

PROJECT ABSTRACT

Master of Divinity

Adventist University of Africa

Theological Seminary

Title: A STRATEGY TO INCREASE YOUTH PARTICIPATION IN CHURCH PROGRAMS AT NKAWKAW EAST DISTRICT, GHANA.

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Abstract

This research paper aimed to develop a strategic framework and an intervention program to enhance youth participation and involvement in church programs at the Nkawkaw East District in Ghana. Guided by one major research question “What strategic framework can be developed to increase youth participation in church programs in the Nkawkaw East District?” the study further examined current participation levels, explored key influencing factors, and proposed a contextually relevant program based on the findings.

The study employed program development design with a mixed-methods approach, combining both qualitative and quantitative data collection techniques. Surveys and interviews were conducted with youth, church leaders, and mentors, while focus group discussions provided further insights into the challenges and opportunities related to youth involvement in church programs. The collected data was analysed using thematic coding for qualitative responses and statistical methods

for quantitative responses. The findings reveal that key factors influencing youth participation included the lack of engaging programs, insufficient leadership development opportunities, and the need for intentional mentorship.

In conclusion, this study emphasizes the need for intentional spiritual mentorship and youth-focused leadership development as critical components in enhancing youth participation. The proposed strategy provided a practical framework that can be adopted by church leaders in the Nkawkaw East District and those who find themselves in similar contexts to foster active youth involvement, and ultimately contribute to church growth, youth member retention, and community development.

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A STRATEGY TO INCREASE YOUTH PARTICIPATION IN CHURCH
PROGRAMS AT NKAWKAW EAST DISTRICT, GHANA.

A project

presented in partial fulfillment

of the requirement for the

Master of Divinity Degree

by

Kwame Onwona-Simpe

March 2025

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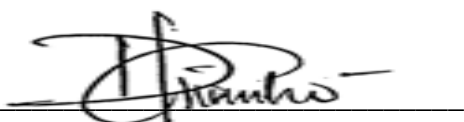
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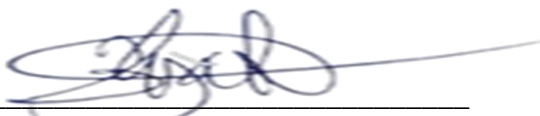
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Dedicated to my late mother,

Hannah Ofosuah.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In the Eastern View Ghana Conference (EVGC) of the Seventh-day Adventist church, the youth have over time, not been very active in the Church activities. In the midst of a rapidly changing world, marked by evolving cultural norms, technological advancements, and shifting social dynamics, a disconcerting trend within the Eastern View Ghana Conference (EVGC) has emerged. According to Musa,¹ Spiritual well-being stands as a fundamental aspect of human nature, serving as a guiding force that offers individuals stability, a sense of purpose, fulfillment in life, and confidence in oneself. Thus, spiritual well-being through personal devotion, fellowship, and active participation of youth in church programs is also integral to the growth and vitality of the Church community.

Religious communities with active involvement of young people seem to thrive in other areas, including personal and social dimensions. In recent times, I have observed a declining interest and engagement of the youth in church worship services and activities within the Nkawkaw East District. This has raised concerns that seem to suggest partly the lack of personal and family devotions. This project aims to recommend some strategies from the literature to help address this challenge and thereby foster increased youth interest in personal devotion and consequently church activities. Nkawkaw East District of the Seventh Day Adventist Church is situated in

¹ Musa, Ahmad S., Osama Elbqowm, Mohammed AlBashtawy, Mohammad I. Al Qadire, Mohammad Suliman, Loai I. Tawalbeh, Abdullah Alkhaldeh, and Abdul-Moni'M. Batiha. "Spiritual wellbeing and quality of life among hemodialysis patients in Jordan: a cross-sectional correlational study." *Journal of Holistic Nursing* 41, no. 3 (2023): 220-232.

the Kwahu-West Municipal, Eastern Region of the great Republic of Ghana. This municipality is known for its rich cultural and religious diversity and for having a strong history of faith-based practices by a variety of religious communities.

However, research shows that there has been a minimal level of participation and enthusiasm among the young people in church programs, most especially after they graduate from Senior High School.²

Benson³ research findings suggest that spiritual development is an active process among the majority of youth across diverse religious and cultural backgrounds, with most having spiritual development unfold without particularly strong engagement in explicitly religious or spiritual practices. It is no wonder that Katarina Westerlund argues that strong cultural ideals like independence and self-realization repress children's and youth's spirituality and spiritual development.

These independence and self-realization which lacks the guidance of leadership might have led to the minimal level of participation and enthusiasm among the young people in spiritual disciplines. According to Vitus, Young people are not adequately informed about their church obligations and lifestyle choices.⁴ Thus, this prevailing trend raises concerns about the sustainability of the Seventh-day Adventist Church communities, reputation, and their ability to transmit their values, heritage, teachings, and leadership mantle to the younger generation. By understanding the

² Barna Group, "5 Reasons Millennials Stay Connected to Church," Barna Group Website, September 17, 2013, accessed December 5, 2024, <https://www.barna.org/barna-update/millennials/635-5-reasons-millennials-stay-connected-to-church#.Vmr2YV4spLM>

³ Benson, Peter L., Eugene C. Roehlkepartain, and Stacey P. Rude. "Spiritual development in childhood and adolescence: Toward a field of inquiry." In *Beyond the Self*, pp. 205-213. Routledge, 2019.

⁴ Ndaruhekeyo, Isacka Vitus, *An approach to nurturing youth at the Bachu Seventh-day Adventist Church in Bachu District, Western Tanzania Conference, 2016-06* <http://irepository.aua.ac.ke/handle/123456789/360>

various factors contributing to this decline, the paper seeks to design a strategic program aimed to reinvigorate the spiritual engagement of youth in the district and consequently in the Conference.

Statement of Problem

Youth participation in spiritual and social programs within the church had been gradually declining, creating a generational gap in church leadership and engagement. Traditional approaches to worship no longer appeal to the youth, largely due to the increasing influence of social media, advancements in contemporary technology, and shifting cultural norms. Over the past decade, the Nkawkaw East District experienced challenges in sustaining youth interest in weekly church activities. Many young members, upon transitioning from pre-tertiary to tertiary education and beyond, began to perceive themselves as independent decision-makers, leading to a disconnect between their evolving personal interests and the religious teachings they had previously embraced.

This diminishing engagement poses a potential threat to the continuity of religious practices, morals, social disconnect, and values within the Adventist faith. This has resulted in the loss of the Adventist tradition, heritage, and identity, missed opportunities for positive societal impact, apostasy, and witnessing challenges that can negatively impact Church growth, reduced future prospective leaders, and a decline in spiritual values, etc. Furthermore, the lack of sustained youth participation contributed to a reduced pool of prospective future church leaders and a decline in spiritual values. The absence of an intentional and structured strategy to nurture, reclaim, and retain youth members exacerbated the situation, as conventional church programs assumed that regular worship services were sufficient for youth engagement. Addressing this challenge was crucial to fostering a vibrant and

sustainable church community, ensuring the active involvement of younger generations in church programs and leadership.

The Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to develop a strategic intervention to enhance youth participation in church programs within the Nkawkaw East District of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Given the observed decline in youth engagement, this study sought to design an effective mentorship and counseling framework aimed at rekindling young people's interest in their spiritual journey. The proposed strategy emphasized one-on-one and group mentorship programs, where youth would receive guidance from church leadership and peers to strengthen their commitment to personal devotion and active participation in church activities.

Furthermore, it will facilitate their grooming in this present age and for future leadership roles within families, local Christian congregations, communities, and educational institutions. The district does not have strategies to nurture, reclaim, and retain the youths. It is assumed that holding normal worship services is enough. For this reason, there is no intentional pastoral care for the youths. This study holds significant implications for the Nkawkaw East District and other church communities facing similar challenges. The literature findings and commendations from this research will contribute to the design, development, and shaping of a strategic program that can effectively and intentionally engage and increase youth interest in church programs, ensuring the preservation of religious values and traditions.

Research Questions

The main question that guided this research was: How can the Nkawkaw East District increase youth participation in Church programs? To better understand this concept, this research sought to augment the main question by asking three other supporting questions, namely;

1. What are the factors contributing to the decline in youth participation in personal faith nurturing and church programs within the Nkawkaw East District of the Seventh-day Adventist Church?
2. What are the implications of declining youth participation in faith-based activities for church growth and leadership sustainability in Nkawkaw East District?
3. How can a strategic mentorship and counselling framework be designed to foster active youth engagement in spiritual and social church activities?

Significance of Study

The research findings might give readers and Church leaders insight into the key factors influencing the youth's declining interest in church activities. Challenge the youth's willingness to learn and transform their worldview to minimize the negative effects associated with their exodus, help harness both their hidden and known potentials, aid them in building a personal relationship with Christ as committed and faithful believers that would translate into active participation in personal devotions and church programs, making them open to counsel and mentoring to help shape their character, identity, and purpose.

Developing their talents and spiritual gifts and maximizing their potential would be one of the effective ways of advancing the gospel and multiplying disciples and leaders. This might diffuse the long-standing ideas that leadership is earned over

an extended time, coupled with the notion that they are not prepared to lead today maybe as they grow older tomorrow. That notwithstanding, adults fear delegating power to the youth to specific tasks and vesting them with the privileges of making decisions as leaders.

Overall, this research project with its strategy might aid in mitigating and checking the rising global threat marked by evolving cultural norms, technological advancements, and shifting social dynamics to the Adventist church, causing the young people to lose interest in the spiritual journey, and consequently leaving the church. This work might serve as an opportunity for mentors to mentor the next generation by helping congregations to create environments that better resonate with young people to embrace Christ's command to disciple others. As a result, participation of young people will increase, ensuring that they are nurtured and retained.

Delimitation of the Study

The study focuses exclusively on theoretical studies and their associated youth engagement in spiritual practices, especially personal devotions and participation in church programmes. Efforts are made to gather a diverse range of perspectives from the literature and the findings may give insight and could be customised to the needs of any church community.

Methodology

This project research adopted a mixed methods approach, combining both quantitative and qualitative techniques to capture a comprehensive understanding of youth participation and involvement in church programs. A cross-sectional survey design was used to gather data at a single point in time, while a program development design guided the creation of an intervention framework based on the findings.

The target population comprised 1,012 individuals, including church pastors, elders, youth leaders, youth members, and parents/guardians in the Nkawkaw East District of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. A sample size of 101 respondents, representing 10% of the total population, was selected to provide a manageable yet representative subset for analysis.

A systematic random sampling technique was employed to ensure fairness and minimize bias in participation selection. Data were collected using self-administered questionnaires (both paper-based and online) for quantitative data and a focus group interview guide for qualitative insights. These instruments were chosen to allow for flexible, inclusive, and context-specific responses. Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics, while qualitative data were subjected to thematic analysis, allowing for both numerical trends and contextual interpretations to emerge.

Program development, also known as curriculum development or product approach, was proposed by Ralph Tyler (1949). In program development, the researcher creates a program, engages human subjects with the program, and then evaluates the program's effectiveness in terms of desired outcomes for the human subjects. This study further adopted the program development design which is typically considered a design rather than a methodology to guide the creation, implementation, and evaluation of a structured program to address youth declining interest and participation in church programs.

Organization of the Study

This entire research paper was structured into six chapters, each focusing on a distinct component of the research and program development process. Chapter one presented the introduction, including the background to the study, problem statement, research objectives and questions, significance, scope, limitations, and a summary of

the methodology. The biblical foundation for youth engagement in the life and mission of the church are addressed in Chapter two (2). Drawing insights from Scriptures and other relevant theological and scholarly resources to establish some fundamental principles. This project also described the local context of Nkawkaw East District of the Seventh-day Adventist Church highlighting its demographic composition, church structure, and youth ministry dynamics in Chapter three (3).

In Chapter four, the research methodology was covered, and detailed the research design, population and sampling, data collection instruments and procedures, ethical considerations, and the methods of data analysis. Chapter five focused on the program design, implementation, and evaluation, presenting the intervention framework developed from the research findings, including its goals, activities, logic model, and assessment strategies. Chapter six, which served as the final chapter of the study, provided a summary of the entire study, discussed the conclusions drawn from the findings, and offered practical recommendations for future implementation and further research.

Definition of Terms

The following definitions serve to provide the scope and framework of this paper, other views would be highlighted as and where necessary.

Youth: focused on individuals aged 18 to 39 years old.

Church Programs: Various activities, events, and services organized by religious institutions for spiritual growth and community engagement.

Engagement: Active involvement, participation, and commitment to church programs and activities.

Strategic Program: A carefully planned and coordinated set of interventions designed to address specific challenges and achieve desired outcomes.

Mentoring: Is a developmental relationship in which someone with a higher level of maturity, experience, knowledge, skill and with the willingness to support, instruct, encourage, train, and see to the development of another person (mentee/protégé), through an intentional relational experience. Mentor, in this project work would be used interchangeably with the word ‘disciple’ to echo the aspect of embarking on a spiritual journey through another’s guidance. Other related terms included are: mentoring, mentorship, disciple, discipling and discipleship.

Intentional Spiritual Mentoring (ISM) is the process where intentional caring relationships are built formally or informally with the hope of gaining permission to share one’s spiritual experience with the least experienced in a non-threatening manner to improve their desire for personal spiritual nurture, growth, and participation in church programs.

Nkawkaw East District of SDA (NkED): Religious entity responsible for spiritual leadership and administration.

Spiritual Disciplines (SD): Practices like prayer, reading the Bible, meditation, witnessing, and fellowship (i.e. attending or participating church programs, small groups etc.).

Participation: The active involvement of youth in church activities, including attendance and engagement.

Interest: The level of curiosity, attraction, or enthusiasm demonstrated by youth towards church activities.

CHAPTER 2

BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATION

This research endeavor shed light on the active engagement of youth in the service of God, a concept deeply rooted in both the Old and New Testaments of the Bible. This research featured perspectives from other notable authors and scholars who have expressed their views on the inclusion and participation of youth in church programs and activities, providing a comprehensive overview of this pivotal aspect of religious practice. Additionally, the study examined the writings of E.G. White, exploring her inspired insights that underscore God's guidance to the Seventh-day Adventist Church during her time, and how these counsels continue to hold relevance in contemporary church settings.

To achieve this goal, the key terminologies including some associated concepts are explored to draw and establish their contextual meaning. It further consulted relevant resources to help in developing the theological and theoretical framework for understanding the origin, usage, principles and implications of youth engagement and disengagement in church programs. That notwithstanding, the Adventist church may use this project to strategize ways to strengthen young people's faith and help them fulfill the gospel commission (Matthew 28:18-20¹) as they participate within the church community to be discipled in order to disciple others.

¹ All scriptural references are taken from the English Standard Version (ESV) unless otherwise stated.

Background to Biblical Interpretation

The research methodology used in this paper is program development. However, the Biblical principles and concepts in this chapter are interpreted and analyzed using the Historical-Grammatical Method (HGM). This guarantees objective interpretation, in contrast to other approaches that compromise biblical authority. Journals, articles, dictionary, encyclopedia, E.G. White writings, other Christian literature were consulted to shape the theological framework for this paper.

“Youth” In the Old Testament (OT)

The word “youth” na‘ur appears seventy-seven (77) times in the Old Testament, each time in a distinct way where is been translated youth, early life, or adolescence. Other words aside na‘ur like na‘ar; yeled; baḥar; yaldut; elem; tsa‘ir; ben; and alum have the following frequency of occurrence (45, 12, 7, 4, 3, 3, 1, 1, 1) respectively. Almost ninety-five percent (95%) of these uses are nouns with a pronominal suffix signifying possession also known as a Possessive Pronoun.² In addition, Baumgartner highlights that [*bachur*], which means youth, occurs three (3) times (Num. 11:28; Ecc. 11:9; 12:1)³ as a verb indicating the state of being or process. This also appears to show that a significant number of people, processes, and relationships in the OT went through, or experienced, or persons could recall their thoughts of that period in their lives.

Youth in some significant instances applies to both males and females.

Generally, the word בָּחֻרִים [*Bachuriym*] or [*bachur*] from [*bachar*] means “to prove,”

² The independent personal pronouns serve as surrogates for an antecedent or implicit noun, usually referring to a person;

³ Koehler, Ludwig; Baumgartner, Walter; Richardson, M.E.J; Stamm, Johann Jakob: *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*. electronic ed. (Leiden; New York: E.J. Brill, 1999, c1994-1996), S. 704.

“to choose,” (Num. 11:28; Ecc. 11:9; 12:1) applying to both male and female and further applies to those qualified for military service. Also, the word “na`ar” [a boy] re-echoes in some instances the idea of “a girl.” Hence, youth in its application can be understood as gender-neutral (Dt 32:25; Jgs 14:10; 1Sa 8:16; 2Ki 8:12, etc.).

The following Biblical passages sum up youth in the OT, these particular ones first describe a time in a person's existence. “Do not remember the sins of my youth, nor my transgressions; According to Your mercy remember me, For Your goodness’ sake, O Lord.” Also “Who satisfies your mouth with good things, so that your youth is renewed like the eagle’s.” (Ps 25:7; 103:5).

