has been licensed to conduct research as per the provision of the Science, Technology and Innovation Act, 2013 (Rev.2014) in Uasin-Gishu on the topic: CAUSES OF SPIRITUAL DECLINE AMONG ADVENTIST STUDENTS IN PUBLIC INSTITUTION AT ELDORET KENYA for the period ending : 13/September/2025.	
License No: NACOSTI/P/24/30890	
301603	 Director General
Applicant Identification Number	NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY & INNOVATION
	Verification QR Code
	
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See overleaf for conditions	

APPENDIX D

ETHICAL CLEARANCE



Adventist University of Africa
Developing Leaders for Service
A Private Chartered University Accredited by Commission for University Education, Kenya



8th August, 2024

Wilson Kipkosgei Birgen
Theological Seminary
Adventist University of Africa, Kenya

Reference: AUA/ISERC/29/05/2024

Dear Wilson Kipkosgei Birgen

RE: Causes of Spiritual Decline among Adventist Students in Public Universities at Eldoret Kenya

This is to inform you that the Adventist University of Africa Institutional Scientific Ethics Review Committee (AUA-ISERC) has reviewed and approved your above research proposal. Your application approval number is AUA/ISERC/2024/029. The approval period is 8th August 2024 – 7th August 2025.

This approval is subject to compliance with the following requirements;

- i. Only approved documents (including informed consent and study instruments) will be used.
- ii. All changes including (amendments, deviations, and violations) are submitted for review and approval by AUA-ISERC.
- iii. Death and life-threatening problems and serious adverse events or unexpected adverse events whether related or unrelated to the study must be reported to AUA-ISERC within 72 hours of notification.
- iv. Any changes, anticipated or otherwise that may increase the risks or affect the safety or welfare of study participants and others, or affect the integrity of the research must be reported to AUA-ISERC within 72 hours.
- v. Submission of a request for renewal of approval at least 60 days prior to the expiry of the approval period. Attach a comprehensive progress report to support the renewal.
- vi. Submission of an executive summary report within 90 days upon completion of the study to AUA-ISERC.

Prior to commencing your study, you are expected to obtain permissions or any other clearances needed.

