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Original Article

Church Intervention and the Holistic Development of Children

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The study investigated the Church intervention and the holistic development of children. This study's objective was to investigate church intervention on the holistic development of children in West Ankole Diocese. This thesis was steered by the subsequent points/objectives: To evaluate the existence of Church programmes for the holistic development of children in West Ankole Diocese, to scrutinise the challenges of the church in the holistic development of children in West Ankole Diocese and to establish a strategy for the holistic development of children in West Ankole Diocese. The researcher used a mixed method for data collection and analysis. Child development workers, church leaders and church members (parishioners) in selected archdeaconries of West Ankole Diocese comprised the population of the study. Study participants were selected using probability and nonprobability sampling methods, based on the category to which they belonged. However, the combined effects of the Church intervention aspect did not significantly predict the holistic development of children in West Ankole Diocese. The challenge of church intervention in the holistic development of children generated themes: Home-related challenges (HRC) and Church related challenges (CRC). Each of these generated several related subthemes. Social, Spiritual and Economic tactics, leadership and management strategies were grouped as the overcoming obstacle strategies. These data suggest that the church intervention in the lives of children has a positive effect on the holistic development of children. However, the church intervention faces a number of impediments that require the fervent devotion of stakeholders in order to encourage the successful involvement of the church in the holistic development issues of children. Therefore, it is concluded that the Church and other stakeholders develop and implement policies that increase the church intervention in the holistic development of children.

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INTRODUCTION

According to the national Child Policy 2020, a 'child' is defined as any person under the age of 18 years, in accordance with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 2 of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, and Article 257 (1) (c) of the 1995 Constitution of Uganda.¹

Children aged 15 and younger comprise one-third of the world's six billion people. In many developing countries, children make up nearly half the population. An additional 26 percent are young people ages 15-29. Another one billion children may be born in the next decade, many into extreme poverty.² Uganda has a young generation with over 56 percent of its population under the age of 18 and about half (48.7 percent) under the age of 15 years (UBOS, 2016). According to the 2014 National Housing and Population Census Report, children 0 to 8 years constitute 30.9 percent, children 0 to 14 years constitute 50.3 percent, and children 0 to 17 years constitute 55.1 percent of the 34.6 million total population of Uganda. This amounts to an estimated 19.2 million children below the age of 18 years.

Child development entails the Biological, psychological and emotional changes that occur in human beings between birth and the conclusion of adolescence, as the individual progresses from dependency to increasing autonomy³. In order for children to develop into happy and functional adults, it is important that they are raised holistically.⁴

Holistic development means to grow and develop the whole person, in order to achieve optimal functioning, happiness and independence. The five aspects of Holistic development are physical, intellectual, social, emotional and spiritual development.⁵ Meryers proposes an understanding of holistic development in which the physical, social and spiritual dimensions of life are seamlessly interrelated. The spiritual cannot be separated from the physical, social and economic aspects of human life.⁶

A church is a place where children must be welcomed regardless of the circumstances in which they were conceived and are brought to the love of Christ who beckons them with open hands, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them; for it is to those who are childlike that the Kingdom of heavens belong." (Mathew 19:14). Only the

¹National Child Policy 2020. The Government of Gender, Labour and Social Development.

² Brewster 2005

³ IBID

⁴Empowered parents. [https:// empoweredparents.com.holis](https://empoweredparents.com.holis) 2nd Jan 2022.

⁵Empowered parents. [https:// empoweredparents.com.holis](https://empoweredparents.com.holis) 2nd Jan 2022.

⁶ Myers,Brian (2011) Walking with the poor: principles and practices of Transformation Development

church can respond to the whole person and she represents the managers entrusted with Gods' resources including our children.⁷

Children are a priority for the king and the kingdom: They are many, they are strategic, they suffer, and God's unambiguous mandate in their favour shouts for urgent action right across the pages of the scriptures. They are both key to the Great Commission and an essential expression of the Great Commandment.⁸

West Ankole Diocese has a child ministry at heart, which focuses on reaching children for Christ, equipping child workers, developing a strategy for nurturing and sensitising the church and community about the role of children. This unit comprises Compassion-assisted projects and Early Childhood Development centres in a few archdeaconries.

Problem Statement

According to Brewster (2005), God's expectation is that all children will grow "in wisdom, in stature, and in favour with God and men". These four components "neatly encompass all aspects of the whole person and provide a useful model around which to create meaningful holistic development programs" (Brewster, 2005).