Youth in the New Testament (NT)

There are different words used for youth in the Greek of the NT. To start with, νεανίας [*neanias*] and νεανίσκος [*neaniskos*] are used to refer to the prime of life of a person, especially between twenty-four and forty (24-40) years of age (Ac 7.58); In the Hellenistic cities, “youth” refers to younger men above twenty (20) years and up to thirty (30) years. It is also used for an older boy, young (unmarried) man (Ac 23.17, 18; Mt 19:20) and in other instances, for a servant (Mk 14:51b; Ac 5:10). Notably, νέος [*neos*], a synonym with καινός (Mt 9.17) does not only reflect the time of life, new existence or fresh but is used substantively⁴ with little comparative force as in young men, youths (Tit 2.6).⁵

Other words such as νεότης [*neotes*], νεωτερικός [*neoterikos*], ὁ, παῖς (Mk 10:20; Lk 18:21; Ac 26:4; 1Ti 4:12) are used for youth, and they occur with the

⁴ [οἱ νεώτεροι]

⁵ Friberg, Timothy; Friberg, Barbara; Miller, Neva F.: Analytical Lexicon of the Greek New Testament. (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 2000, Baker's Greek New Testament Library 4), S. 269.

following frequency (4, 1, 1, 1) respectively. However, in these four (4) instances, νεότης is used as a noun in the genitive sense to mark the noun as the source or possessor of something. Νεωτερικός also highlights a person who is an attendant, servant, or one inferior in status.

Scripture describes youth as a time of vigor and strength, as Martin H. Manser explains. As a result, they frequently succumb to internal and external pressures and temptations.⁶ However, the Bible gives plenty of guidance on what is required of them. Although the Bible does not specify an age range for youth, interpretations drawn from certain scriptures and the cultural setting point to a period between adolescence and forty (40) years.⁷ In Athens, "youth" is defined as the period preceding adulthood and is considered to start at the age of sixteen (16). Given that Athens was one of the key cities of influence in the New Testament, this is significant.⁸

Youthful Responsibilities in the Bible

In the Bible, there are some obligations and responsibilities associated with being young. The youth have some important responsibilities, one of which is to constantly remember their Creator, God. They are also urged to respect and revere their elders, which includes parents and authorities. Last but not least, keeping their marital vows faithful is an important duty. According to biblical teachings, these principles emphasize the significance of upholding a strong sense of faith (Ecc 12:1),

⁶ Martin H. Manser, *Zondervan Dictionary of Bible Themes. The Accessible and Comprehensive Tool for Topical Studies* (Grand Rapids, MI: ZondervanPublishingHouse, 1999).

⁷ James Strong, S.T.D., LL. D, *A Concise Dictionary of the Words in the Greek Testament and The Hebrew Bible* (Bellingham, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 2009).

⁸ Aesch. Aesch Aeschylus. Ed. Sidgwick, Oxford (OCT). Scholia, Ed. W. Dindorf in Editone Aeschyli, Oxford 1851. Scholia in Aeschyli Persas, Ed. O. Dähnhardt, Leipzig (T.) 1894.

respect for authority (Ps 119:9) and wisdom (Lev 19:32,) and faithfulness to one's spouse (Ex 20:12) as essential components of a righteous and purposeful youth (Pr 1:8, Pr 5:18).⁹

In other words, the youth must not only acknowledge these authority figures but also allow them to shape, guide, model, and mentor their life by availing themselves of religious gatherings and worship services. Once, faithfulness to a spouse could be questionable since it is a period of intense lustful emotions. Hence, obedience to God's commands, teaching, training, counsel, and instructions coupled with the influence of their human authority figures becomes an essential requirement.¹⁰

Youthful Challenges in the Bible

In both Testaments, young people (youth) are earnestly advised to seek knowledge and be sober-minded (Pr. 1:8, 9; Eccl 11:9; 12:1; 13, 14; Tit 2:6 etc.). Since they are less experienced, the knowledge, skills, and wisdom of mature believers are instrumental in minimizing challenges in these stages. According to Paul Tillich, in his article published by the “*The Christian Century*” titled “On the Boundary Line,” does not only describe but affirms some alarming tendencies and challenges highlighted in the Bible concerning the youth. He puts it this way;

It [youth] is a feeling of emptiness, insecurity, meaninglessness—often increased by loneliness—feelings of guilt, hostility and disgust; in short, characteristics of the human predicament as described by existentialist

⁹ Neufeld, Don F., *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Student's Source Book*, (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1962). See also additional passages - 1Ki 18:12; Ps 71:5; La 3:25-27; Ps 71:17; Eze 4:14; Job 29:8; 32:6; 1Ti 5:1; 1Pe 5:5; Dt 5:16; Eph 6:2-3; Lev 19:3; 1Ti 5:4; Pr 6:20; 23:22; Eph 6:1; Col 3:20; Pr 2:17; Mal 2:14-15.

¹⁰ Martin H. Manser, *Zondervan Dictionary of Bible Themes. The Accessible and Comprehensive Tool for Topical Studies* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1999).

literature, art and philosophy. These experiences have led some to cynicism, others to indifference and many to a search for security at any price.¹¹

In other words, these feelings have the potential to increase a person's susceptibility, and this susceptibility can lead to a variety of social, developmental, and lifestyle difficulties. Consequently, these challenges have the potential to profoundly impact an individual's conduct and psychological welfare. Depression, loneliness, anxiety, and, in certain situations, even more serious problems like physical or sexual abuse, can all be warning indications of this vulnerability.

It is crucial that young people have mentors who are knowledgeable about these potentially harmful inclinations in order to address these issues. These mentors can be quite helpful in directing and protecting young people from giving in to these dangerous habits (Ps 25:7; 2Ti 2:22; Pr 1:10-16; Lk 15:12, 13; 1Ki 12:8-14, etc.).

By employing this strategy, the church may successfully pique people's interest again, provide a sense of acceptance, and stimulate a sense of ownership—all of which are critical for assimilating them into the church community. As a result, this tactic makes it easier for members to accomplish their individual and group spiritual goals and causes them to be less reluctant or resistant. Within the church, reviving excitement, strengthening ties to the community, and developing a sense of duty are all essential to the successful alignment of individual and corporate spiritual aspirations.

It is evident from scripture that the reason for declining interest in church programs could be because they lack attitudes of godly passion, living exemplary lives, and being enthusiastic with God (1Jn 2:13, 14; 1Ti 4:12; 1Sa. 17:26-51). To

¹¹ Neufeld, Don F., *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Student's Source Book*, (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1962).

possess these attitudes that could deal with their deep needs and reconnect them to the church community, it is expected that they feed on God's word, totally surrender to God through obedience, exercise discretion in choices and live soberly (Ps. 119:9; Mt 19:20-22; Pr 1:4; Isa 40:30, 31; Tit 2:6; 1Jn 2:13, 14).

The Concept of the “Church”

This section explores the various dimensions and uses of church, its origin, meaning, and its role in the early Christian community. In the contemporary context, the idea of the Church as a community is gaining prominence. Many individuals express a preference for congregations that emphasize community over traditional religious institutions. This trend reflects a broader societal issue: modernity often fosters anonymity and a sense of being mere cogs in a vast social machinery. Consequently, people seek more intimate social connections within or elsewhere. The concept of the "church" in the New Testament (NT) is multifaceted, drawing from both Old Testament (OT) and Greco-Roman influences.

The Origin and Meaning of “Church”

The English word “church,”¹² which stems from “cot,” meaning *small, or light bed* more notably a crib or baby bed with high sides made of slate¹³ and *ecclesia* with its varied forms¹⁴ are all derivatives from New Testament (NT) Greek Gk. adjective

¹² Catherine Soanes and Angus Stevenson, *Concise Oxford English Dictionary*, 11th ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

¹³ "Cot." Online Etymology Dictionary, accessed July 5, 2024. <https://www.etymonline.com/search?q=cot>.

¹⁴ F. L. Cross and Elizabeth A. Livingstone, *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, 3rd ed. rev. (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 346.

Gk. Greek

kyrialos or *kyriakós* or more specifically as used in some phrases such as *kyriakon dōma* or *kyriakē oikia*, meaning ‘the Lord’s house’ or “belonging to the Lord,” or “belonging to the house of the Lord” (*i.e.*, a Christian place of worship).¹⁵

Drawing for the idea above, any area safe, secure, protective space, physically or virtually, accepted, chosen to represent and dignify God’s presence by a group of believers. Also, it should be an accessible place for assembly, worship, and fellowship for two or three to gather in God’s name for equipping and empowerment for mission. The word church, according to M.G. Easton, was used by ancient authors to describe a place of worship.¹⁶ Thus, physical structures, buildings or spaces, including any social media environment corporately accepted for service to God which can convey reverence and bring dignity to God’s name and His people is a church.

However, in the NT Gk. *Ekklēsia*, also means the called out (*ek* “out” and *klētos* “called”) which is significantly used to distinguish God’s people who are not of the world. The Greek translation of the O17T (the Septuagint), further uses two main words for these called out People of God: assembly (*ekklēsia*) and synagogue (*synagogē*).¹⁸ In the Old Testament, Heb. *Qāhāl* ((Deut. 23:3, Neh. 13:1, cf. Acts 7:38) designates an assembly, either religious (e.g., 2 Chr. 30:23; cf. “congregation”)

¹⁵ D. R. W. Wood and I. Howard Marshall, *New Bible Dictionary*, 3rd ed. (Leicester, England; Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 199.

¹⁶ M.G. Easton, *Easton's Bible Dictionary* (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1996).

¹⁷ Paul J. Achtemeier, Publishers Harper & Row and Society of Biblical Literature, *Harper's Bible Dictionary*, 1st ed. (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1985), 168.

or secular (e.g., Jer. 26:17, KJV; RS19V “assembled people”), and could be literally translated as “meeting called together.”²⁰

Thus, “the church” in summary is the assembly of individuals irrespective of gender, age, occupation, skills, talents, spiritual gifts, social and marital status, etc., for religious services, ceremonies, events, and activities. The intent is to prepare the heart, seek the law of the Lord, to do it, and teach others as recorded in the example of Ezra in Ezra 7:10.

The idea of the church emphasizes its non-location-specific nature by going beyond a physical building. In contrast to the Old Testament, when God designated particular locations and times for meetings, the church is determined by the members' collective decision about where to gather, as revealed in the New Testament (John 4:20–23). The Bible's precepts, which emphasize a change from a rigid, location-based model to one based on social consensus and conformity with biblical teachings, serve as the foundation for this decision.

Youth Involvement in God’s Mission

The Bible offers several instances of young people participating in God's work, which challenges church leaders to incorporate them in a variety of ways. Ellen White asserts that, in God’s master plan, “...the Lord has appointed the youth to be His helping hand.”²¹ As such, young people were used by God and also, as they participated in temple rituals, kingship, prophetic office, and most often in battle

RSV Revised Standard Version

¹⁹ Allen C. Myers, *The Eerdmans Bible Dictionary* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1987), 215.

²¹ Ellen G. White, *Testimonies*, vol. 7. p. 64

circles. Ellen further adds that, God has assigned an individuality and a distinct work to each human being.”²²

Not only are young people the church's future, but they are also an integral part of it now, it is therefore biblically correct to prevent youngsters from being passive observers²³ of adults at work but should be allowed to contribute their lot. According to *Messages to Young People*, Ellen White posits that, if correct, the young person could sway a powerful figure. The influence that young people who are devoted to God can have on their peers is greater than that of preachers or older laity.²⁴ While some young ones were appointed and engaged in line with divine summons, others were chosen by God-fearing people who recognized their hidden potential. In the Old Testament, Joseph, David, King Saul, Samuel, Jeremiah, Daniel, Shadrach, Abednego, served as great leaders. On the other hand, Timothy, Titus, John Mark, Mary, John the Baptist, Jesus Christ, and the twelve disciples.

Youth Involvement in the Seventh-day Church

Young people including James White who was 23 years, Ellen G. White 17 years, J. N. Andrews 21 years, Uriah Smith 20 years, John N. Loughborough 21 years,

²² Ellen G. White, *Manuscript Releases Volume Fourteen* [Nos. 1081-1135], 205.4

²³ General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Youth Department, *Getting it Right*, (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2005), 145.

²⁴ Ellen G. White. *Messages to Young People*, (Nashville Tenn: Southern Pub. Association, 1930). 204.

²⁵ were used by God to develop, equip, and shaped the Seventh-day Adventist Church in this worldwide movement that we have today.²⁶

In light of these biblical, historical, and Adventist examples drawn from the Old and New Testaments and church history, there is an explicit encouragement to trust young individuals with substantial responsibilities. These stories highlight the essential role of youth in God's work, demonstrating their involvement in worship, service, and even significant tasks, dispelling the notion that only older individuals should bear these burdens. Thus, a contemporary challenge emerges, urging us to consider involving and entrusting young people with important assignments and leadership role.

²⁵ Adventist Heritage Ministries, “*Miracles in My Life: Autobiography of Autobiographical experiences of Adventist pioneer,*” Accessed 27 October, 2023, <https://adventistheritage.org/heritage-shoppe/biographies-pioneer-stories/miracles-my-life/>

²⁶ Schwarz R. W. Greenleaf F. & General Conference of Seventh-Day Adventists Department of Education, *Light Bearers: A History of the Seventh-Day Adventist Church*, Rev. ed., (Pacific Press Pub. Association, 2000),

CHAPTER 3

DESCRIPTION OF THE ISSUE IN LOCAL SETTINGS

Global Youth Disengagement

The decline in church engagement among young people is a global phenomenon regardless of faith and denomination. This global data aligns with the challenges faced in the Nkawkaw East District, affirming the relevance of investigating strategies to re-engage youth in church programs. The literature highlights the growing trend of religious disengagement among young adults, noting that by 2000, nearly a quarter of individuals aged 18-29 identified as religiously unaffiliated, and by 2005, over half of this age group were unchurched.¹

Aside from the fact that youths were religiously unaffiliated, this literature, on the contrary, addresses the decline in church attendance among youth aged 14 to 18 following Confirmation in an Episcopal Church in Louisiana. It identifies a concerning pattern: Confirmation, which is intended to affirm Christian faith and commitment, is instead marking a turning point for youth disengagement.²

Unlike the tradition of confirmation, Michael Kiju in his paper discusses the decline in membership at St. Peter's Episcopal Church, with youth being the most affected group. He further asserts that the decline threatens the future of the church's

¹ Nina M Thompson. *Holy Spirit Gift Activation, Mentoring and Leadership Training to Increase Church Attendance and Godly Commitment In Emerging Adults*. United Theological Seminary. <https://rim.ir.atla.com/concern/etds/de20e772-7d3e-45c0-99a2-79b9ba0d5fd4?q=youth%20and%20church%20attendance>.

² Roman D Roldan. *Evaluating Post-Confirmation Church Attendance At a Rural Church In Louisiana*. Trinity Episcopal School for Ministry (Ambridge, PA). <https://rim.ir.atla.com/concern/etds/025d31e7-8f51-40ab-9ef7-10b05a8f04a0?q=youth%20and%20church%20attendance>.

ministry which he attributes to the failure of leadership to prepare youth as future ministry leaders.³ Similarly, Enderle's research highlights the importance of intentional leadership, holistic programming, and outreach efforts in addressing declining church attendance and fostering spiritual growth. He provides a framework of actionable strategies that can inform the design and implementation of youth engagement programs⁴ in Nkawkaw East.

This literature describes the development of a sports evangelism strategy for Airline Baptist Church in Bossier City, Louisiana. The project aimed to use sports as a tool for intentional evangelism by involving staff, lay leaders, and experts in crafting the strategy. The outcome was a four-part strategy designed to integrate evangelism into the church's sports ministry.⁵

Youth Participation in Church Programs

The decline in church engagement among young people is not just a local occurrence. According to Nina's research data, this global trend aligns with the challenges faced in the Nkawkaw East District, affirming the relevance of investigating strategies to attract, re-engage, and retain youth in church programs. The literature highlights the growing trend of religious disengagement among young

³ Michael Kiju Paul. *The Role of Transformational Leadership In Preparing Youth As Future Church Leaders*. <https://rim.ir.atla.com/concern/etds/101c750e-6eb2-4f2a-8225-1307fdf88f7f?q=youth%20and%20church%20attendance>.

⁴ Enderle, Phillip Mark. *Congregational Renewal and Revitalization: a Case Study of Hope Lutheran Church, Fond Du Lac, Wisconsin*. <https://rim.ir.atla.com/concern/etds/c2d0d41f-fab7-4c8a-90a8-5405660d6bf9?q=youth%20and%20church%20attendance>.

⁵ Young, Terry. *Developing a Sports Evangelism Strategy for Airline Baptist Church, Bossier City, Louisiana*. <https://rim.ir.atla.com/concern/etds/327e783b-6920-484f-b677-2efdf9a5354?q=youth%20and%20church%20attendance>.

adults, noting that by 2000, nearly a quarter of individuals aged 18-29 identified as religiously unaffiliated, and by 2005, over half of this age group were unchurched.⁶

As we navigate through this chapter, we will establish a comprehensive understanding of the local context and the intricacies surrounding youth's declining interest in church activities. This exploration will encompass the key factors, effects and the overarching reasons behind this trend. In parallel, we will highlight the potential gains realized when the youth are actively involved and their inherent talents and spiritual gifts are used and their experiences are leveraged for the collective benefit of their family, church, and community.