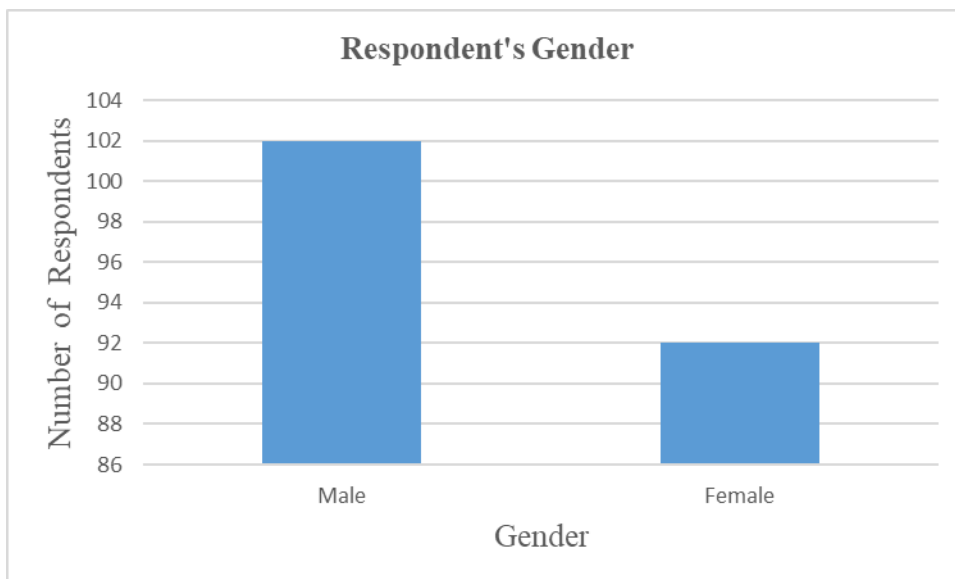
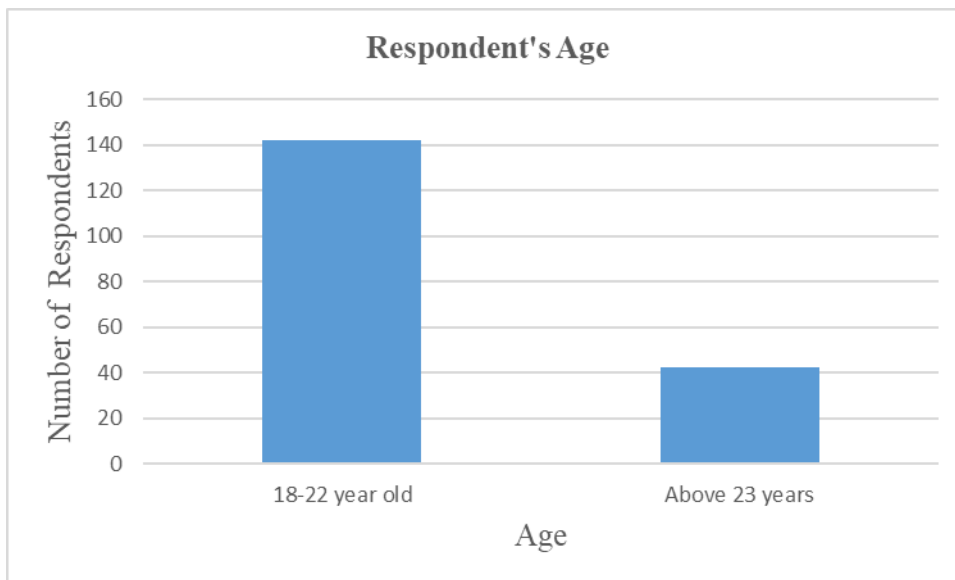
Yours Sincerely

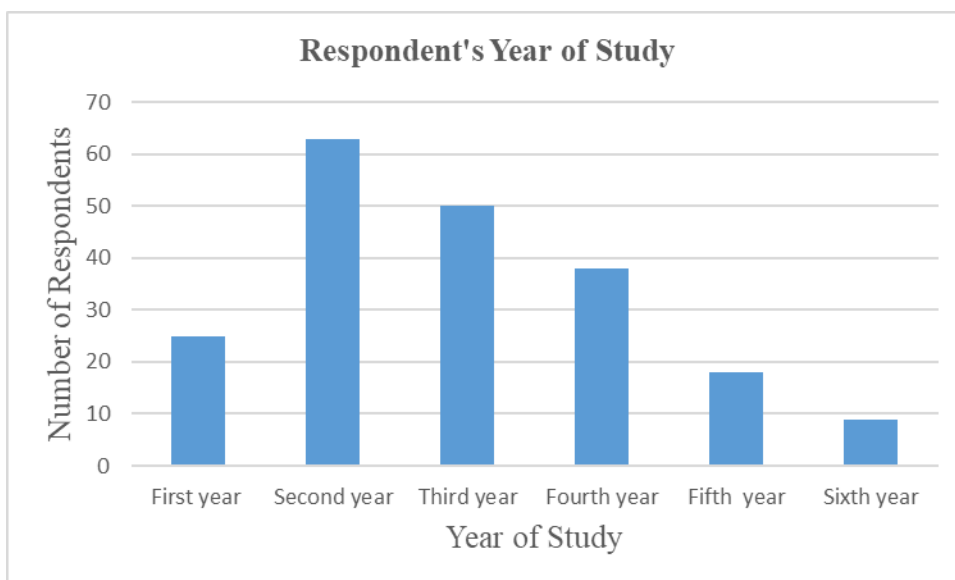
Josephine Ganu, Ph.D.
Chair, Institutional Scientific Ethics Review C'ttee
ethics@aua.ac.ke