Children are victims of exploitation, violence and abuse in many circumstances. After children are confirmed, many lack discipleship and do not have a clear direction to go. In addition to that, parishioners lack skills for the holistic development of children, and there is little awareness among the church leaders, leading to perpetually non-holistically developed children. All this is manifested in the escalating moral degeneration, low level of self-confidence, feeling unloved,

neglected and unwanted. As a result, the goal of developing children holistically will be at risk.

In reality, "true holistic development can only be done by the Church (Christians) which has understanding of the nature of sin, of God's intention for His people and His creation and of the power of the gospel to bring substantial holistic healing to the whole person" (Brewster, 2005). Hence, the church's intervention in the holistic development of children.

Purpose of the Study

The study investigated church intervention and the holistic development of children in West Ankole Diocese.

Study Objectives

The following objectives guided the study:

- 1.) To evaluate the Church programmes for the holistic development of children.
- 2.) To assess the challenges in the holistic development of children in the Diocese of West Ankole
- 3.) To establish a strategy for the holistic development of children in West Ankole Diocese.

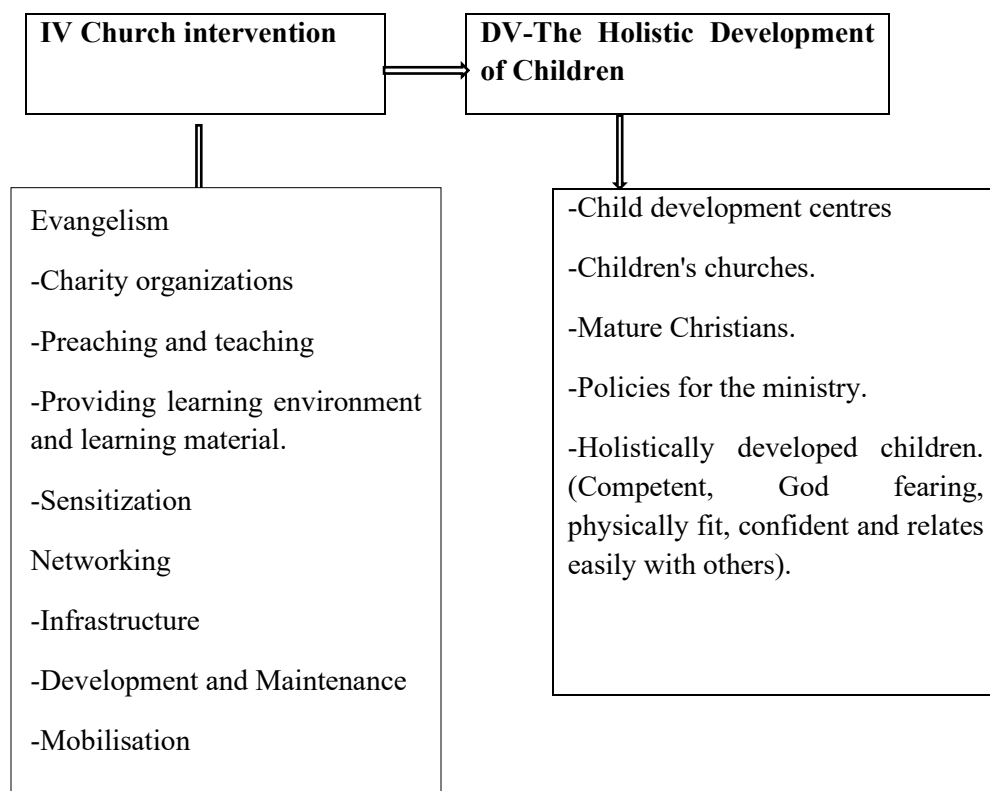
Objective Questions

- 1) What are the existing church programs for the children's holistic development?
- 2) What are the challenges the church has in the holistic development of children?
- 3) What are the suggested strategies for the church on the holistic development of children in the Diocese?

Conceptual Framework

⁷Dan Brewster, 2005. Church, Child and mission, Compassion International, USA

⁸ Dan Brewster, (2005). Church, Child and Mission. Compassion International, U.S.A.

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework Showing the Relationship between the Church and the Holistic Development of Children.**Key: IV-Independent Variable****DV-Dependent Variable****Significance of the Study**

It is important as a church to be critically concerned about the holistic development of children because they are the most in need people on the planet (Brewster,2005). The Church, whose centre is Jesus, should also follow Jesus' example by showing compassion to children and caring for their holistic development. Child raising "experts" and professionals' theories and methods are limited to the physical and mental needs of the children, and cannot deal with the spiritual and moral concepts needed for a balanced development. This is the reason the church intervenes in the holistic development of children.