Who is a Youth?

A youth is typically defined as a young person. Still, the specific age range or definition can vary depending on the context and cultural or legal norms of a given society. In general, youth refer to people who are in the process of transitioning from childhood to adulthood.⁷ Youth are typically defined as those in their adolescent and early twenties, ranging in age from 13 to 24. According to Holt, the term "youth" is socially constructed and designates people who are older than children but not quite

⁶ Nina M Thompson. *Holy Spirit Gift Activation, Mentoring and Leadership Training to Increase Church Attendance and Godly Commitment In Emerging Adults*. United Theological Seminary. <https://rim.ir.atla.com/concern/etds/de20e772-7d3e-45c0-99a2-79b9ba0d5fd4?q=youth%20and%20church%20attendance>.

⁷ United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), *Definition of Youth*, Accessed on 13th October, 2023. <https://www.un.org/esa/socdev/documents/youth/fact-sheets/youth-definition.pdf>

adults.⁸ Friedmann highlights how different cultures and societies define youth differently, based on things like puberty, rights, and responsibilities.⁹

However, Abdieva emphasizes youth as a time for development and self-determination on both a personal and professional level.¹⁰ Furthermore, Yi-hon explores how the idea of youth is evolving concerning societal development and offers a definition that defines youth as people between the ages of 18 and 35 who are both spiritually and physically mature.¹¹ However, this age range is somewhat flexible, and in some contexts, the term "youth" can be used to describe individuals in their late teens or early thirties.

The precise definition of youth may differ from one country or culture to the next, as well as depending on the specific purpose or criteria. In summary, the papers collectively suggest that youth is a socially constructed category that encompasses individuals in a transitional stage between childhood and adulthood, characterized by personal, professional, and societal factors.

These youths and their parents according to Ishaya⁶ now have a distance between them as a result of the changing world, which includes technology, social media, and busy family life. He further asserts that; this makes it challenging for them to connect. The church has suffered as a result, especially in the area of mentoring and

⁸ Holt, Louise. "Youth/youth cultures." (2009). DOI: 10.1016/B978-008044910-4.01021-X <https://www.semanticscholar.org/paper/Youth-youth-cultures-Holt/237c2f253486f96c4d810ed24bed3d5f4813a83>

⁹ Friedmann, F. G. "Varieties of Youth." (1971). DOI:10.1007/978-1-349-01389-0_1 <https://www.semanticscholar.org/paper/Varieties-of-Youth-Friedmann/ff07585fa15e008a645fe72aa045005a5a690029>.

¹⁰ Gaziza Ilyasovna Abdieva, *youth as a period of personal and professional self-determination and formation, 2021*, <https://doi.org/10.52013/10.52013/2658-5197-59-2-6>.

¹¹ Yi-hon, Liao. "Explaining on the Concept of Youth." *Journal of Beijing Administrative College* (2007): n. pag

discipleship. In the past, mentoring has been successful in assisting young Christians, but today's generational divide in the church makes spiritual mentoring less helpful in advancing mission objectives.¹²

In the subsequent sections of this chapter, we embark on a comprehensive exploration of issues within the Nkawkaw East District, offering readers a multifaceted insight into this unique local district. Within these pages, you will find a wealth of information concerning the district's geographical characteristics, historical development, economic dynamics, religious diversity, and its cultural tapestry. Our aim is to paint a vivid and informative portrait of Nkawkaw East District, allowing readers to delve deep into its multifarious facets and better appreciate the unique identity it holds within the broader context of our world.

Global and African Youth Demographics

The median age distribution highlights the dominance of young populations in many nations, with 143 out of 234 UN-recognized countries having a median age between 15 and 35 years. Africa, with a median age of 18.8, exemplifies this trend, as seen in Ghana (21 years).¹³ While global median age has risen from 22 to 30.5 (1955–2023), many developing nations remain youth-dominated. These findings emphasize the need for education, employment, and youth empowerment policies to harness demographic potential, ensuring sustainable development and social stability

¹² ISHAYA, Istifanus, “*Mentoring Youth for Mission in the Twenty-First (21st) Century: A Case Study of the Seventh-Day Adventist Church, Nigeria.*” *International Journal of Research and Innovation in Social Science*, vol. 06, no. 09, Jan. 2022, pp. 190–99, doi:10.47772/ijriss.2022.6908.

¹³Worldometer, "World Demographics." Worldometer, accessed July 4, 2024, <https://www.worldometers.info/demographics/world-demographics/>.

while addressing the challenges and opportunities presented by youthful populations worldwide.¹⁴

SDA World Church Demographics

There is an almost striking gender balance among Seventh-day Adventists worldwide, with roughly equal numbers of male and female members (43% male and 57% female). Comparing the online data, this gender balance reflects the church's inclusive and diverse character. Thus, the Adventist global population indicates a wide spread distribution which represents not only inclusivity but diversity of ages, races, and other demographics, which consequently fosters interaction as worldwide community of believers.

The age distribution within the Adventist Church highlights demographic trends among its members. Youth and young adults (0–35 years) constitute 44.34% of the membership, while adults (36–65 years) make up 32.5%, and older members (66+) represent 10.52%. Additionally, 12.64% lacked age data, complicating demographic analysis. With a global membership of 22,234,406 (2022), the church has a significant global influence, shaping diverse communities. The findings emphasize the importance of youth engagement and retention, ensuring generational continuity and sustained growth while addressing demographic gaps for more effective church planning and outreach.

¹⁴ Statista, "Age Distribution of the Population of Sub-Saharan Africa from 2010 to 2021." Statista, accessed March 4, 2024, <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1225664/age-distribution-of-the-population-of-sub-saharan-africa/>.

Ghana SDA Church Demographics

Within the boundaries of Ghana, the Seventh-day Adventist Church is organized into two primary administrative units known as Unions: The Northern Ghana Union Conference (NGUC) and the Southern Ghana Union Conference (SGUC). These Unions collectively represent a substantial number of members. The NGUC alone has 209,937 members, while the SGUC can boast a membership of 191,983. The combination of these two Unions results in a cumulative membership of 401,920 members, indicating the significant presence of the Adventist Church within the country.¹⁵

The Eastern View Ghana Conference (EVGC) gender distribution shows that youth (15–39 years) dominate the population, with 3,112 males and 3,573 females. The older age group (40+) has 2,100 males and 2,715 females, while children (0–14 years) are the smallest group, with 273 males and 352 females. Females outnumber males across all age groups, particularly in the youth (15–39) and older (40+) categories. This data highlights the youth as the largest segment, emphasizing the need for targeted engagement strategies to retain and integrate them into church activities while addressing gender representation in leadership and participation.¹⁶

History of the Nkawkaw East District

The Nkawkaw East District, situated within the Kwahu-West Municipal, is a community deeply rooted in religious traditions, with a significant Christian presence. However, in recent years, a concerning trend has emerged—a decline in youth

¹⁵ Office of Archives, Statistics, and Research, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, April 3, 2023, accessed on 14th October, 2023. <https://documents.adventistarchives.org/Statistics/Other/SDAWorldChurchStatsSummary2022.pdf>.

¹⁶ Ibid.,

participation in church programs. This decline in youth engagement has become a pressing issue within the local setting, characterized by several key issues to be discussed in this section.

The Nkawkaw East District (NkED) of the Seventh-day Adventist Church (SDA) is an administrative arm that reports directly to the Eastern View Ghana Conference (EVGC), which is under the Southern Ghana Union Conference (SGUC) of SDA. NkED shares this political region with Nkawkaw South and North to fulfil the Gospel Commission. The district is made up of ten (10) organized churches and five (5) company churches, and four (4) Sabbath School branches.

According to the local church records, the bulk of members of the local congregations within the Nkawkaw East District are people between the ages of 15 and 39 with slight variation as compared to their adult group.¹⁷ When male and female participation across four different categories were compared, the first category shows minimal participation, with 12 males and 20 females. The second category sees a notable increase, with 163 males and 200 females. The third category maintains growth, with 169 males and 202 females. Across all categories, female participation slightly surpasses male participation.¹⁸

Description of the Issues in the Local Setting

Over the past five years, there is a noticeable decline in the number of young individuals attending church services and participating in various church-related

¹⁷ Ibid.,

¹⁸ Ibid.,

activities by observation. This shift has raised concerns about the sustainability and vibrancy of the local church community. Many young people within the Nkawkaw East District are increasingly disengaged from personal faith nurturing practices, such as prayer, Bible study, and meditation which ultimately affect fellowship, church growth, and witnessing.

The declining interest and involvement of youth in church programs have adverse effects on the overall spiritual health and vibrancy of the 19 local churches of the District. Reduced youth member participation has led to stagnation, limited outreach, and a lack of intergenerational connections within our territory. Similarly, the Nkawkaw East District Churches are not immune to the impact of societal trends, technological advancements, and cultural shifts as many communities globally.

Activities and Responsibilities of Youths in the Church

The activities and responsibilities of youths in the church depends on the local customs of the Nkawkaw East District, and the specific needs of the church community. However, these are some of the common activities and responsibilities that youths often undertake within the Eastern View Ghana Conference Seventh-day Adventist church setting. Here's a detailed breakdown.

Sabbath Worship Services

Adventist youths can actively participate in regular sabbath worship services, which may include singing in the choir, coral groups, quartets, leading congregation singing sessions, or playing musical instruments¹⁹. Youth involvement in leading prayers, particularly during Wednesday prayer meetings or participating in prayer

¹⁹ Matthews, Sherri Anne. "Pedagogical approaches for the female adolescent voice in Southern Baptist youth choir rehearsal," PhD diss., (Boston University, 2024).

bands and groups during public outreach, is common. Some youths may be responsible for reading passages from the Bible during services.

Youth Ministries

The district has dedicated Adventist Youth Ministry (AYM) where young members could meet regularly for Bible study, Spirit of Prophecy Readings and discussions, and fellowship. Youths often take on leadership roles within youth ministries, serving as group leaders, event organizers, or mentors to younger members.²⁰ Youth groups may be involved in community outreach and service projects, such as volunteering at camp meetings, organizing charity drives, or participating in mission trips.

Religious Education

Some youths assist in teaching Sabbath School classes for children, colleagues, and adults helping them learn about the Bible, Christian standards, and values. Youths may serve as volunteers or leaders during vacation Bible school programs for younger children.²¹ In some local churches, older youths serve as informal mentors to guide younger members in their faith journey.

Events and Activities

Organizing and participating in youth retreats, singles retreats, marriage seminars, entrepreneurship and skills acquisition training, education and career guidance and counseling, weekend camps, and survival camps. These events often

²⁰ McKnight, Tim. *Engaging Generation Z: Raising the Bar for Youth Ministry*, (Kregel Publications, 2021).

²¹ McCorquodale, Charlotte. "New Directions in Youth and Young Adult Ministry Leadership: Where Have We Been and More Importantly Where Are We Headed?" *Religions* 12, no. 3 (2021): 146.

focus on spiritual growth, physical development, financial skills, academic and creating avenues for building strong Christian friendships to tone down the distracting negative influences. Youths may attend Christian conferences, conventions, retreats, and seminars, where they can learn, connect with peers, and gain new insights. Organizing social gatherings, game nights, or fellowship events can help build a sense of community and belonging among young Adventist church members.

Service in Church Leadership,

Some churches have youth representatives who participate in church leadership meetings and provide a youthful perspective on decision-making. In some local churches, youths may serve as elders or deacons, taking on roles of responsibility within the Adventist church leadership structure.²²

Mission and Evangelism

Engaging in local, global mission work, and evangelism is a significant responsibility for the Adventist youth.²³ Youth-led outreach teams may focus on sharing the gospel with their community, inviting new members, and nurturing the faith of current churchgoers.²⁴

²² Gantt, David M. "Common Areas to Integrate Young People into Active Church Ministry Roles." (2019).

²³ Williams, Michelet. "Youth Participation in Urban Mission and Ministry." *Journal of Adventist Mission Studies*, vol. 15, no. 1, Jan. 2019, pp. 134–50, doi:10.32597/jams/vol15/iss1/11/.

²⁴ Demo, Kelly, and Barbara McCall, *The Micah Paradigm: Building a Culture of Justice and Mercy in Your Church's Children and Youth Programs*, (Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2022).

Personal Spiritual Growth

Encouraging youths to develop their personal prayer and devotional life as their fundamental responsibility.²⁵ This helps them grow spiritually and deepen their relationship with God, causing them to be rooted and grounded in their faith. Contrary to the parents who do not have time and also pressure their young people to marry outside the faith.²⁶

Church Administration and Technology

Youths with technical skills may help with audio-visual aspects of church services, social media accounts, and maintaining church websites and other digital platforms. Some youths may assist with church administration tasks, such as planning, organizing events, reporting, managing schedules, and handling communications, publicity, and logistics.²⁷

Encouraging Inclusivity

Youths often play a pivotal role in making newcomers feel welcome and included within the church community. Being a mentor and providing support to those who are new to the church. The specific activities and responsibilities of youths in the church can be tailored to the needs and culture of the local congregation.²⁸ The

²⁵ Krause, Neal, et al. "Church Involvement, Spiritual Growth, Meaning in Life, and Health." *Archive for the Psychology of Religion*, vol. 35, no. 2, May 2013, pp. 169–91, doi:10.1163/15736121-12341263.

²⁶ ISHAYA, Istifanus. "*Mentoring Youth for Mission in the Twenty-First (21st) Century: A Case Study of the Seventh-Day Adventist Church, Nigeria.*"

²⁷ Demo, Kelly, and Barbara McCall. *The Micah Paradigm: Building a Culture of Justice and Mercy in Your Church's Children and Youth Programs*, (Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2022).

²⁸ McCorquodale, Charlotte. "New Directions in Youth and Young Adult Ministry Leadership: Where Have We Been and More Importantly Where Are We Headed?" *Religions* 12, no. 3 (2021): 146.

aim is to involve youths within and without in meaningful ways that help them grow in their faith, serve the church community, and actively contribute to the church's mission and ministry.

Effects of the Lack of Youth Participation

When youth disengage from the church and no longer actively participate in its activities and responsibilities, several effects can be observed within both the youth themselves and the church community as a whole. These effects can vary in significance depending on the size and dynamics of the church, the level of youth involvement, and the specific roles they held. Below are some of the common effects:

Loss of Fresh Perspectives

Youth often bring fresh perspectives, innovative ideas, and contemporary insights to the church community.²⁹ When they disengage, the church may miss out on these valuable contributions.

Reduced Energy and Enthusiasm

Youth can inject energy and enthusiasm into church activities and events.³⁰ Their disengagement may lead to a decline in the overall vibrancy and excitement within the church.

²⁹ Branson, Mark Lau, and Juan F. Martinez. *Churches, cultures, and leadership: A practical theology of congregations and ethnicities*. InterVarsity Press, 2023.

³⁰ Denning, Stephanie. "Religious faith, effort and enthusiasm: motivations to volunteer in response to holiday hunger." *cultural geographies* 28, no. 1 (2021): 57-71.

Leadership Gaps

Many youths who were actively involved in leadership roles within the church upon disengaging can result in leadership gaps that need to be filled by others, often older members of the congregation.³¹

Diminished Outreach

Youth are often involved in community outreach, witnessing, and evangelism efforts. Their minimal interest and disengagement can result in reduced effectiveness in reaching out to new members and sharing the gospel with the community. Motivation for others who might have been touched by their ministry will not yield any positive results.

Decreased Inclusivity

Youth play a key role in serving as ushers and welcoming guests and colleagues, newly baptized, and creating an inclusive environment. Their disengagement may result in a less welcoming and inclusive church culture.

Impact on Youth Ministries

Disengagement from youth ministries can lead to a decline in the quality and quantity of programs and events aimed at nurturing the spiritual growth of young members.³²

³¹ Florida, David Callaby. "Non Attending Young People: Bridging the Gap for a More Inclusive Church." *Journal of Youth and Theology* 1, no. aop (2023): 1-22.

³² Denning, Stephanie. "Religious faith, effort and enthusiasm: motivations to volunteer in response to holiday hunger." *cultural geographies* 28, no. 1 (2021): 57-71.

Loss of Technological Expertise

If youths with technical skills disengage, the church may face challenges in managing its online presence, audio-visual aspects of services, musical, and technology-related tasks.³³

Implications for Future Leadership

The disengagement of youth can affect the pipeline of future church leaders. According to Barna's research, youth want to be taken seriously today and not some distant future leadership role.³⁴ Many leaders often emerge from the ranks of actively involved youth.

Community and Fellowship Impact

Disengaged youth may experience a sense of disconnection from the church community, which can lead to feelings of isolation and loneliness.³⁵

Impact on Personal Faith

Youth who disengage from the church may experience a weakening of their faith, spiritual growth, and intimacy with God.³⁶

³³ Branson, Mark Lau, and Juan F. Martinez. *Churches, cultures, and leadership: A practical theology of congregations and ethnicities*, (InterVarsity Press, 2023).

³⁴ Barna Group, "5 Reasons Millennials Stay Connected to Church," Barna Group Website, September 17, 2013, accessed December 5, 2024, <https://www.barna.org/barna-update/millennials/635-5-reasons-millennials-stay-connected-to-church#.Vmr2YV4spLM>

³⁵ Denning, Stephanie. "Religious faith, effort and enthusiasm: motivations to volunteer in response to holiday hunger." *cultural geographies* 28, no. 1 (2021): 57-71.