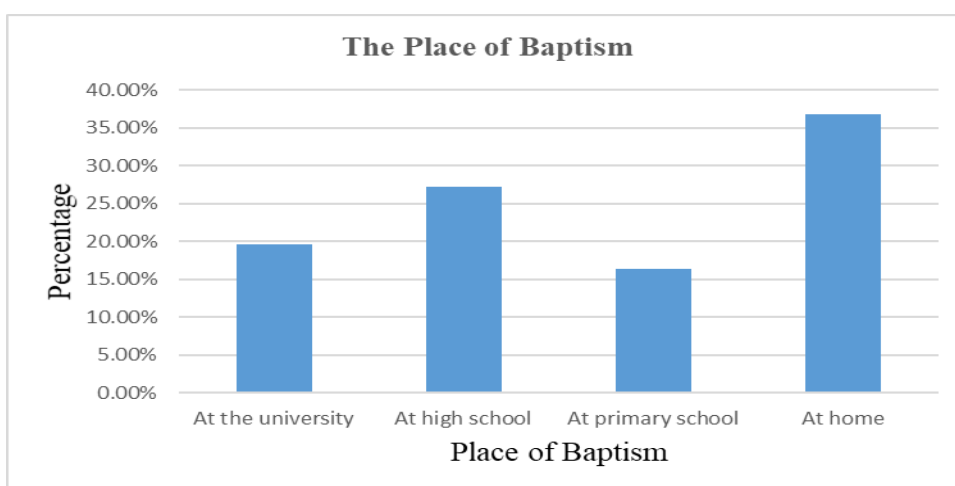
APPENDIX E

RAW DATA

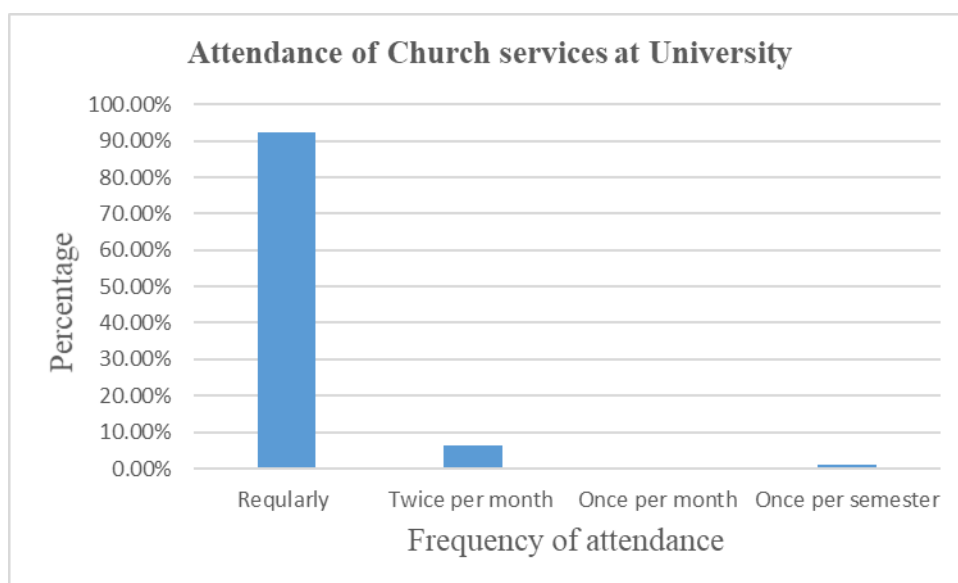
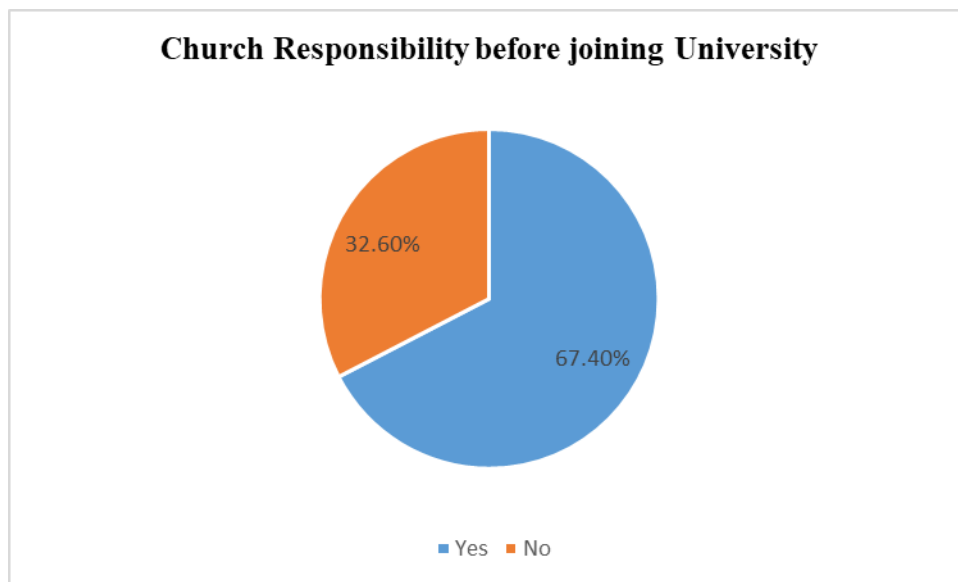