The study findings will be very significant to the local church leadership, priests, the surrounding community, church policy makers, theologians, the government authorities, charity organisations in

West Ankole Diocese and other dioceses in and outside Uganda. The church should know what they are supposed to do and how it is to be involved in the holistic development of children. The Church leadership and priests will be able to know how the Church interventions affect the holistic development of children and thus take measures to get involved.

This research will help church leaders to remain alert so as to play their part in the holistic development of children. This will be done through recognising the holistic nature of children, individual attention and love. The findings will provide the church with the information and make it keen on allocating funds, seeking accountability to avoid misapplication and embezzlement of the funds by its workers. Theological students who will be carrying out research will be provided with a

base on which other studies on children can be conducted.

Justification of the Study

All children should develop as Jesus did– “in wisdom, in stature, and in favour with God and men”⁹. These four components “neatly encompass all aspects of the whole person and provide a useful model around which to create meaningful holistic development programs” (Brewster, 2005). Like other human beings, children have the potential to develop if we demonstrate God’s compassionate love to them by helping to explore their gifts and strengths and meet their needs in an effective and consistent manner.

This topic will help the church to know the areas of need in the development of children. Due to the fact that no such research has been done in the West Ankole Diocese, the researcher found it essential to carry out a study about the church intervention and the holistic development of children in the West Ankole Diocese.

Scope of the Study

Table 1: The Table Showing Diocese of West Ankole Archdeaconries in their Respective Districts

No.	Name of the archdeaconry	Name of the District
1.	Dean St.Peter’s Cathedral Bweranyangi	Bushenyi
2	All Saints Greater Bushenyi	Bushenyi
3	Rwabutura archdeaconry	Sheema
4	Bikungu Archdeaconry	Mitooma
5	Kabiira Archdeaconry	Mitooma
6	Bugongi	Sheema
7	Kitagata	Sheema
8	Kyeizooba	Bushenyi
9	Kigarama	Mitooma
10	Kashenshero	Mitooma
11	Kyabugimbi	Buwheju
12	Rugando	Rubirizi
13	Kyamuhunga	Bushenyi
14	Kyanyakatura	Sheema
15	Masheruka Arch	Sheema
16	Kabwohe	Sheema
17	Nombe	Bushenyi

⁹ Luke 2:52 in the Bible

The boundaries and extent of the study were defined. This helped me to focus and provide a clear understanding of what was to be investigated.

Content Scope

The researcher investigated the church intervention and the holistic development of children in West Ankole Diocese. The researcher focused on church intervention and the holistic development of children, the opportunities the church has in her attempt to intervene, challenges and the strategies for the holistic development of children.

The Geographical Scope

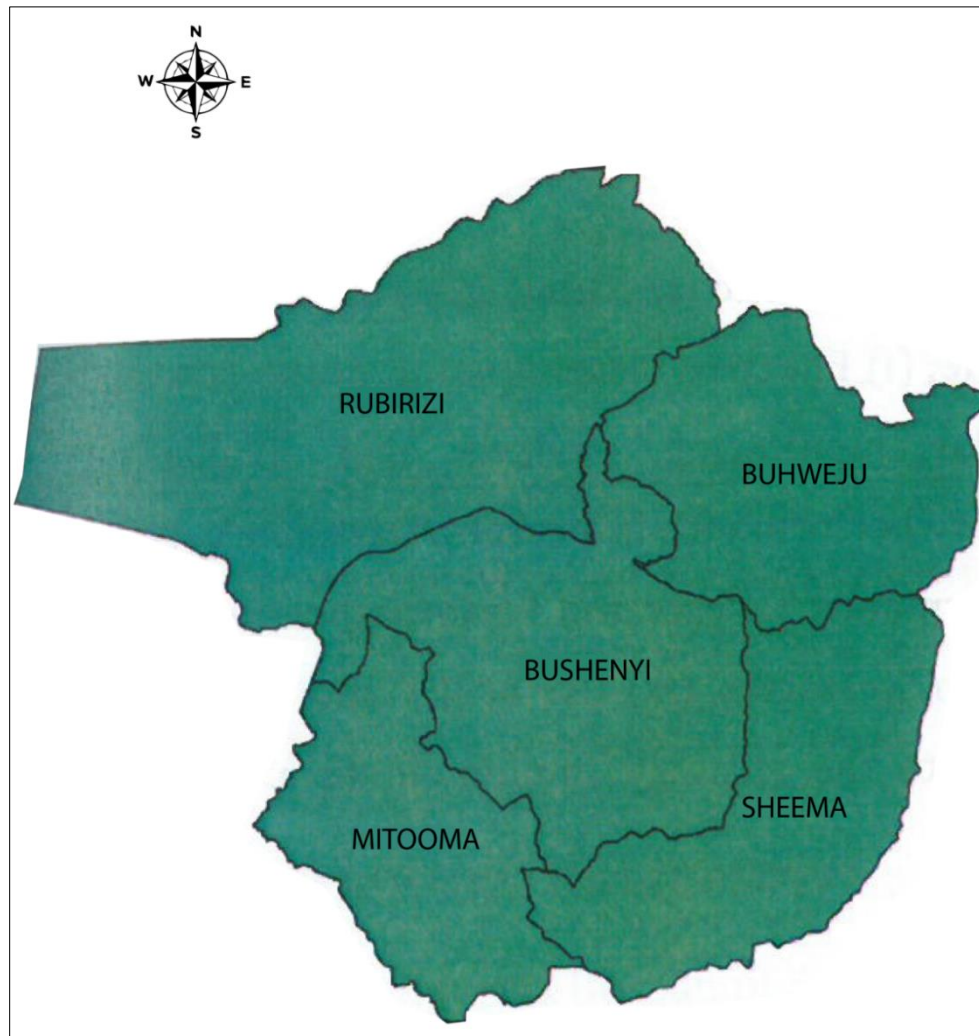
The study was conducted in 25 archdeaconries of West Ankole Diocese. The Diocese was created in 1976 by the subdivision of the Ankole Diocese. West Ankole Diocese is currently led by The Rt. Rev. Johnson Twinomujuni, which is made up of 25 archdeaconries as indicated in the table below:¹⁰ The 25 archdeaconries are in 5 districts, Bushenyi, Rubirizi, Mitooma, Buwheju and Sheema.