³⁶ Florida, David Callaby. "Non Attending Young People: Bridging the Gap for a More Inclusive Church." *Journal of Youth and Theology* 1, no. aop (2023): 1-22.

Generational Disconnect

Disengagement can contribute to a generational disconnect, making it challenging for older and younger church members to relate to each other and collaborate effectively to accomplish the mission and vision of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Loss of Diversity and Inclusivity

Youth often bring diversity to the church community.³⁷ Diverse spiritual gifts, talent, skills, and experiences to bear. However, their disengagement may result in a less diverse and dynamic church environment.

Addressing the effects of youth disengagement requires a proactive approach from the church leadership and community. It may involve efforts to understand the reasons for disengagement, creating more appealing and relevant youth programs, fostering intergenerational connections and inclusivity, and encouraging an open dialogue between youth and the church leadership. Attracting, re-engaging, and retaining disengaged youth is essential for maintaining the vitality and relevance of the church within an ever-changing society.

Youth Interest and Church Growth

The declining youth engagement in church activities significantly affects church growth and mission. Three main factors come into play: declining attendance and membership, reduced effectiveness of evangelism and outreach, and financial challenges. With increased youth dropouts where we often capture a set of

³⁷ Branson, Mark Lau, and Juan F. Martinez. *Churches, cultures, and leadership: A practical theology of congregations and ethnicities*, (InterVarsity Press, 2023).

professionals and intellectuals. When overall attendance drops, it potentially discourages both existing and potential new members.

Youthful members are essential for effective outreach and bring fresh perspectives; their absence hampers the church's mission. Financially, overall contributions may decrease, straining the church's budget and limiting its ability to grow and fulfill its mission. In summary, declining youth interest can affect attendance, outreach, and finances, ultimately impacting the church's growth and mission.

Attendance and Membership

As youth participation wanes, overall church attendance may decline.³⁸ Youth often represent a substantial portion of the congregation. A reduction in youth attendance can lead to smaller congregations during services, worship events, and church activities. When youth disengage from the church, it can lead to attrition in church membership. Some youth may leave the church altogether, resulting in a loss of membership.

A decline in youth attendance and membership can create a negative perception of the church's vitality, especially among potential newcomers. It may signal to the community that the church is not connecting with the next generation, making it less attractive for new members. A lack of youth engagement can disrupt intergenerational interactions within the church. This may result in a less diverse and dynamic congregation, affecting the church's ability to minister effectively to a wide range of age groups.

³⁸ Denning, Stephanie, "Religious faith, effort and enthusiasm: motivations to volunteer in response to holiday hunger," *cultural geographies* 28, no. 1 (2021): 57-71.

In Evangelism and Outreach Efforts

Youth are often actively engaged in missions. The one year in mission program, had dedicated young people who sacrificed one year out of their studies and schedule to serve as missionaries. Such enthusiasm became so instrumental in reaching out to several communities in a short time ministering to both the unchurched or those who were already seeking faith. When youth are disengaged, the church's outreach efforts may lose effectiveness.³⁹

Financial Implications

Financial stewardship as taught in scripture and embraced by the District is considered a sign of a person's loyalty to God. Unlike taking care of the body temple, wise use of time, talent, and influence, youth disengagement often affects financial strength of the District.⁴⁰ This can further affect the church's ability to meet its budget, support the needy, outreach activities, mission efforts, and maintain its facilities and programs. In effect, decreased financial contributions from the youthful working class can lead to budgetary challenges. Thus, the church may need to reallocate, trim mission activities, cut back on other programs, or face financial strain

In conclusion, the declining interest of youth in church activities has a profound impact on church planting, nurture, growth, and the overall mission of the Seventh-day Adventist church. Attendance, membership, and the church's capacity to engage with newer generations is negatively affected. It can also limit the effectiveness of outreach and mission efforts and cause financial difficulties.

³⁹ Florida, David Callaby. "Non Attending Young People: Bridging the Gap for a More Inclusive Church." *Journal of Youth and Theology* 1, no. aop (2023): 1-22.

⁴⁰ Denning, Stephanie. "Religious faith, effort and enthusiasm: motivations to volunteer in response to holiday hunger." *cultural geographies* 28, no. 1 (2021): 57-71.

Addressing these difficulties will take deliberate efforts to re-engage young people, adapt to their changing needs, and instil a sense of ownership, belonging, and purpose in the church community. When done correctly, such efforts can revitalise the church's development, fulfilment of its mission and vision.

Influences on Youth's Church Program Decline

The falling zeal and involvement of young persons in church activities is a complex issue rooted in the intricate interconnections of socioeconomic determinants, cultural developments, and the pervasive effects of modernity and secularisation. It is essential to investigate each of these variables in-depth in order to have a deeper understanding of the complex network of causes that collectively lead to the reduction in adolescent participation within the church. This thorough analysis will clarify the fundamental causes of young people's declining interest in church programming and offer insightful strategy and recommendation for successfully resolving this issue.

Socio-economic factors

Many youths today face increased demands on their time due to academic pursuits, part-time jobs, extracurricular activities, and other commitments.⁴¹ The pressure to excel in their studies and build their careers can leave little time for church involvement, resulting in declining participation. Economic challenges may lead young adults to prioritize work or other income-generating activities over church involvement. Financial stress can overshadow the desire to participate in church programs and activities. Youth often relocate for educational or job opportunities.

⁴¹ Ibid.,

Frequent moves can disrupt their sense of belonging to a specific church community, making them less likely to engage actively in church activities.

Cultural Influences

Cultural shifts over time can lead to changes in values and priorities. As societies evolve, certain traditional religious values may lose their significance, affecting the motivation for church participation among the youth.⁴² A broader cultural trend, secularization, involves a decreasing influence of religion on societal norms and institutions. In increasingly secular cultures, youth may perceive church activities as less relevant to their lives. In culturally diverse communities, youth may be exposed to a variety of belief systems and worldviews. This exposure can lead to greater religious pluralism and potentially reduced allegiance to a single faith tradition.

Modernization and Secularization

Modernization, particularly the widespread availability of technology and the internet, has introduced numerous distractions. Youth may be drawn to online entertainment, social media, and virtual interactions, which can compete with church activities for their time and attention. Modernization often comes with a shift towards a more secular worldview, emphasizing rationality, science, and individualism.⁴³ This shift can lead youth to question or reconsider traditional religious beliefs and practices. Modern consumer culture promotes materialism and instant gratification,

⁴² Florida, David Callaby, "Non Attending Young People: Bridging the Gap for a More Inclusive Church," *Journal of Youth and Theology* 1, no. aop (2023): 1-22.

⁴³ Denning, Stephanie. "Religious faith, effort and enthusiasm: motivations to volunteer in response to holiday hunger." *cultural geographies* 28, no. 1 (2021): 57-71.

which can hinder a focus on spiritual matters. Youth may prioritize consumerist pursuits over church involvement.

The combined impact of these factors is that many youths perceive traditional church activities as less relevant, less engaging, or less compatible with their changing lifestyles and worldviews. As a result, they have become less interested in participating in church programs. Addressing the declining interest and participation of youth in church activities would require the church to adapt its approach to better resonate with the contemporary context. This could involve creating a counselling model as an Intentional Spiritual Mentorship program that accommodates busy schedules, engaging in meaningful dialogue with youth about their life challenges, questions, and doubts, while emphasizing the relevance of faith in a rapidly changing world.

Aside from these facts, Roman literature addresses the decline in church attendance among youth aged 14 to 18 following Confirmation in an Episcopal Church in Louisiana. It identifies a concerning pattern: Confirmation, which is intended to affirm Christian faith and commitment, is instead marking a turning point for youth disengagement.⁴⁴

Unlike the tradition of confirmation, Michael Kiju, in his paper, discusses the decline in membership at St. Peter's Episcopal Church, with youth being the most affected group. He further asserts that the decline threatens the future of the church's ministry, which he attributes to the failure of leadership to prepare youth as future

⁴⁴ Roman D Roldan. *Evaluating Post-Confirmation Church Attendance At a Rural Church In Louisiana*. Trinity Episcopal School for Ministry (Ambridge, PA). <https://rim.ir.atla.com/concern/etds/025d31e7-8f51-40ab-9ef7-10b05a8f04a0?q=youth%20and%20church%20attendance>.

ministry leaders.⁴⁵ Similarly, Enderle's research highlights the importance of intentional leadership, holistic programming, and outreach efforts in addressing declining church attendance and fostering spiritual growth. He provides a framework of actionable strategies that can inform the design and implementation of youth engagement programs in Nkawkaw East.⁴⁶

This literature describes the development of a sports evangelism strategy for Airline Baptist Church in Bossier City, Louisiana. The project aimed to use sports as a tool for intentional evangelism by involving staff, lay leaders, and experts in crafting the strategy. The outcome was a four-part strategy designed to integrate evangelism into the church's sports ministry.⁴⁷

Expected Impact

When completed, this project which intends to design a strategy to attract, re-engage, retain, and increase youth participation in church programs will have several meaningful impacts on the Nkawkaw East District, and Eastern View Ghana Conference at large. The research findings will equip church leaders with data-driven insights into the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and treats surrounding youth engagement, as evidenced in the study by Johnson⁴⁸.

⁴⁵ Michael Kiju Paul. *The Role of Transformational Leadership In Preparing Youth As Future Church Leaders*.<https://rim.ir.atla.com/concern/etds/101c750e-6eb2-4f2a-8225-1307fdf88f7f?q=youth%20and%20church%20attendance>.

⁴⁶ Enderle, Phillip Mark. *Congregational Renewal and Revitalization: a Case Study of Hope Lutheran Church, Fond Du Lac, Wisconsin*.<https://rim.ir.atla.com/concern/etds/c2d0d41f-fab7-4c8a-90a8-5405660d6bf9?q=youth%20and%20church%20attendance>.

⁴⁷ Young, Terry. *Developing a Sports Evangelism Strategy for Airline Baptist Church, Bossier City, Louisiana*.<https://rim.ir.atla.com/concern/etds/327e783b-6920-484f-b677-2efdff9a5354?q=youth%20and%20church%20attendance>.

⁴⁸ Johnson, Rebecca, Diana Ingram, Paris Davis, and Simon Gordon. "Promoting public good and wellness from the perspective of a midwestern Regional Baptist Church community-led research engagement partnership." *Metropolitan Universities* 31, no. 3 (2020): 44-69.

This information will enable them to make more informed decisions towards the future implementation of the proposed strategies for increasing youth participation. The project's insights will allow for the development of tailored strategies that is specific to the Nkawkaw East District, taking into account its unique cultural, social, and spiritual dynamics.

The research contributed to the overall health and vitality of the local church community. A more active and engaged youth population can invigorate the congregation, enhance worship experiences, and foster a sense of community, as evident by Hodge.⁴⁹ And as a result, facilitate better intergenerational relationships and connections within the church. This bridge between youth and older generations can lead to a stronger sense of unity and mentorship, enriching the spiritual experiences of both groups. Increased youth participation can also boost the church's outreach efforts. Younger members often bring fresh perspectives and ideas for community engagement and mission work, potentially expanding the church's impact beyond its walls.

As youth become more actively involved in church programs and personal devotion, the project has the potential to promote spiritual growth among the youth population of the local district. This development benefits not just the youth, but also the whole spiritual well-being of the congregation. The research project's success can serve as a model for other churches and districts in the conference, giving useful insights and best practices for promoting youth engagement. This could spark similar

⁴⁹ Hodge, David R. "Religious congregations: An important vehicle for alleviating human suffering and fostering wellness." *Journal of Religion & Spirituality in Social Work: Social Thought* 39, no. 2 (2020): 119-137.

projects around the conference. A lively, energetic, and involved local church community can have a favorable impact on the whole conference.

A stronger, more engaged districts within the EVGC is likely to benefit the conference's overall goal and objectives. Provide an example for other districts in the conference to emulate, and thereby contribute to the conference's overall growth, unity, and spiritual vigour. As a result, the completion of this research project will make a significant difference within the conference by addressing an immediate concern and providing practical solutions.

Summary and Conclusion

Amidst these problems and complexities, there is a significant research gap that this initiative intends to fill. Despite the urgency of the issue and its importance to the Nkawkaw East District, there is a lack of comprehensive research that systematically investigates the factors influencing the decline in youth engagement in church programs, the district's broader implications, and the relationship between personal devotion and church involvement.

The available literature on youth engagement in church programs is generally concerned with global or national trends, frequently ignoring the specific local context of the Nkawkaw East District. Furthermore, while some studies discuss religious and sociological aspects of teenage disengagement, there is a dearth of in-depth research that takes into account the district's unique dynamics and suggests context-sensitive remedies.

As a result, the research gap that this project aims to fill is the lack of a localised and theologically informed investigation into how to boost youth involvement in church programming in the Nkawkaw East District. The research aims to address this gap by providing practical insights, strategies, and theological

frameworks that can reinvigorate youth involvement and foster a deeper connection between youth, adults, leadership, and the local church community, allowing them to contribute their fair share to the district's spiritual growth and vitality.

CHAPTER 4

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a mixed methods approach, integrating both quantitative and qualitative research methods to obtain a comprehensive understanding of youth participation in church programs and to guide the development of an effective program framework. The quantitative data were gathered through structured questionnaires, while the qualitative data were obtained through semi-structured interviews.¹ The integration of both methods allowed for a more robust analysis by triangulating the findings and capturing both statistical patterns and personal experiences.²

This mixed methods approach was chosen because of the complex nature of the research problem, requiring both measurable data and contextual understanding to inform program design. The cross-sectional survey design was used for the data collection phase, allowing data to be collected from different categories of participants at a single point in time. This design was appropriate for assessing the current levels of youth participation and identifying influencing factors.³ Following the collected data, the study adopted a project development design, which involved

¹ Saunders, M. N. K., Adrian Thornhill, and Philip Lewis, *Research Methods for Business Students*, 8th ed. (Harlow, United Kingdom: Pearson, 2019).

² Creswell, John W., and J. David Creswell. *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*, 5th ed., (SAGE Publications Inc., 2018).

³ Bryman, Alan, *Social Research Methods*. Fifth edition, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).

using the findings to inform the creation of a structured intervention—namely, the program framework to increase youth participation. This design aligned with the practical goal of the study to develop a relevant and implementable church-based program.⁴

This study employed a mixed methods approach to further understand youth involvement in church programming. A sample population of 1,012 people in the Nkawkaw East District were surveyed using a cross-sectional design. Also, for the purpose of analysis, a sample size of 101 was used. Focus group interviews and self-administered questionnaires were used to gather data from respondents. For qualitative insights, thematic analysis was employed, and descriptive statistics were employed for quantitative data. Research Design

This chapter discusses further the research approach used in the study. It describes in fully the research design, methodologies, and procedures for collecting and analysing data. The chapter begins by going over the research design, which specifies the general strategy to the investigation. It then discusses the research methodologies used to conduct a thorough investigation of the topic under consideration. The study area, Nkawkaw East District, is explained to offer context.

Furthermore, the target population and sample techniques are described, including how participants were chosen for the study. The chapter also discusses the data gathering tools used to gather pertinent information, as well as the procedures required to assure accuracy and reliability. The data analysis techniques used to interpret the acquired data are then discussed. Finally, the ethical concerns used

⁴ Sidani, Souraya, and Carrie Jo Braden, *Nursing and Health Interventions: Design, Evaluation and Implementation*. Second edition, (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley-Blackwell, 2021).

throughout the research process are discussed to ensure conformity with ethical research standards

Target Population and Sampling Procedure

The research focused on primary and principal stakeholders engaged in church programs within the Nkawkaw East District. The target population consisted of 1,012 members, which included 3 Church Pastors, 63 Elders, 182 Youth Leaders, and 764 Youth Members.⁵ The selection of these groups is based on their direct involvement in youth programs, either as decision-makers or participants, rendering them crucial sources of information for evaluating youth participation levels and formulating an effective intervention.

A systematic random sampling technique was employed in this study to select participants from a total target population of 1,012 individuals, which included church pastors, elders, youth leaders, youth members, and parents/guardians within the Nkawkaw East District of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. A sampling percentage of 10% was applied, resulting in a sample size of 101 respondents. Systematic random sampling was deemed appropriate for this study because it allowed for the selection of participants at regular intervals from an ordered list, thereby minimizing selection bias and enhancing the representativeness of the sample.⁶

Moreover, systematic sampling was efficient and easy to implement within the church context, where member registers and group listings were available and

⁵ Richard Boateng, District Pastor, Nkawkaw East District, interviewed by Kwame Onwona-Simpe, November 14, 2024. Interview on District Church Membership Groupings. Kwame' Oral History Collection, Eastern View Ghana Conference, Eastern Region, Ghana.