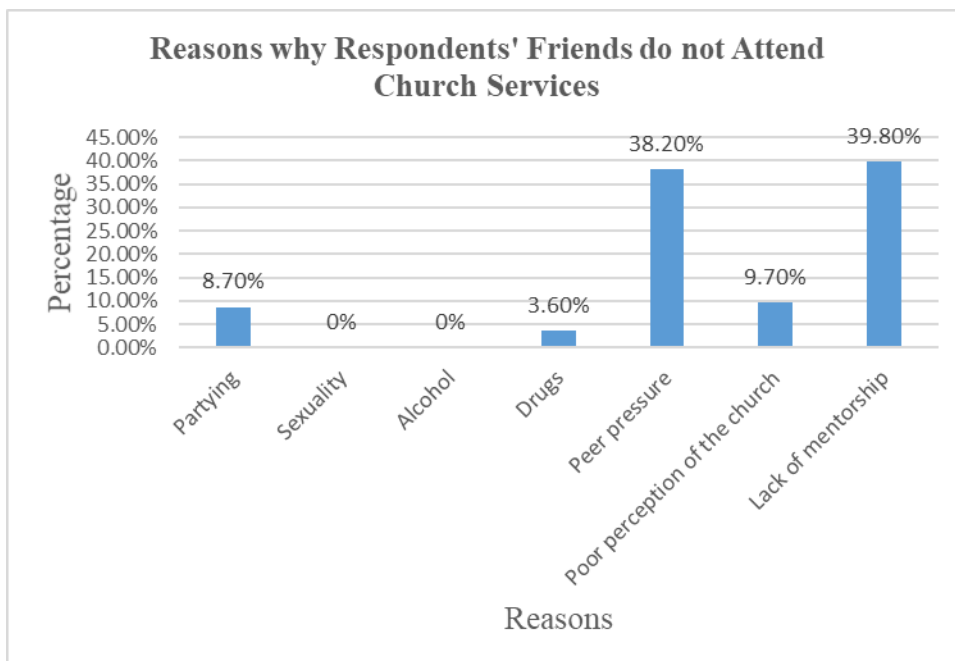
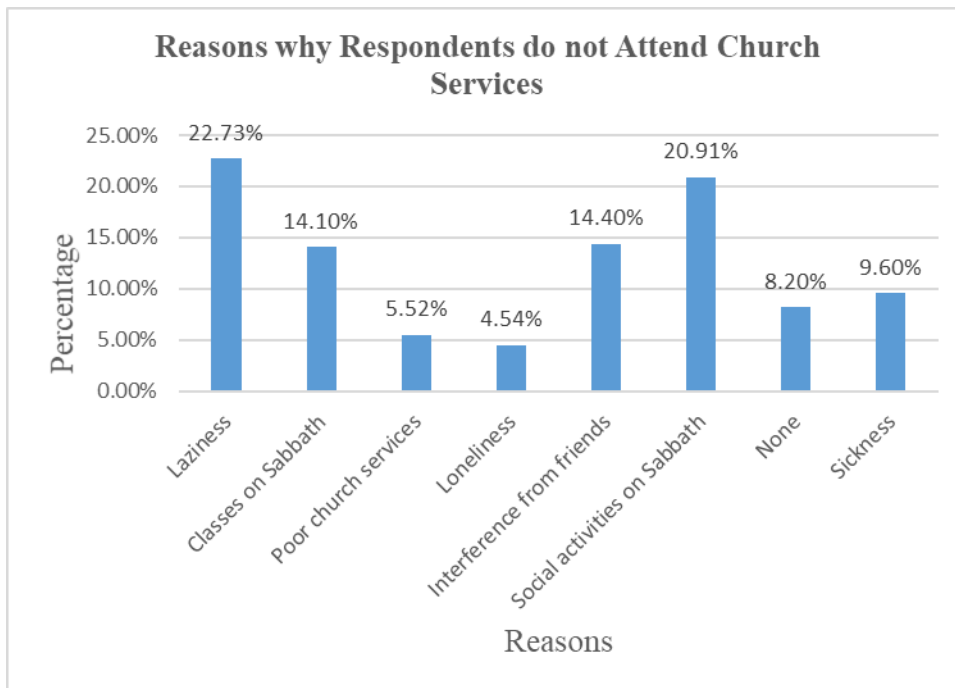