¹⁰ The Churchman’s Book and Diary 2024, Centenary Publishing House Limited, Kampala

No.	Name of the archdeaconry	Name of the District
18	Nyakashaka	Buwheju
19	Mitooma	Mitooma
20	Rweibaare	Sheema
21	Ryakasinga	Sheema
22	Nsiika	Buwheju
23	Ndekye	Rubirizi
24	Katerera	Rubirizi
25	Ishaka Urban Arch.	Bushenyi

Source: *Primary data*

The Map of the Diocese of West Ankole Showing 5 Districts where the 25 Archdeaconries are Located.



Source: *Secondary data (Diocese of West Ankole Strategic plan 2023-2027)*

The Diocese of West Ankole is one of the 37 Dioceses that currently constitute the Church of Uganda, and its headquarters are located in Bweranyangi hill, about 50 km from Mbarara on the Mbarara-Fort Portal highway. It is composed of 5 districts. Sheema, Rubirizi, Greater Bushenyi, Bushenyi District, Southwestern Uganda, at Mitooma and Buwheju. It is bordered by Kasese

District in the west, Rukungiri District in the South, Ntungamo District in the southeast and Ibanda District in the North. It has a deanery, 24 Archdeacons, 138 parishes, 412 Sub-Parish Churches, 1 community chaplaincy and school and institutional chaplaincies. West Ankole Diocese is a Bible believing and Spirit-led Church engaged in the mission of Christ in today's world. West Ankole Diocese was chosen because it was feasible within my financial constraints, and the data concerning this topic was readily available. In addition, this thesis has never been carried out there.¹¹

Time Scope

The researcher investigated the church intervention and the holistic development of children in West Ankole Diocese. This study focused on the period from 2002 to 2023 since child development centres were established. The researcher felt that this period would still give recent data by the time of data collection because it is the time when the work of holistic development is realised most by establishing child development centres in the Diocese.

Theoretical/Hypothesis Background

This thesis is directed by Maslow's philosophy, which recognises five levels of needs. These are the needs of understanding, visual and purely spiritual needs. In relation to this research, these needs contribute to the physical, social-economic and spiritual development aspects which are essential for the holistic development of children. The second need is not felt until the demands of the first have been fulfilled, nor the third until the second has been satisfied.¹² This implies that they complement each other for holistic development.

According to Maslow's laws, there is a need for oxygen, food, water, and a relatively constant body temperature (physiological needs). These are the strongest needs, and the physiological needs come

first in the person's search for satisfaction. When the person's thoughts and behaviour are no longer controlled by the physiological needs, the need for security can become active. When children display the signs of insecurity and the need for love and affection, the need for belonging can emerge.

According to Maslow, people seek to overcome feelings of loneliness and alienation. This involves giving and receiving love, affection and a sense of belonging, and they can become dominant. These involve needs for both self-esteem, which is gained from others. Humans have a need for stable, firmly based, high-level respect and respect from others. The person feels self-confident and valuable in the world when these needs are satisfied. The person feels inferior, weak, helpless and worthless when these needs are frustrated. When all of the above-mentioned needs are satisfied, then only the needs for self-actualisation are activated.