⁶ Taherdoost, Hamed, *Sampling Methods in Research Methodology; How to Choose a Sampling Technique for Research*, 2018. [S.l.]: SSRN. <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3205035>.

accessible. The reason for adopting a 10% sampling ratio was influenced by its practicality, resource considerations, and the goal of maintaining proportional representation of the different categories of respondents. According to Israel, sample sizes ranging between 5% and 10% are generally acceptable in social research when dealing with relatively homogeneous populations and when a high level of precision is not critical.⁷

Data Collection Instruments

This study employed two primary data collection instruments: self-administered questionnaires and an interview guide for focus group discussions. These instruments were selected based on their ability to effectively capture both quantitative and qualitative data from diverse groups within the Nkawkaw East District of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

The questionnaire was the principal instrument for collecting quantitative data. It was structured and composed of both closed-ended and limited open-ended questions. The instrument was administered in two formats: paper-based for respondents with limited access to digital devices and online (via Google Forms) for technologically literate respondents, according to Baloyi, after the Covid-19 internet usage and mobile phone access are rising in sub-Saharan Africa⁸ where children above five (5) easily gain access.⁹ This dual approach ensured inclusivity and

⁷ Israel, G. D., *Determining Sample Size*. ([Gainesville, Fla.]: University of Florida Cooperative Extension Service, Institute of Food and Agriculture Sciences, EDIS, 1992). Accessed 18 January, 2025 <http://purl.fcla.edu/UF/lib/PD006>.

⁸ Baloyi, Ezekiel, and Joseph Khamadi Pali, "Being a Digital Church in the Transition to post Covid-19 pandemic era." *Pharos Journal of Theology* 104, no. 5 (2023).

⁹ Ghana Statistical Service, Household Survey on ICT in Ghana: Abridged Version, March 2020, [https://statsghana.gov.gh/gssmain/fileUpload/pressrelease/Household%20Survey%20on%20ICT%20in%20Ghana%20\(Abridged\)%20new%20\(1\).pdf](https://statsghana.gov.gh/gssmain/fileUpload/pressrelease/Household%20Survey%20on%20ICT%20in%20Ghana%20(Abridged)%20new%20(1).pdf)

increased the response rate across different demographic groups.¹⁰ The questionnaire was particularly suitable for youth members, youth leaders, church elders, and parents, as it allowed them to provide information at their convenience while ensuring anonymity, which can enhance the honesty of responses.¹¹

Despite its strengths, the questionnaire method has limitations. It restricts the depth of responses due to its structured nature and may result in response bias if questions are misinterpreted by respondents.¹² However, these limitations were mitigated through pilot testing and the inclusion of brief instructions and clarifications within the questionnaire itself.

The interview guide was used solely for focus group discussions, not for individual interviews. This approach allowed the researcher to explore in depth the collective views of specific groups, such as church elders, youth leaders, and parents, on youth participation and church programming. The interview guide included open-ended questions, designed to facilitate discussion, generate ideas, and uncover shared perceptions and group dynamics.¹³ It provided a platform for participants to express experiences, challenges, and suggestions in a more natural and interactive setting.

The use of focus group discussions was advantageous in capturing contextual and emotional dimensions of the research topic that might not emerge through questionnaires alone. However, this method also posed challenges, such as dominance

¹⁰ Creswell, John W., and J. David Creswell. *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*.

¹¹ Bryman, Alan, *Social Research Methods*.

¹² Saunders, M. N. K., Adrian Thornhill, and Philip Lewis, *Research Methods for Business Students*.

¹³ Krueger, Richard A., and Mary Anne Casey, *Focus Groups: A Practical Guide for Applied Research*. 5th edition, (Thousand Oaks, California: SAGE, 2015).

by outspoken participants, potential groupthink, and difficulties in coordinating schedules for group meetings. These challenges were addressed by using trained facilitators, ensuring a safe and respectful discussion environment, and selecting homogenous groups to encourage open communication.¹⁴

Data Collection Procedures

The data collection for this study took place over a two-month period, from 12th August 2024 to 15th October 2024. It involved both paper-based and electronic methods to ensure the broadest possible participation from the youth in Nkawkaw East District. To facilitate this process, the researcher engaged a team of trained assistants who helped distribute and collect the data. Prior to the actual data collection, a training session was conducted three days before the fieldwork began. The training focused on the proper administration of the questionnaires and conducting interviews in a consistent manner.

Following the training, the researcher carried out community entry in the churches within one week. This was an essential step for establishing rapport and gaining approval from the church leaders and the youth members for participation in the study. The data collection process was executed through two approaches: paper-based questionnaires and online surveys. Paper questionnaires were distributed to participants who were not as familiar with or did not have easy access to the internet, ensuring inclusivity of the sample. Simultaneously, an online version of the questionnaire was made available to participants who were comfortable using

¹⁴ Morgan, David L., *Basic and Advanced Focus Groups*, (Los Angeles: SAGE, 2019). Accessed on 14 February, 2025. http://methods.sagepub.com/book/basic-and-advanced-focus-groups?utm_source=ss360&utm_medium=discovery-provider.

electronic devices. This dual approach helped maximize the reach and facilitated the collection of data from a diverse group of youth.

In addition, the questionnaires were used to explore what different groups, including youth members, youth leaders, elders, and pastors' opinions, perceptions, and experiences. Each group consisted of a maximum of 10 participants to allow for meaningful and in-depth discussions. The interviews helped to gather qualitative insights into the perceptions and experiences of the participants regarding youth participation in church programs. This approach was designed to maximize the response rate and ensure comprehensive data collection within the two-month period. The data collection was completed within the two-month timeframe, ensuring that all the youth participants were given adequate time to respond.

Validity Testing of Instruments

In the context of this research project, validity refers to the extent to which the data collection instruments accurately measure the concepts they were designed to assess.¹⁵ To ensure content validity, the self-administered questionnaire and interview guides were reviewed by experts in the fields of youth ministry, church programs, and social research. These expert reviewers examined the instruments to confirm that the questions adequately addressed the key components of youth participation in church programs and personal faith nurturing. Based on their feedback, the researcher revised the instruments to enhance their relevance and clarity.

Each question was designed to measure specific constructs related to youth participation and personal faith, ensuring that the instruments captured the intended

¹⁵ Kimberlin, Carole L., and Almut G. Winterstein. "Validity and reliability of measurement instruments used in research." *American journal of health-system pharmacy* 65, no. 23 (2008): 2276-2284.

variables. Additionally, face validity was achieved through a pilot test conducted with a small sample of youth participants and church leaders.¹⁶ This allowed the researcher to assess whether the questions were understood as intended and relevant to the topic. Feedback from the pilot test was incorporated to refine the instruments for clarity and ease of understanding.

Reliability and Trustworthiness of Instruments

Reliability refers to the consistency of the results produced by the data collection instruments. To ensure the internal consistency of the questionnaire used for the quantitative phase of the study, a reliability test was conducted using Cronbach's alpha coefficient.¹⁷ The instrument was pre-tested with a group of respondents drawn from Nkawkaw North District, a nearby Seventh-day Adventist Church District that shared similar demographic and organizational characteristics with the Nkawkaw East District, but was not included in the main study. This pre-testing enabled the researcher to identify and address any ambiguous or inconsistent items in the questionnaire before full deployment.

The Cronbach's alpha coefficient obtained from the pilot study was 0.79. This figure exceeds the commonly accepted threshold of 0.70, indicating that the questionnaire had acceptable internal consistency and that the items measured the same underlying constructs reliably. According to Tavakol, a Cronbach's alpha value of 0.70 or higher is generally considered acceptable for ensuring the reliability of

¹⁶ Aoun, Salah G., Tarek Y. El Ahmadi, Najib E. El Tecele, Marc R. Daou, Joseph G. Adel, Christine S. Park, H. Hunt Batjer, and Bernard R. Bendok. "A pilot study to assess the construct and face validity of the Northwestern Objective Microanastomosis Assessment Tool." *Journal of neurosurgery* 123, no. 1 (2015): 103-109.

¹⁷ Bonett, Douglas G., and Thomas A. Wright. "Cronbach's alpha reliability: Interval estimation, hypothesis testing, and sample size planning." *Journal of organizational behavior* 36, no. 1 (2015): 3-15.

instruments in social science research.¹⁸ Therefore, the reliability of the questionnaire was deemed statistically sound for the purpose of this study.

In addition to ensuring the reliability of the quantitative instrument, the study also assessed the trustworthiness of the qualitative data collection tool, namely the interview guide used for focus group discussions. The trustworthiness of the guide was evaluated based on the qualitative research criteria of credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability as outlined by Lincoln.¹⁹ To assess credibility, a pilot focus group discussion was conducted with a small group of youth leaders and church elders from a neighbouring district. During this session, participants were given the opportunity to verify and clarify their responses, a process known as member checking, which ensured that their views were accurately captured.

Dependability was addressed by maintaining detailed documentation of how the data were collected, analysed, and interpreted.²⁰ This audit trail demonstrated that the procedures followed were consistent and replicable. Confirmability was enhanced by ensuring that the researcher's personal biases were minimized and that the data analysis was grounded in the actual responses from participants.²¹ Transferability was supported by providing a rich description of the context in which the study was conducted and the characteristics of the participants, thereby allowing future researchers or practitioners to assess the applicability of the findings to similar church

¹⁸ Tavakol, Mohsen, and Reg Dennick. "Making sense of Cronbach's alpha." *International journal of medical education* 2 (2011): 53.

¹⁹ Guba, Egon G., and Yvonna S. Lincoln. "Competing paradigms in qualitative research." *Handbook of qualitative research* 2, no. 163-194 (1994): 105.

²⁰ Cope, Diane G. "Methods and meanings: Credibility and trustworthiness of qualitative research." *Number 1/January 2014* 41, no. 1 (2013): 89-91.

²¹ Ahmed, Sirwan Khalid. "The pillars of trustworthiness in qualitative research." *Journal of Medicine, Surgery, and Public Health* 2 (2024): 100051.

environments.²² These measures confirmed that both the questionnaire and the interview guide were appropriately tested and met acceptable standards of reliability and trustworthiness for the purpose of this paper.

Data Analysis

The data collected for this study was analysed using both quantitative and qualitative techniques to address the research questions and objectives. The quantitative data, derived from the paper-based and online questionnaires, were processed and analysed using statistical software such as SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences). This allowed for the examination of patterns and trends related to youth participation in church programs and personal faith nurturing. Descriptive statistics, such as frequencies and percentages were used to summarize the responses and provide a clear picture of the current state of youth involvement.

Using the interview guide, additional qualitative data gathered from the focused group discussions which were analysed using thematic analysis. Thematic analysis involved identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns (themes) within the data. This was done by first transcribing all the group discussions, followed by coding the responses based on emerging themes and categories relevant to the research objectives. The qualitative data provided deeper insights into the factors influencing youth participation, the perceptions of church leaders, and the challenges that the youth faced in engaging with church programs. Both the quantitative and qualitative data were integrated to offer a comprehensive understanding of the issues and to

²² Nyirenda, Lot, Meghan Bruce Kumar, Sally Theobald, Malabika Sarker, Musonda Simwinga, Moses Kumwenda, Cheryl Johnson et al. "Using research networks to generate trustworthy qualitative public health research findings from multiple contexts." *BMC medical research methodology* 20 (2020): 1-10.

provide a well-rounded analysis of the strategies needed to increase youth participation in church programs in the Nkawkaw East District.

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

This study followed essential research ethics principles to protect participants' rights and maintain the credibility of the findings. All respondents provided informed consent after being briefed on the study's purpose, the nature of their participation, and the intended use of the findings. Participation was voluntary, and individuals were informed that they could withdraw from the study at any point without facing consequences (See Appendix A – Questionnaire).

To ensure confidentiality and privacy, the identities of respondents were anonymised, and all collected data were securely stored and utilised exclusively for academic purposes. Furthermore, approval was obtained from the leadership of the Nkawkaw East District SDA Church, confirming that the research was consistent with the church's values and policies. The study maintained ethical considerations, including fairness, respect, and honesty, thereby reinforcing its integrity and ensuring the protection of participants' rights.

ANALYSIS OF PRE-PROGRAM DATA

Socio-demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

Aside socio-demographic features of the respondents who participated in the study, other characteristics that were examined include sex, age group, level of education, occupation, baptismal status, and leadership roles within the church characteristics. These variables were analysed to offer insights into the composition of the study population and to identify patterns that may influence participation in

church-related activities. Table 1 below provides a summary of the distribution of respondents across these demographic categories.

TABLE 1: SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF RESPONDENTS

Variable		(N=101)	
		N	%
Sex	Male	45	44.4
	Female	56	55.6
Age Group	Under 20	5	5.1
	20-24	42	41.3
	30-35	37	37.0
	36+	17	16.6
Educational Level	Senior High School	11	11.1
	Tertiary Education	78	77.8
	Others	12	11.1
Occupation	Student	34	33.3
	Employed (full-time)	45	44.4
	Self-employed	22	22.3
Baptismal Status	Baptized	67	66.7
	Non-baptized	34	33.3
Leadership Position	Pastor	1	0.99
	Church Elder	6	5.94
	Youth Leaders	18	17.82
	Youth Members	76	75.25

Source: Field Work (2024)

Considering the table 1 above, the socio-demographic data of the respondents (N = 101) revealed a balanced representation across key variables relevant to the study. In terms of sex, female respondents constituted the majority (55.6%), while males made up 44.4%. This suggests a slightly higher participation or representation

of females in the study sample, which may reflect broader gender participation trends within the church.

Age-wise, the largest proportion of respondents (41.3%) fell within the 20–24 years age group, followed closely by those aged 30–35 years (37.0%). Only 5.1% of respondents were below 20 years, while 16.6% were above 36 years. This indicates that the study sample was predominantly composed of young adults, which is consistent with the focus on youth participation in church programs.

With respect to educational background, the majority of respondents (77.8%) had attained tertiary-level education, while 11.1% had completed senior high school. This high educational profile suggests a literate and potentially more informed youth population capable of engaging with structured church programs and leadership activities.

Occupational analysis revealed that 44.4% were full-time employees, 33.3% were students, and 22.3% were self-employed. This reflects a diverse occupational mix and implies that the study captured views from both economically active youth and those still in education. The analysis of baptismal status showed that 66.7% of the respondents were baptized members of the church, whereas 33.3% were not. This highlights the importance of designing church programs that are inclusive of both baptized and unbaptized youth.

Finally, in terms of leadership roles, a significant majority of respondents identified as youth members (75.25%), with smaller proportions serving as youth leaders (17.82%), church elders (5.94%), and pastors (0.99%). This distribution reinforces the centrality of ordinary youth members in church participation and the need to empower this group through mentorship and leadership development programs.

Perceptions of Youth Participation in Church Programs

This section presents and analyses the perceptions of youth and other stakeholders regarding youth participation in church programs within the Nkawkaw East District of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. The data highlight experiences related to leadership training, opportunities for involvement, and perceptions of responsibility for current levels of engagement. Understanding these perceptions is crucial for identifying gaps in participation and informing the design of appropriate intervention programs. Table 2 below summarizes the perceptions of respondents on various aspects of youth involvement in church activities.

TABLE 2: PERCEPTION OF YOUTH TOWARDS THE YOUTH PARTICIPATION IN CHURCH PROGRAMS

Variable	(N=101)	
		%
Attendance of Church Leadership Training	Once	16.7
	More than once	66.7
	Not any	16.7
Election to Church Leadership Position Since Baptism	Once	0.0
	Twice	0.0
	More than twice	100
Perception of Youth as Important Members of the Church	Yes	100
	No	0.0
	Not sure	0.0
Perception of Youth Consideration and Participation Opportunities in Church Activities	Yes	83.3
	No	16.7
Perception of Youth Participation in Church Programs and Activities	Yes	33.3
	No	66.7
Perception of Youth Responsibility for Low Participation in Church Programs	Yes	33.3
	No	50.0
	Not sure	16.7
Satisfaction with Involvement and Participation in Church Programs	Yes	100
	No	0.0

Source: Field Work (2024)

The analysis of Table 2 revealed several key insights. A substantial proportion of respondents (66.7%) had attended church leadership training more than once, and an additional 16.7% had attended at least once. Only 16.7% reported never having participated in such training. These findings suggest that leadership development efforts have reached the majority of respondents. However, the existence of a minority who have never attended such programs indicates that access to or awareness of these opportunities may not be evenly distributed among all youth, which could affect their confidence or readiness to participate in church leadership.

Interestingly, 100% of respondents indicated that they had been elected into church leadership positions more than twice. This result implies a high level of leadership retention and possibly limited turnover, which could hinder the involvement of new or less-experienced members. The findings align with concerns raised in such as John C. Maxwell who found that when we grow leaders it has a positive consequential effect on the organization conversely prolonged retention of leadership positions within churches may lead to disillusionment among emerging youth leaders seeking opportunities to serve.”²³

The data further revealed that all respondents (100%) agreed that the youth constitute an important part of the church. This collective affirmation reflects a positive valuation of the youth within the church community. A strong majority (83.3%) also believed that youth are considered important and are given space to participate in programs, though 16.7% disagreed. This suggests that, while efforts toward inclusivity exist, there remain segments of the youth who feel excluded from decision-making or programming.

²³ Maxwell, John C. *Developing the leaders around you: How to help others reach their full potential*. HarperCollins Leadership, 1995.

The findings from the table indicates a clear disconnect between perceived value and actual involvement. Despite the recognition of youth importance, only 33.3% believed that youth participation in church programs was adequate, while 66.7% disagreed. Hence, it be observed from the responses that many youths in Ghanaian churches feel underutilized and disengaged due to a lack of responsive programming and leadership mentoring.