Years	Frequency	Percent
One month to two years	71	20.4
Three years and above	125	79.6
Total	196	100.00

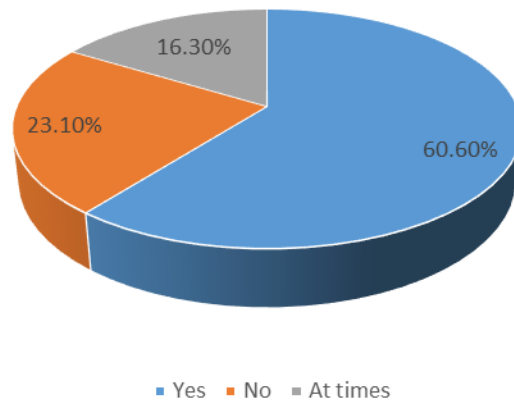


		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
	Yes	105	53.6	53.6
	No	91	46.4	46.4
	Total	196	100.0	100.0

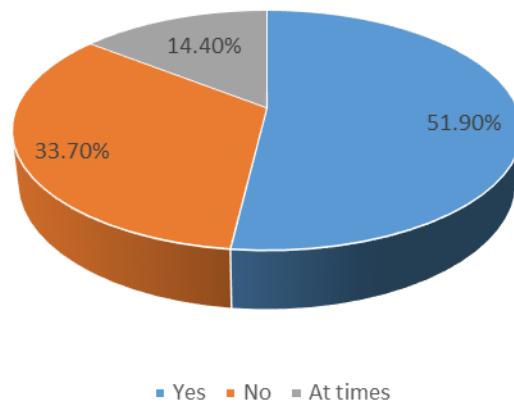




Respondents who are Affected Spiritually by not Attending Church



Respondents' Friends Affected Due Failed Church Services Attendance



Mean range	Interpretation
1.00-1.49	Strongly Disagree
1.50-2.49	Disagree
2.50-3.49	Agree
3.50-4.00	Strongly Agree

Item	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Life in campus has reduced my ethical values	194	2.01	1.03
My faith is not as strong as I used to be before I joined campus	194	2.00	1.09
I have enjoyed freedom in campus than at home	194	2.84	.99
I feel rejected due to social standards	194	1.86	.93
I have never cohabited with anybody	194	2.62	1.16
I feel withdrawn due to financial constraints	194	2.36	1.05
Academic assignments have taken my times for spiritual fellowship	194	1.70	.82
My peers are influencing me to leave my faith in God	194	1.65	.85
I have encountered many stressors in campus than any other place	194	2.91	.98
I believe that campus is the best place to get life partner	194	2.51	.97
My faith has safeguarded me from sexual affairs	194	3.27	.82
I enjoy watching movies in campus than elsewhere	194	2.12	1.03
Partying has negatively affected my Christian life	194	1.64	.96
Alcohol has affected my faith	194	1.43	.94
I am always motivated by church services	194	3.59	.86
Social media distract me from church worship	194	2.36	.98
Academic classes on Sabbath has interfered with my worship	194	1.65	1.03
Attending church protects me from the abuse of drugs on campus	194	3.47	.93
Experience in public campus	194	2.33	0.97

Item	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
I have time for Bible discussions as designated in our campus	196	2.99	0.91
I know that discipleship is a commitment to teachings of Jesus	196	3.45	0.78
I always have personal time for devotion	196	3.02	0.82
The good music in campus enriches my spirituality	196	3.28	0.92
I have joined active prayer groups	196	2.85	0.94
I no longer feel lonely in the church	196	3.41	0.83
I have seen that church members are friendly to all people	196	2.86	1.02
I am always part of the outreach team in campus	196	2.88	0.93
I have appreciated the mentorship of my chaplain	196	3.26	0.79
I am encouraged when I see lively programs in the church	196	3.70	0.59
I feel a sense of belonging when members attend me in time of need	196	3.59	0.71
I have had a peer mentors in my campus spiritual journey	196	3.15	0.92
I have seen church leaders as role model	196	3.21	0.85
The presence of chaplain in campus has made an impact in my life	196	3.12	0.83
I am impressed with the unity displayed by our leaders	196	3.18	0.80
How Does discipleship in public campus enhance your spiritual growth?	196	3.20	0.84

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CURRICULUM VITAE

Personal Details

Name	Wilson Kipkosgei Birgen
Marital Status	Married, With Four Daughters And One Son
Religion	Christian, SDA
Current Address	3059-30100, Eldoret
Email Address	birgenwilson@gmail.com
Mobile Number	0726269756/0752661945

Education

2016-2025	Adventist University of Africa - Master of Chaplaincy Candidate
2001-2005	Bugema University - Bachelor of Theology
1999-2000	Eastern Uganda Ministerial Diploma
1981-1984	Kabiyet Boys - Certificate of Education
1971-1980	Tuiyo Primary School - Certificate of Primary Education

Employment

Ordained Minister of The Gospel SDA Church in Greater Rift Valley Conference

Work Experience

2022-To Date	Ministerial Secretary Grvc
2020-2022	Station Director, West Station
2018-2020	Kapkoros District
2017- 2018	University Of Eldoret- Chaplaincy
2015-2016	Sunshine/Alasiri District
2013-2014	Busia District
2010-2013	Koiluget District
2008-2009	Eldama Ravine District
2006-2007	Kimolwet High School - Chaplain
1993-1999	Global Pioneer Missionary - Baringo

Hobbies

Team Working, Problem Solving, Love Music, Preaching and Teaching. Family Life Seminars. Love Athletics - Middle Races.

Achievements

Mentored young pastors in the ministry
Created new church congregations
Developed good church structures and pastors' residences
Promoted education at different levels
Supported the vulnerable