Finally, when asked whether the youth themselves were to blame for their low participation, responses were mixed: 33.3% agreed, 50% disagreed, and 16.7% were unsure. These results point to the complexity of the issue, suggesting that youth disengagement may stem from a combination of internal factors (e.g., personal commitment, peer influence) and external factors (e.g., leadership style, program relevance). These findings support arguments in Regnerus research who stressed that youth participation is not solely a matter of attitude, but is also shaped by the church's ability to design appealing and meaningful programs that has psychosocial influences and can affect the emotional, physical health, and behaviours.²⁴

In conclusion, the analysis of perceptions regarding youth participation in church programs revealed a high level of awareness of the importance of youth, and considerable exposure to leadership training. However, significant concerns still remain regarding the adequacy of participation and access to leadership opportunities. The data show that while the youth are valued in principle, this does not consistently translate into active engagement or representation in church programs.

The findings underscore the need for intentional strategies that promote inclusivity, mentorship, and shared leadership within church structures. These results

²⁴ Regnerus, Mark D. "Religion and positive adolescent outcomes: A review of research and theory." *Review of religious research* (2003): 394-413.

are consistent with previous research findings and provide a solid foundation for the design of a targeted youth mentorship and leadership development program, as discussed in Chapter Five.

Factors Influencing Youth Declining Interest in Church Programs

This section presents the findings on perceived factors that contribute to the declining interest and participation of youth in church programs. The data were obtained from respondents who assessed the extent to which various socio-cultural and personal factors influenced youth disinterest in church activities. Table 3 presents the summary of responses, categorizing each factor as either influential or not influential based on respondent’ perceptions.

TABLE 3: FACTORS INFLUENCING YOUTH DECLINING INTEREST IN CHURCH PROGRAMS

Factors	Not Influential %	Influential %
Urbanization (City lifestyle, lack of time)	7.69	92.31
Technological Advancement (Social media, entertainment, distractions)	23.08	76.92
Changing Family Dynamics (Parental influence, family devotions)	15.38	86.62
Societal Trends and Shifts (Peer influence, cultural changes)	46.15	53.85
Academic Pursuits (School workload, study pressure)	15.38	84.62
Part-time Jobs (Work schedules, financial responsibilities)	30.77	69.23
Extracurricular Activities (Sports, clubs, social groups)	53.85	46.15
Secularization (Decline in religious relevance, modern beliefs)	30.77	46.45

Source: Field Work (2024)

The findings from summary Table 3 revealed that urbanization is perceived as the most influential factor, with an overwhelming 92.31% of respondents acknowledging it as a key contributor to youth disinterest in church programs. This reflects the increasing demands of urban living, time constraints, and lifestyle shifts that often prioritize personal convenience and productivity over traditional spiritual commitments. This finding is consistent with the observations by Chiroma,²⁵ who found that urban youth in Ghana often face competing commitments that reduce their availability for church-related engagements.

Technological advancement was also acknowledged as a significant influence, with 76.92% of respondents indicating that distractions from social media, entertainment platforms and digital content have contributed to reduced youth focus on church life. This is consistent with research by Golan²⁶ who argue that digital entertainment and social networking have redefined how young people spend their time, often at the expense of religious activities.

The role of changing family dynamics was considered influential by 84.62% of respondents. The decline in family devotions, reduced parental influence, and busy home schedules appear to be undermining spiritual formation at the family level. This supports the findings of who emphasized that strong parental modeling and home-based worship are positively correlated with youth religiosity.²⁷

²⁵ Chiroma, Nathan Hussaini, *Mentoring: a sustainable means of developing young leaders for the church in Africa*, 2008. <http://hdl.handle.net/10019.1/3395>

²⁶ Golan, Oren, Introduction: Digital Youth and Religion. *Religions*, 2023:14. 704. 10.3390/rel14060704.

²⁷ Knuth, Phillip, "Family Worship: Raising Children Through Discipleship in the Home," (Biola University ProQuest Dissertations & Theses, 2023). Accessed on 21st February. <https://www.proquest.com/openview/6ef38ab0bd91d461209c62b2c44ed758/1?cbl=18750&diss=y&pq-origsite=gscholar>

A substantial 84.62% of respondents also identified academic pressure as a major factor. The growing demands of schoolwork, long study hours, assignments, research work, and examination stress coupled with travel distances have reduced the time available for participation in church events. This is particularly relevant in the Ghanaian context, where academic excellence is heavily emphasized. Related studies have also linked school-related pressure to declining youth involvement in church activities.

The influence of part-time jobs was recognized by 69.23% of respondents, reflecting the need for some youth to juggle work responsibilities alongside church commitments. While part-time employment may offer financial independence, it may also cause scheduling conflicts with church programs, especially during weekends and evenings. Interestingly, societal trends and shifts and secularization received more moderate ratings. Only 53.85% and 69.23% of respondents respectively considered these factors influential. This suggests that while peer influence and modern ideologies are relevant, they may not be as direct or immediate in their impact as practical and lifestyle-related issues.

Lastly, extracurricular activities such as sports, clubs, and social groups were widely seen as influential, with only 46.15% indicating so. This may imply that such activities are viewed as manageable or less of a barrier when compared with academic or work-related challenges.

The analysis indicates that youth disinterest in church programs is largely driven by structural and lifestyle-related challenges such as urbanization, academic pressure, changing family dynamics, and technological distractions. These findings suggest that interventions aimed at increasing youth participation must consider the time constraints, digital habits, and family structures influencing youth behavior.

Furthermore, while ideological and social trends are present, their impact may be less immediate compared to practical daily pressures. These results reinforce the need for contextually relevant, flexible, and engaging church programs, as highlighted in earlier literature on youth ministry challenges in urban Ghanaian settings.

Challenges of Personal Faith and Church Participation

This section explores the internal and external challenges that affect youth members' spiritual lives and active involvement in church programs. These challenges are critical for understanding not only the reasons for youth disengagement but also the wider impact on church functioning and sustainability. Table 4 presents a summary of the key obstacles identified by respondents, both at the personal level and in relation to the church's growth and ministry.

TABLE 4: CHALLENGES OF PERSONAL FAITH & CHURCH PARTICIPATION

Variable	(N=101)	%
Lack of time		44.4
Loss of interest		22.2
Negative church exposure		55.6
Influence of friends/social circles		22.2
Lack of relevance in church programs		22.2
Negative media influence		33.3
Others		

Source: Field Work (2024)

The findings in Table 4 point to a range of challenges affecting youth participation in church programs and their personal faith journeys. The most cited personal challenge was negative church exposure, reported by 55.6% of respondents. This includes experiences of judgmental attitudes, poor leadership behaviour, and conflict within the church. Such findings are consistent with Kinnaman who reported

that youth often feel marginalized or discouraged when church environments are perceived as unfriendly or overly rigid.²⁸

The issue of lack of time was reported by 44.4% of respondents and reflects the practical challenges youth face in balancing church involvement with school, work, and personal responsibilities. This supports earlier findings in this study related to academic pressure and part-time work, and is consistent with Sumpter who observed that Millennials are most educated and thus can be deduced that time constraints are among the most significant barriers to their consistent church attendance among young adults.²⁹

Another important issue raised was loss of interest in church activities, reported by 22.2% of respondents. This may be linked to the perceived irrelevance of church programs or the lack of youth-targeted engagement strategies. Studies such as Strommen argue that disinterest often arises when youth feel that church services fail to address their spiritual, emotional, and social needs.³⁰

Respondents also identified institutional consequences of declining youth participation. Notably, 31.82% noted its effect on leadership development, suggesting that the current disengagement trend may hinder the emergence of new leaders. Another 22.72% observed that it had reduced church attendance, which could affect the vibrancy of weekly services. Additionally, reduced involvement was seen as

²⁸ Kinnaman, David, and Aly Hawkins. *You lost me: Why young Christians are leaving church... and rethinking faith*. Baker Books, 2011.

²⁹ Sumpter, Charles Eugene. "Declining church attendance: Five reasons why millennials have stopped attending church." (2019), 44.

³⁰ Strommen, Merton P., Karen E. Jones, and Dave Rahn. *Youth ministry that transforms: A comprehensive analysis of the hopes, frustrations, and effectiveness of today's youth workers*. Zondervan, 2001.

negatively impacting evangelism (18.18%), overall church growth (18.18%), and even financial contributions (9.09%).

These findings highlight a ripple effect, where personal disconnection among the youth results in institutional weaknesses within the church. They also echo previous research by Hellman who emphasized that effective youth engagement is vital to maintaining a thriving church ecosystem, as youth are not only future leaders but also current contributors to mission and ministry.³¹

The analysis reveals that both personal and institutional factors are contributing to the challenges facing youth faith and participation. Negative experiences within the church, time constraints, and declining interest significantly hinder youth engagement, while church systems are also experiencing reduced vitality in leadership, attendance, and outreach. These results underscore the urgency for church leadership to address youth-specific needs, foster inclusive environments, and integrate mentorship structures aimed at restoring trust and rekindling active involvement among young members.³²

Proposed Solutions to Address Youth Non-Participation in Church Programs

This section presents recommendations offered by respondents on how the church can improve youth engagement and participation in its programs. These suggestions reflect the preferences and expectations of young people regarding what types of church initiatives they find meaningful, engaging, and spiritually enriching.

³¹ Hellman, Ann N., Wesley E. Williams Jr, and Shelia Hurley. "Meeting spiritual needs: A study using the spiritual care competence scale." *Journal of Christian Nursing* 32, no. 4 (2015): 236-241.

³² Dean, Kenda Creasy. *Practicing passion: Youth and the quest for a passionate church*. (Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2004), 89.

Table 5 summarizes the proposed interventions and their corresponding levels of support among respondents.

TABLE 5: TYPES OF LEADERSHIP PROGRAMS

Variable	(N=101)	%
Youth leadership & mentorship programs		88.9
Recreational & social activities		88.9
Technology driven programs		66.7
Interactive Bible Initiatives		100.0
Community Service Initiatives		66.7

Source: Field Work (2024)

In Table 5 the findings indicate strong support for interactive Bible study initiatives, with 100% of respondents endorsing this intervention. This unanimous response demonstrates the high value youth place on engaging and relatable spiritual content. This finding is consistent with the study of Bozalek emphasized the importance of experiential learning with a special focus on participatory learning methods as means of sustaining youth interest in faith-based activities.³³

Equally high levels of support (88.9%) were recorded for both youth leadership programs and recreational/social activities. The preference for mentorship programs reflects the desire of young people to be guided and equipped for church leadership roles. This is consistent with previous sections of this study that showed a concentration of leadership among a few long-serving individuals, with limited opportunities for newer yet young leaders to emerge. Studies such as Groves research

³³ Bozalek, Vivienne, and Linda Biersteker "Exploring power and privilege using participatory learning and action techniques." *Social Work Education* 29, no. 5 (2010): 551-572.

study similarly affirms mentorship as a way to build leadership succession and involvement among the youth.³⁴

The endorsement of recreational and social activities also points to the need for a holistic approach to youth ministry. These activities not only offer a platform for relationship building but also serve as an avenue for informal spiritual growth and church bonding.³⁵ This aligns with the study by Krause who argued that creating an emotional and socially supportive church members and environment increases the likelihood of consistent participation among young members.³⁶

Technology-driven programs, supported by 66.7% of respondents, highlighted the need to incorporate digital tools such as livestreaming, youth podcasts, social media, and online Bible platforms to engage a digitally active generation. The importance of digital engagement, especially post-COVID-19, has been widely documented as a viable tool for church growth and continuity.³⁷ Similarly, community service and outreach activities were supported by 66.7% of respondents. This suggested that the youth want their faith to be expressed in practical and socially relevant ways. Engaging the youth in community service not only reinforces Christian values but also helps improve the church image and relevance within the broader society.³⁸

³⁴ Groves, Kevin S. "Integrating leadership development and succession planning best practices." *Journal of management development* 26, no. 3 (2007): 239-260.

³⁵ Becker, Penny Edgell, and Pawan H. Dhingra. "Religious involvement and volunteering: Implications for civil society." *Sociology of religion* 62, no. 3 (2001): 315-335.

³⁶ Krause, Neal, Christopher G. Ellison, Benjamin A. Shaw, John P. Marcum, and Jason D. Boardman. "Church-based social support and religious coping." *Journal for the scientific study of religion* 40, no. 4 (2001): 637-656.

³⁷ Baloyi, Ezekiel, and Joseph Khamadi Pali, "Being a Digital Church in the Transition to post Covid-19 pandemic era." *Pharos Journal of Theology* 104, no. 5 (2023).

³⁸ Del Castillo, Fides A., and Rebecca Cacho. "Perspectives of youth on religious education in the Philippines." *Religious education* 119, no. 1 (2024): 43-58.

Conclusion and Justification for Program Design

The pre-data analysis provided valuable insights into the current state of youth participation in church programs within the Nkawkaw East District of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. The findings indicate that while the youth acknowledge their significance within the church, their actual participation in leadership roles and church activities remains relatively low. A substantial number of respondents reported having attended leadership workshops or training, yet this has not translated into increased involvement in church programs.

Additionally, the data gathered revealed that while the majority of respondents agreed that youth are an essential part of the church's membership, a significant proportion felt that they are not given enough room to actively contribute to decision-making and church programs.

The analysis disclosed divergent viewpoints regarding the causes of diminished youth participation. Some respondents ascribed this phenomenon to the attitudes of the youth, whereas others contended that structural impediments within the church, including leadership retention by older members and restricted opportunities for youth engagement, significantly contributed. Additionally, a considerable proportion of youth articulated dissatisfaction with their degree of involvement, underscoring the necessity for a focused and intentional strategies to enhance participation.

Implications of the Findings

The findings indicate that, despite the youth's acknowledgement of their position in the church, institutional obstacles impede their holistic engagement. The disparity between leadership training and genuine participation underscores the necessity for deliberate frameworks that convert training into real involvement. The

belief that young people are inadequately involved in church decision-making underscores the need for avenues that facilitate their involvement and mentoring.

Justification for the Program Design

According to the finding from the data, a well-planned and designed intervention was necessary to address the existing gaps and enhance youth participation in church activities. The program design presented in Chapter 5 directly addresses the issues indicated in the pre-data analysis. This effort served as a catalyst that led to the implementation of a strategic framework to empower the Nkawkaw East District youth, promotes inclusive leadership, and cultivates a culture of active engagement in church activities.

The program included components such as leadership training and mentorship, youth-led initiatives, and the inclusion of youth representation in decision-making committees. The suggested program fostered a more engaging and supportive environment for youth involvement by addressing the challenges highlighted in the pre-data analysis. This rationale emphasises the imperative of shifting from data analysis to practical implementable solutions, guaranteeing that the insights derived from this study foster sustained enhancements in youth engagement within the Nkawkaw East District Adventist church.

CHAPTER 5

PROGRAM DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION

Informed by the data analysis, this chapter outlines the strategic program aimed at increasing youth involvement and participation in church activities within the Nkawkaw East District of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. The pre-data analysis and findings necessitated this program which indicated minimal youth engagement in leadership roles, decision-making, and church programs, despite its acknowledged significance within the church community. The chapter outlines the objectives, components, implementation techniques, and anticipated outcomes of the program, ensuring alignment with the church's overarching mission while addressing the specific difficulties found in the study.

Program Design Framework

Program Title: "Empowered to Serve: Intentional Spiritual Mentorship"

This program emphasises spiritual growth, leadership development, faith-based service, and the incorporation of digital tools for maximum youth engagement at individual and congregational spheres.

Program Goals and Objectives

- Enhance youth engagement with an intentional spiritual mentorship framework that will empower the youth to serve.
- Nurture spiritual growth and develop leadership skills among young members.

- Connect youth with experienced mentors for spiritual and personal development.
- Utilise online digital platforms, and social media to improve communication and maintain engagement.
- Establish levels of monitoring and evaluation strategies to ensure sustained impact and integration within church programs.

Program Focus/Target Group

- ***Junior Youth (Ages 4-9):*** The program will involve Adventurers aged 4 to 9 and Pathfinders aged 10 to 15, providing foundational mentorship training in spiritual growth, and character development.
- ***Senior Youth (Ages 16-35+):*** Individuals aged 16 to 35 years, who will engage in church ministries, mentorship initiatives, leadership training programs, and spiritual development activities will be the pivotal focus of the program.
- ***Elders and Youth Leaders:*** Elders, youth leaders, well conducted peers will act as mentors and role models, offering spiritual guidance and leadership support. They will participate in structured intentional spiritual mentorship training to improve their capacity to engage and inspire youth effectively.

Leadership of the Program

- The Programs Committee, operating under the Local Church Board, was established to oversee the design, implementation, and evaluation of the program.

- A Church Elder or Board Member possessing expertise in program implementation will lead the committee.
- Committee members will consist of Church Board Members, mentors, and specialists in leadership, youth development, and community engagement.
- The committee will work in conjunction with Church Pastors and Nkawkaw District Administrators to align the program with the overarching church mission and vision.
- Youth leaders will act as intermediaries between the committee and the registered youth, addressing concerns and promoting engagement.

Program Duration and Meetings

- The Intentional Spiritual Mentorship (ISM) program is structured to operate for one year, with an option for extension to two years contingent upon its effectiveness and participant needs.
- Meetings will occur weekly or monthly, contingent upon the specific activity and participant availability.
- Each meeting is to be scheduled on weekends to suit the availability of mentors and mentees, specifically on Friday evenings, Saturday afternoons, or Sunday mornings, including virtual schedules.
- The duration of each meeting will be between one to two hours, providing adequate time for discussions, interactive activities, and spiritual reflection.

Description of Program Activities

- ***Program Launch***, this will be the district and local church community's formal introduction of the program. Taking place in the first month of

implementation, the launch will lay the groundwork for all following activities.

- ***Training & Orientation***, all participants, mentors, young leaders, and mentees will take part in these sessions. Scheduled for the first three months of the program, the training will guarantee that every participant is well-equipped prior to its full implementation.
- ***Youth Engagement & Participation***, will consist of community service projects, leadership seminars, discipleship courses, youth-led worship services, and interactive Bible study classes. From the fourth month to the ninth month of the year, the engagement and involvement session will run.
- ***Monitoring & Evaluation***, will include feedback sessions with both mentors and mentees, attendance monitoring, focus group talks, and frequent surveys. Quarterly evaluations by the Programs Committee will evaluate progress, highlight issues, and make required adjustments and changes.
- ***Awards & Certification***: At the end of each program cycle, certificates of participation will be awarded to mentors and mentees, to acknowledge their dedication to the program. Special awards will also be given for Best Mentor, Most Active Mentee, Outstanding Youth Leader, and Excellence in Community Service.

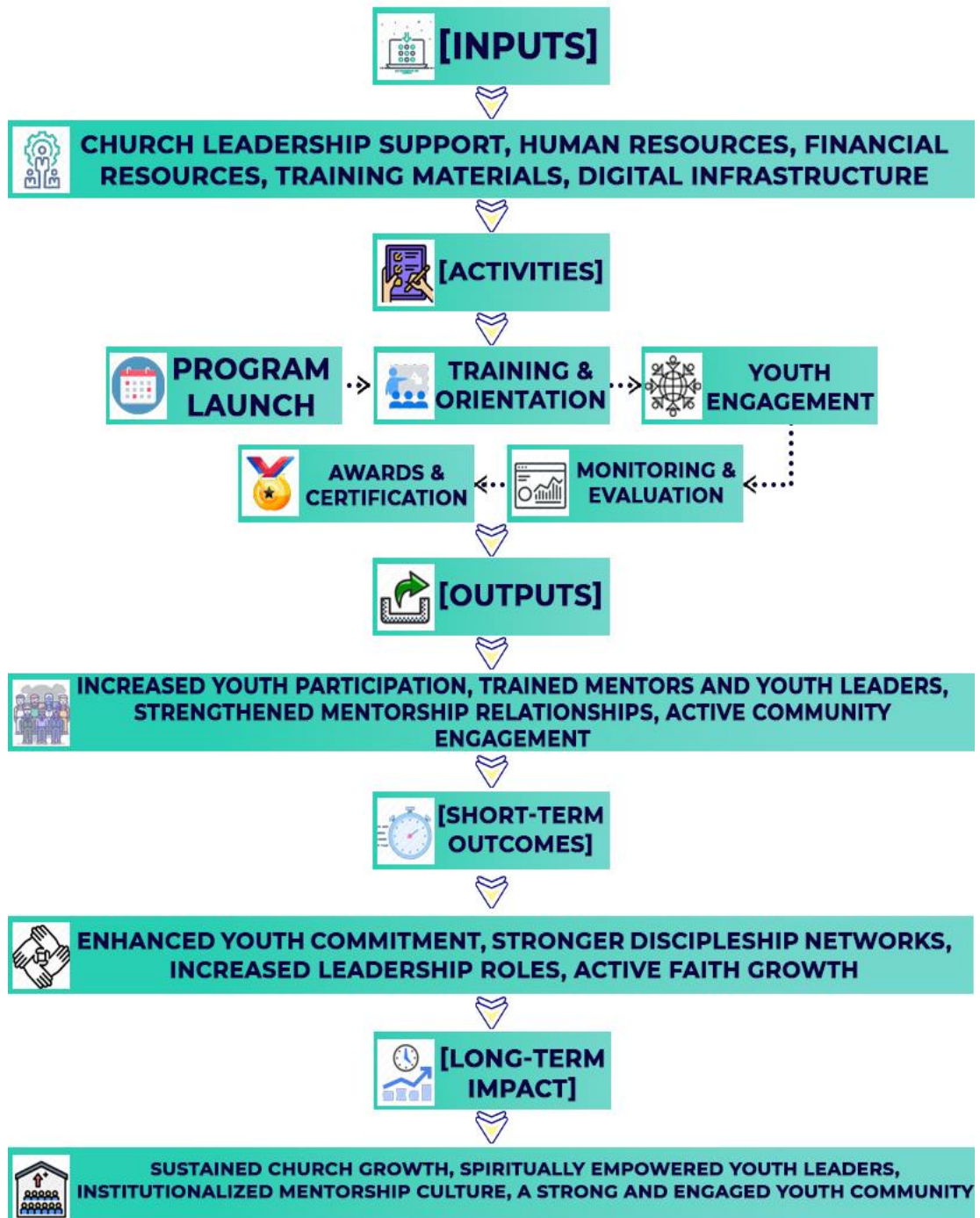
Logic Model: Schematic Diagram of Activity Flow

The Intentional Spiritual Mentorship program followed a structured flow of activities to ensure effective implementation, monitoring, and sustainability. The logic model diagram below outlines the relationship between inputs, activities, outputs,

short-term outcomes, and long-term impact to illustrate how the program is expected to achieve its objectives.

LOGIC MODEL SCHEMATIC INFOGRAPHICS

ILLUSTRATION: LOGIC MODEL



Program Budget

The budget for the Intentional Spiritual Mentorship program was designed to cover all essential financial aspects of the initiative, to ensure smooth implementation and sustainability. It included both fixed costs and variable costs, which account for recurring and non-recurring expenses.

The budget prepared by the Programs Committee and approved by the Church Board at the beginning of the church year. To maintain transparency and efficiency, the budget shall be reviewed on a semi-annual basis by the Church Board, to allow for adjustments based on financial needs, expenditure trends, and program progress.

Project Implementation Methods

The project will use a mix of participatory, capacity-building, and digital engagement approaches to increase youth involvement and maintain mentorship connections.

Participatory Approach, this seeks to guarantee that all stakeholders including young people, church leaders, mentors, and parents are actively engaged in planning and decision-making, participatory approach will be fundamental to the execution.

Capacity-building Methods, this will enable young people and mentors to acquire the tools, skills, and information required for efficient mentoring and leadership. This will comprise leadership development initiatives, interactive workshops, and organised training courses.

Structured Mentored Framework, this will be implemented whereby young people will be matched with qualified mentors offering ongoing direction and assistance. Depending on the needs of mentees and the availability of mentors, mentorship sessions will be held weekly or monthly.

Performance Tracking and Monitoring System, the progress and impact of the program will be measured by this performance tracking and monitoring system. This will call for participant feedback gathering, attendance monitoring, frequent surveys, and influence awards and certification of active participants.

Evaluation Design and Project Assessment

Based on the local district, the project assessment will be focussing on various stages of execution and outcomes, the evaluation approach will include process assessment, outcome evaluation, and impact evaluation.

Process Assessment, this will be done all during the program to guarantee that every intended activity is being carried out as planned. This assessment phase will emphasise monitoring the efficiency of program execution, the participation rate of mentors and mentees, and the efficacy of training programs and mentorship sessions.

Outcome Evaluation, indicators to be measured in this phase include more young church activity attendance, strengthened leadership abilities among mentees, and more involvement in community service projects. Thus, this will aid in evaluating the program's direct impact on youth involvement and mentoring connections.

Impact Evaluation, At the end of the entire cycle's completion, impact evaluation will be based on historical data comparisons, testimonies, and thorough interviews with important stakeholders. This evaluation will emphasise the long-term viability and more general consequences of the program on the Conference, District and the church community.

Sample Program Implementation Schedule

Program Duration: Saturday, October 5, 2024 to Saturday, December 7, 2024

Program Theme: *Empowered to Serve: Intentional Spiritual Mentorship*

Meeting Days and Time: Friday Evenings: 7:00 PM – 8:00 PM & **Saturday**

Afternoons: 3:00 PM – 5:00 PM

Facilitators: District and Church Pastors, Church Elders, Program Committee

Chairperson, Youth Leaders, Guest Speakers (Experienced Youth Leaders,

Evangelism Team, Multi-Media/Digital Evangelism Experts)

TABLE 6: SAMPLE PROGRAM SCHEDULE

Week	Date	Time	Objective	Activities	Facilitators	Evaluation Measure
Week 1	Oct 5, 2024	3:00 PM – 5:00 PM	Launch the program, raise awareness, establish mentor-mentee relationships	Opening Prayer, Welcome Address, Program Overview, Keynote, Pairing & Icebreaker, Commitment Pledge	Church Pastors, Youth Leaders, Program Chairperson	Attendance, Mentor-Mentee Registration, Feedback on Expectations
Week 2	Oct 11, 2024	7:00 PM – 8:00 PM	Equip mentors and mentees with roles and mentorship principles	Introduction to Christian Mentorship, Roles of Mentors/Mentees, Q&A Session	Church Elders, Youth Mentors	Post-session quiz, Mentor-Mentee feedback on roles clarity
Week 2	Oct 12, 2024	3:00 PM – 5:00 PM	Teach importance of personal devotion and faith-based leadership	Bible Study on Daily Devotion, Small Group Discussions, Strengthening Spiritual Discipline	Guest Speaker, Church Pastors	Mentees' reflections on devotion practices and challenges
Week 3	Oct 18, 2024	7:00 PM –	Strengthen faith and leadership	Bible Study on Faith, Leadership &	Church Elders, Youth Leaders	Mentor-Mentee reflections,

	4	8:00 PM	skills	Service, Panel Discussion		Leadership Role Assignments
Week 3	Oct 19, 2024	3:00 PM – 5:00 PM	Encourage youth participation in worship	Youth-Led Worship Service, Testimonies, Group Planning for Youth Programs	Youth Leaders, Church Mentors	Observation of participation, Post-session feedback
Week 4	Oct 25, 2024	7:00 PM – 8:00 PM	Equip with practical leadership skills for ministry	Public Speaking Training, Mock Worship Leading	Church Administrators, Guest Speaker	Practical presentations, Mentor assessments
Week 4	Oct 26, 2024	3:00 PM – 5:00 PM	Encourage community outreach and service	Community Evangelism Plan, Youth in Outreach Programs	Church Pastors, Evangelism Team	Community service participation, Youth reflections
Week 6	Nov 1, 2024	7:00 PM – 8:00 PM	Integrate digital tools in faith engagement	Using Social Media for Faith Engagement, Online Bible Study Group	Media Ministry (Multi-media and Digital Evangelism Experts)	Digital participation tracking, Social media interactions
Week 6	Nov 2, 2024	3:00 PM – 5:00 PM	Review program progress and address challenges	Mid-Program Evaluation, Open Discussion	Youth Leaders, Program Committee	Surveys, Focus group feedback
Week 8	Dec 6, 2024	7:00 PM – 8:00 PM	Review program impact, collect final feedback	Participant Surveys, Spiritual & Leadership Reflections	Program Committee, Church Board Representatives	Survey results, Mentor reports
Week 8	Dec 7, 2024	3:00 PM – 5:00 PM	Recognize participants, officially close the program	Youth-Led Worship, Presentation of Certificates & Awards, Closing Address	Church Pastors, Elders, Guest Speaker	Participation records, Final impact assessment

Sustainability Plan

To guarantee that the "Empowered to Serve: Intentional Spiritual Mentorship" program does not turn into a transient project but rather continues to influence young people, promote spiritual development, and shape leaders long after the first session, its sustainability is absolutely vital. The following sustainability plan is meant to complement established best practices for program continuity as well as the evaluation reports from the pilot implementation plan.

TABLE 7: SUSTAINABILITY PLAN

Plan	Objective	Persons Responsible	Action Needed
1. Regular Program Evaluation	To evaluate the program's effectiveness and make necessary adjustments.	Program Committee, Facilitators, Mentors	Evaluation should be done at the end of every key phase or session to track progress and issues.
2. Mentor Training and Development	To equip mentors with ongoing training to improve their mentoring skills.	Program Committee, Experienced Mentors	Regular training will ensure that mentors stay engaged and updated on best practices.
3. Mentorship Follow-up Sessions	To maintain engagement and monitor mentees' spiritual and leadership growth.	Mentors, Program Coordinators	Monthly check-ins to assess mentee progress and ensure continued support.
4. Youth-Led Events and Programs	To involve mentees in running events, enhancing ownership of the program.	Mentors, Mentees, Church Youth Leaders	Develop Youth-led activities to help build long-term commitment, leadership, and engagement.
5. Resource and Fundraising Planning	To ensure financial resources are available for program continuity.	Program Committee, Church Leadership, Volunteers	Develop fundraising or grant applications system to keep the program running.
6. Integration of Digital Tools	To continue integrating digital engagement for broader reach.	Program Coordinators, Media Team, Mentors	Ensure digital tools are used to engage wider audiences and ensure virtual participation

			when needed.
7. Alumni Engagement	To involve past mentees in leadership roles and program expansion.	Alumni, Mentors, Program Coordinators	Establish alumni association to create a sense of ownership and help in outreach efforts.
8. Leadership Development Integration	To integrate leadership development into church programming for long-term sustainability.	Church Leadership, Program Coordinators	The church can adopt mentorship and leadership training into their regular programming, ensuring lasting impact.

Summary and Conclusion

The entire Chapter 5 described the design and execution framework for the "Empowered to Serve: Intentional Spiritual Mentorship" initiative meant to increase youth involvement in church programming in the Nkawkaw East District of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Supported by a digital interaction element, the chapter discussed the program's fundamental framework comprising weekly and monthly mentorship sessions emphasising spiritual growth, leadership development, and faith-based service. Emphasising regular involvement via mentorship, Bible study, and leadership training, an example timetable was given with assessment criteria woven into every stage.

A sustainability strategy was also included; it guarantees the program's long-term viability by means of strategic alliances, community participation, and a legacy fund. Ultimately, this chapter offered a thorough road map for efficiently carrying out and maintaining the program, with evident plans for raising youth involvement and leadership development in the Nkawkaw East District of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

CHAPTER 6

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Drawing on the results from the survey, this concluding chapter delivers highlights of the strategic program that deals with a more general consequences of young people leaving and gives informed advice for church leaders, parents, and youth stakeholders to increase young people's participation in church activities. To guarantee long-term young commitment to faith and church activities, the suggestions emphasise strategic mentoring, leadership development, and creative ideas to spiritual involvement. Key results of the survey, conclusions reached from the analysis, and suggestions for handling the waning interest of young people in personal faith nurture and church involvement in the Nkawkaw East District are summarised in this chapter.

Summary of Findings

The study found several key factors influencing young people's declining interest in personal faith development and church. Survey results showed that young people's disengagement is greatly influenced by sociocultural changes, academic obligations, peer pressure, and church-related issues.

Demographically, the study sample comprised 55.6% female and 44.4% male respondents, with the majority (41.3%) falling within the 20–24 age group, followed by 37.0% aged 30–35. Educationally, 77.8% of respondents had tertiary education, while only 11.1% had completed senior high school. Regarding occupational status, 44.4% were full-time employees, while 33.3% were students and 22.3% were self-employed. The study also found that 66.7% of respondents were baptized, while

33.3% had not been baptized, indicating a considerable number of youths who have not fully integrated into the church. While church elders and pastors made up 5.94% and 0.99%, respectively, youth members (75.25%) formed the largest group and youth leaders constituted (17.82%) which portrays the leadership role performed by the youth.

Considering the results from this research, it can be underlined that among the main elements driving young people away from church activities are urbanisation, technology diversions, evolving social ideals, and secular exposure. These factors have caused a change in priorities that makes church activities less interesting to the young. Many young people viewed academic workloads and extracurricular activities to be significant obstacles since they had to juggle their religious, work, and academic obligations.

Aside the general observation of the analysis, a deeper study revealed that personal challenges, including lack of time (44.4%) and loss of interest (22.2%), greatly fuelled young people's declining participation. On the other hand, negative church experiences including feelings of hypocrisy, judgemental attitudes, and lack of inclusiveness discouraged young people as well. Respondents also mentioned peer influence and social circles as 22.2% of the time, suggesting that many young people give social events top priority over faith-based pursuits.

Furthermore, (22.2%) also mentioned the irrelevance of church programs, which implied that many young people feel alienated from conventional church structures not addressing modern concerns influencing them. Furthermore, negative media influence (22.2%) was noted as a new element as secular material and internet distractions battled with spiritual involvement.

These results from the research imply that young people disengagement is not only a matter of personal apathy but also a complicated interaction of social, educational, social, and church-related obstacles. Hence, dealing with these problems calls for a multiple strategy that includes leadership participation in youth activities, participatory and young-friendly church projects, and mentoring programs.

Conclusions of the Study

The study reveals that youth disengagement from church programs and activities is influenced by sociocultural changes, academic commitments, peer influence, church-related experiences, and digital distractions. This decline affects church growth and development, leading to reduced attendance, weakened leadership development, reduced evangelism efforts, and decline in church finances. The study also highlights the strong connection between personal devotion and church participation, suggesting the need for intentional efforts from church leaders, parents, and youth ministry stakeholders to foster a culture of committed and spiritually grounded youth who actively participate in church life.

Recommendations of the Study

Based on the findings of the study, the recommendations in this section will be able to address the declining youth interest in church programs and activities. First, adopt a structured mentorship and discipleship program to strengthen relationships between young members and experienced church leaders. Second, redesign youth engagement strategies to make programs more relevant and appealing.

Third, leverage technology and digital platforms to reach and engage youth effectively. Fourth, foster an inclusive and welcoming church environment that encourages youth participation. Fifth, promote a balance between faith and other life

responsibilities by organizing programs that accommodate school and work schedules. Finally, establish a structured monitoring and evaluation framework to assess youth engagement and adjust programs accordingly. Recognizing committed youth through awards, certificates, and leadership opportunities reinforces a culture of active involvement and service.

Suggestions for Further Research

Future and projects should explore family upbringing, parental influence, digital ministry, mentorship programs, cross-denominational comparisons, and long-term retention of youth in church leadership roles. Understanding how family structures, parental involvement, and early spiritual training impact long-term church engagement can provide effective strategies for youth retention. Additionally, examining the impact of mentorship programs on spiritual development and leadership readiness can provide deeper insights.

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APPENDIX A
QUESTIONNAIRE

NAME OF RESEARCHER: Kwame Onwona-Simpe

RESEARCH TOPIC: A Strategy To Increase Youth Participation In Church Programs
At The Nkawkaw East District, Ghana.

Please kindly take some few minutes to complete this survey, your inputs are greatly appreciated. You are invited to participate in this research study by a Master of Divinity student from the Adventist University of Africa. Your participation is voluntary, and you may withdraw at any time. Your responses will remain confidential. This study aims to develop a strategy to increase youth participation in church programs at the Nkawkaw East District of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. There are no known risks. By checking the box below, you consent to participate. Thank you!

Target Respondents: Pastors, Elders, Youth Leaders, and Youth Members.

By checking this box below, I give my consent to participate.

Section A: Demographic Information

(This section provides background information to analyse variations across different groups.)

1. Select your age group

15-19 years
20-24 years
25-29 years
30-35 years
36+

2. Gender

Male
Female

3. Educational Level

Basic (JHS)
Senior High School (SHS)
Tertiary (University/College)
Vocational/Technical

4. Occupation

Student
Employed (Full-time)
Employed (Part-time)
Self-employed
Unemployed

5. Marital Status

Single
Married
Divorced
Separated

6. Your church Membership (Religious Affiliation)

Seventh-day Adventist
Other (Specify)

7a. Are you a baptized member?

Yes
No

7b. For how long have you been baptized?

1-3 years
4-5 years
6-10 years
11-20 years

7c. Indicate your leadership role (Position)

Pastor

Church Elder

Youth Leader

Youth Member

Church Member

Section B: Religious Status and Key Factors Influencing Youth's Declining Interest
(This section examines key factors contributing to youth disengagement.)

8. How often do you attend church services?

Regularly (Weekly)

Occasionally (2-3 times a month)

Rarely (Once a month or less)

Never

9. My family is...

Seventh-day Adventist (SDA)

None - Seventh-day Adventist (SDA)

10. Where were you born?

In the Church

Outside the Church

11. Have you attended any church workshop/training on church leadership

Once

more than once

not any

12. Have you been elected to any leadership position or office in the church from your baptism?

Once

Twice

More than three times

13. Do you consider yourself as part and parcel of the church family?

Yes

Sometimes

Not Sure

14. Do you think the youth are an important part/ membership of the church

Yes

No

Not Sure

15. Do you think the youth are considered important and are given enough room to participate in the church activities and programs?

Yes

No

Not Sure

16. Do you think that the youth are participating enough in church programs and activities?

Yes

No

17. Do you think the youth are to blame for their less participation in church programs and activities?

Yes

No

Not Sure

18. Are you happy with your involvement and participation in the church programs and activities?

Yes

No

19. Do you think your talents are used by the church?

Yes

No

Partially

20. Are the church programs /activities important and interesting to you?

Yes

No

Sometimes

21. Do you think the church programs must be improved?

Yes

No

Not Sure

22. Do you think the youth must be involved in the leadership of the church?

Yes

No

Sometimes

23. How influential are the following factors in reducing your engagement in personal faith nurturing and church programs? Use the following - 1 (Not at all) | 2 (Slightly) | 3 (Moderately) | 4 (Very) | 5 (Extremely) |

23. How influential are the following factors in reducing your engagement in personal faith nurturing and church programs? Use the following - 1 (Not at all) | 2 (Slightly) | 3 (Moderately) | 4 (Very) | 5 (Extremely) | *

	1 (Not at all)	2 (Slightly)	3 (Moderately)	4 (Very)	5 (Extremely)
Urbanization (...)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Technological ...	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Changing Fami...	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Societal Trend...	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Academic Purs...	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Part-time Jobs ...	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Extracurricular ...	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Secularization ...	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Exposure to Ot...	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

24. In your opinion, what other factors contribute to youth's declining interest in personal faith nurturing and church participation? (Open-ended response)

25. What are the main challenges you face in maintaining personal faith and church participation? (Select all that apply)

Lack of time

Loss of interest

Negative church experiences

Influence of friends/social circles

Lack of relevance in church programs

Negative Media Influence

Other (Specify)

Section C: Impact of Declining Youth Participation
 (This section evaluates the effects of disengagement on the church and community)

26. How significant is the impact of declining youth participation on the following aspects of the church and community? Use the following - 1 (No Impact) | 2 (Slightly) | 3 (Moderately) | 4 (Very) | 5 (Extreme Impact) |

*

	1 No impact	2 Slightly	3 Moderately	4 Very	5 Extreme Imp...
Church Attend...	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Leadership Dev...	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Evangelism an...	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Financial Contr...	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Church Growth...	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

27. How has the decline in youth participation affected church activities and ministries in your district? (Open-ended response)

Section D: Connection Between Personal Devotion and Church Participation
 (This section explores the link between private spiritual practices and public church engagement.)

28. How often do you engage in personal faith practices? (Choose the most appropriate response)

	Never	Rarely (Once a ...	Occasionally (...	Frequently (We...	Daily
Personal Prayer	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Bible Study	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Fasting	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Christian Fello...	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Witnessing/Ev...	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Stewardship (U...	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

29. Do you believe there is a connection between personal devotion and church participation?
Yes, strongly connected
Yes, but slightly connected
No connection

30. In what ways does personal devotion influence your participation in church programs?

(Open-ended response)

Section E: Recommendations and Solutions (This section seeks suggestions for improvement.)

31. What can the church do to encourage youth participation in personal faith nurturing and church programs? (Open-ended response)

32. What type of church programs would be more engaging for young people? (Select all that apply)

Youth mentorship programs

Technology-driven programs (online sermons, social media engagements, etc.)

Interactive Bible study sessions

Community service initiatives

Recreational and social events

Other (Specify) _____

APPENDIX B

Focus Group Discussion Guide

Title of Study:

A Strategy to Increase Youth Participation in Church Programs at Nkawkaw East

District, Ghana

Section A: Opening and Rapport Building

1. Can you briefly introduce yourself and share your role or relationship with the church youth?
2. How would you describe the current level of youth participation in church programs in your congregation?

Section B: Understanding Participation and Engagement

3. What motivates youth to participate actively in church programs?
4. In your view, what are the key barriers preventing more youth from participating in church activities?
5. Do you think youth feel welcomed and included in church decision-making and leadership roles? Why or why not?

Section C: Leadership, Mentorship, and Program Relevance

6. Have you observed any opportunities for youth leadership development in your church? Please describe.
7. What kind of mentorship or training do you think youth need to feel more empowered and involved?

8. How relevant and engaging do you think the current church programs are for young people?

Section D: Modern Influences and Lifestyle Factors

9. In what ways do factors such as school demands, work schedules, technology, or peer pressure influence youth participation?
10. How do you think the church can respond to the changing lifestyles and interests of today's youth?

Section E: Recommendations and Solutions

11. What kinds of programs or activities do you believe would help improve youth engagement?
12. How can the church use technology and social media more effectively to connect with the youth?
13. What role should parents and church leaders play in encouraging youth participation?
14. What are your thoughts on incorporating community service or outreach into youth ministry?

Section F: Closing

Is there anything else you would like to share regarding how the church can improve youth involvement and spiritual growth?

APPENDIX B

SUMMARY OF QUESTIONNAIR RESPONSES

SECTION A: SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF RESPONDENTS

Variable	(N=89)	%
Sex	Male	44.4
	Female	55.6
Age Group	Under 20	5.1
	20-24	41.3
	30-35	37.0
	36+	16.6
Educational Level	Senior High School	11.1
	Tertiary Education	77.8
	Others	11.1
Occupation	Student	33.3
	Employed (full-time)	44.4
	Self-employed	22.3
Baptismal Status	Baptized	66.7
	Non-baptized	33.3
Leadership Position	Pastor	0.99
	Church Elder	5.94
	Youth Leaders	17.82
	Youth Members	75.25

Source: Field Work (2024)

SECTION B: FACTORS INFLUENCING YOUTH DECLINING INTEREST IN CHURCH PROGRAMS

Factors	Not Influential %	Influential %
Urbanization (City lifestyle, lack of time)	7.69 23.08	92.31 76.92
Technological Advancement (Social media, entertainment, distractions)	15.38	86.62
Changing Family Dynamics (Parental influence, family devotions)	46.15	53.85
Societal Trends and Shifts (Peer influence, cultural changes)	15.38	84.62
Academic Pursuits (School workload, studies pressure)	30.77	69.23
Part-time Jobs (Work schedules, financial responsibilities)	53.85	46.15
Extracurricular Activities (Sports, clubs, social groups)	30.77	46.45
Secularization (Decline in religious relevance, modern beliefs)		

Source: Field Work (2024)

CHALLENGES OF PERSONAL FAITH & CHURCH PARTICIPATION

Variable	(N=101)
	%
Lack of time	44.4
Loss of interest	22.2
Negative church exposure	55.6
Influence of friends/social circles	22.2
Lack of relevance in church programs	22.2
Negative media influence	33.3
Others	

Source: Field Work (2024)

SECTION C: IMPACT OF DECLINING YOUTH PARTICIPATION

Variable	(N=101)	%
Church attendance		22.72
Leadership Development		31.82
Evangelism & Outreach		18.18
Financial Contribution to the Church		9.09
Church Growth & Accountability		18.18

Source: Field Work (2024)

SECTION D: CONNECTION BETWEEN FAITH & CHURCH PARTICIPATION FREQUENCY OF PERSONAL FAITH PRACTICE

	No connection	Connection	Mean
Personal Prayer	0.00	41.67	
Bible Study	0.00	8.30	
Fasting	33.30	0.00	
Christian Fellowship	25.00	8.30	
Witnessing & Outreach	41.67	0.00	
Stewardship	0.00	41.67	

Source: Field Work (2024)

PERCEPTION OF PERSONAL DEVOTION & CHURCH PARTICIPATION

Variable	(N=101)	%
Slightly connected		11.1
Strongly connected		88.9

Source: Field Work (2024)

SECTION E: CHURCH PROGRAMS & SOLUTIONS TO NON-PARTICIPATION PROBLEM TYPES OF LEADERSHIP PROGRAMS

Variable	(N=101)	%
Youth leadership & mentorship programs		88.9
Recreational & social activities		66.7
Technology-driven programs		100.0
Interactive Bible Initiatives		66.7
Community Service Initiatives		

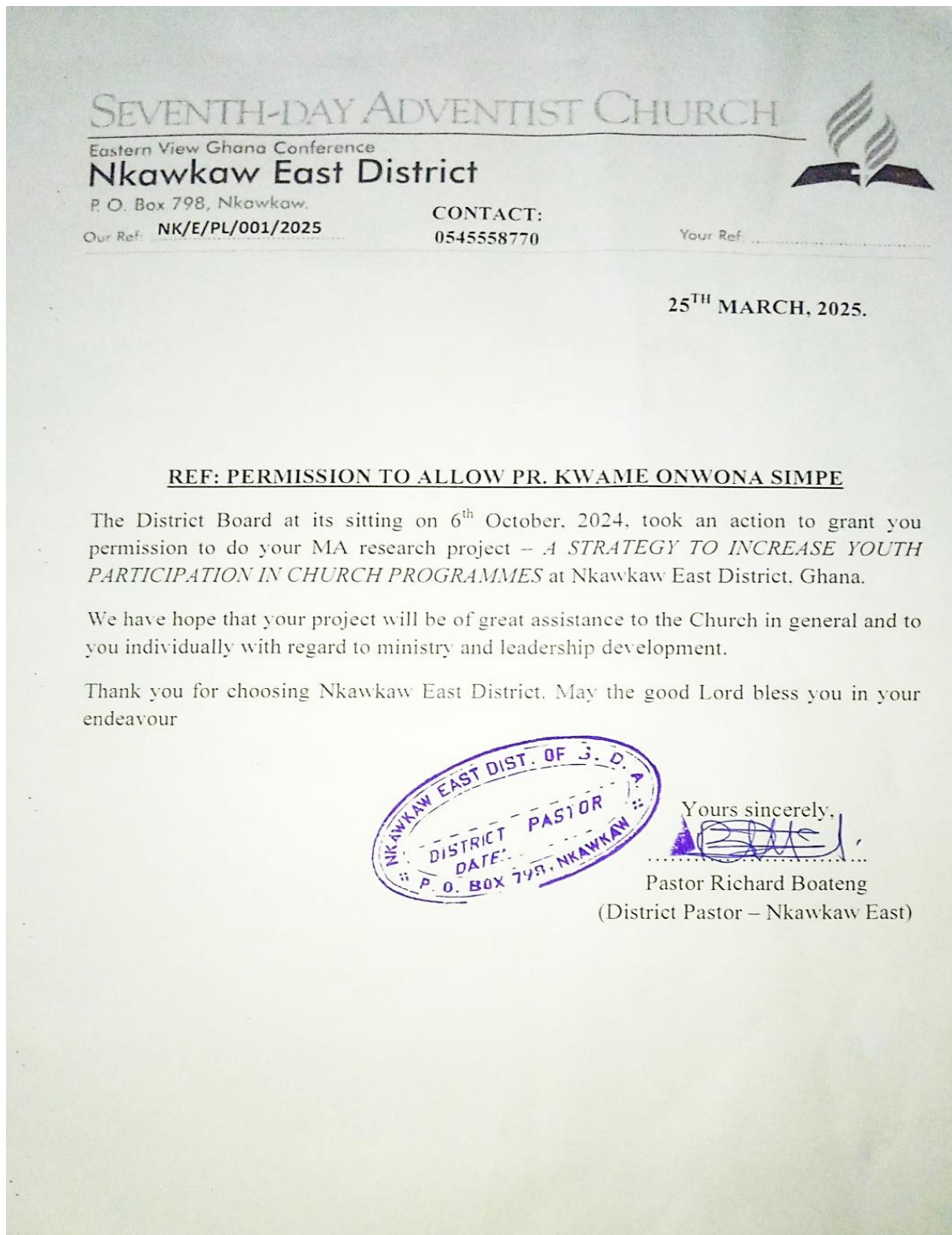
Source: Field Work (2024)

Some Suggested Solutions by Participants

- Church leaders should actively get involved in ensuring youth participation in church programs
- The church should be transparent and supportive to everyone.
- Engage them in their programs
- It should start from parenting
- Organizing series of revivals
- Pray, fast and put some interested and educative program to help nurture them
- Church leaders must draw the youth closer to them by engaging in heart-to-heart talks making them feel like they belong.
- Introduce more educative programmes in the church
- Involved the youth in decision making

APPENDIX C

LETTER OF PERMISSION



CURRICULUM VITAE

NAME: Kwame Onwona-Simpe

DATE OF BIRTH: 14th May 1988

ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENTS

2016 – 2025: Adventist University of Africa, Kenya. (M.Div Candidate)

2007 – 2011: Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (B.Eng.)

2003 – 2006: Tamale Secondary School (WASSCE)

2000 – 2003: Tamale S.D.A. Junior High School (BECE)

PROFESSIONAL ACHIEVEMENT

<u>ORGANIZATION</u>	<u>ROLE</u>	<u>DATE</u>
Jack-Strong Company Ltd.	Instr. Engineer	2023-Present
Jack-Strong Company Ltd.	Admin. Assistant	2022-Present
Ghana Statistical Service	Field Supervisor	2021
Ghana Statistical Service	Regional Trainer	2021
Self-Employment	IT Support Assistant	2016-2021
IPMC Tamale	Systems Engr. Trainer (Volunteer)	2016
Jack-Strong Company Ltd.	Maintenance Engr. (Volunteer)	2014-2016
R. E. Internet World Cafe	Internet Café Manager	2012-2014
National Service Scheme	Teaching (JHS)	2011-2012
R. E. Internet World Cafe	Internet Café Manager	2010-2011
VRA/NEDCo Techiman Subst.	Industrial Attachment	2009
R. E. Internet World Cafe	Internet Café Manager	2007-2009

FAMILY HISTORY

Siblings: Dr Asante and Rachel