Self-actualisation is described as a person's need to be and do that which the person was "born to do." These needs make them feel signs of restlessness. If a person is hungry, unsafe, not loved or accepted or lacking self-esteem, it is very easy to know that the person is restless. It is not always clear when there is a need for self-actualisation. The only reason people would not move well in the direction of self-actualisation is because of the interferences placed in their way by society. Maslow states that educators should respond to the potential an individual has for growing into self-actualisation.

Contextual Background

Children are the future of the Church, and as such, they hold a unique and privileged position.¹³ God's heart for children extends to all nations, and each child shows God's creative, living power to thrive and change their own atmosphere. Local churches in 27 countries around the world partners with Compassion in Africa, Asia, Central America, the

¹¹ The strategic plan 2022-2023

¹² Adopted from <http://www.AbrahamMaslow.Com/motivational/Hierarchyofneeds>.

¹³ COU Child protection policy

Caribbean and South America to give children the opportunity to rise above their conditions to be in their destiny. The Church does this to advocate for children and release them from economic, spiritual, social, and physical poverty in response to the Great Commission. They enable them to become responsible and fulfilled Christians.¹⁴ This ministry began in Uganda in 1980.

In 2014, the Church of Uganda Provincial Assembly, the highest governing organ, approved a Child Protection policy as a step toward Child Protection, Safeguarding and Well-being of all children in all our work and Ministry. The Church of Uganda, as a faith-based organisation, has demonstrated its commitment to Children by putting in place the child protection and safeguarding policy to ensure that our children are kept safe and protected from all harmful acts.¹⁵ However, many people, including Church members, are still not sufficiently mindful of the holistic growth of children.

Many families are unstable due to violence, abuse, alcoholism, substance abuse and HIV/AIDS. Too many Children are suffering in silence. Thousands run away from home, and small babies are abandoned to institutions, the parents perhaps not realising the effects of orphanage on a child's physical and mental development, behaviour, intellect, social abilities, and emotional well-being.¹⁶

In 1976, the Diocese of West Ankole was carved out of Ankole Diocese¹⁷ and on 30th January 1977, it was installed with the consecration of Rt. Rev. Yoram Bamunoba as the 1st Bishop. At the time of inauguration, there were 33 parishes, but by 1989, the number had risen to 99. In 2011, the Diocese of South Ankole was carved out of the Diocese of West Ankole, which led to the transfer of part of the Diocese's churches to South Ankole Diocese.

West Ankole has departments which include Education, Mission and Finance, Communications and Information, Planning, Development, Investment, Lands and Estates. Child Ministry is at the heart of the Diocese, and it focuses on reaching young people for Christ to enable spiritual learning and growth for Christian witness, and equipping workers for children's growth to maturity. The strategy for nurturing, discipling children and sensitising the community about the importance of children has been laid. This unit comprises Compassion International to lift up children from spiritual, physical, economic, social and cognitive poverty in only 5 Archdeaconries (Kigarama, Kyabugimbi, Kyamuhunga, Mitooma, and Rweibaare) out of the 26.

The Diocese partners with the Ministry of Education (MOE) and UNICEF to support a few Early Childhood Development Centres in a few areas of the Diocese. The Diocese also supports 1,030 orphans and vulnerable children in 8 sub-counties of Bushenyi district through the Bweranyangi Parish Orphans and Vulnerable project. Apart from Bushenyi District, other districts in the diocese are not yet reached with OV services. All this has contributed a small portion to the all-inclusive growth in the Diocese. Hence, the need for the church to reach out to more children outside Compassion-assisted projects, Orphans and Vulnerable Children and Early Childhood Development programs. Therefore, the researcher will look at the church intervention and the children's holistic development.

Biblical Perspective of Holistic Development

According to Wilson Makuru (Christian Parenting amidst the 21st century challenges), training a child involves saturating our lives with the character-building principles of the Word of God and obeying it. The Church should continually emphasise God's love, care, provision and protection. They should

¹⁴ Compassion International...worldtradersdirectory.com

¹⁵ COU Child protection policy

¹⁶ IBID

¹⁷ Rt. Rev. Yoram K. Bamunoba (2015), *The Development of Anglican Church in West Ankole 1900-1990*, Fountain Publishers

continue to broaden and deepen the child's spiritual horizons through their example, and by exposing the child to the Word of God, at a very early age (2Tim.3:14-17). As they do so, the child's knowledge of the Lord God and care for others will grow. Jesus' own teaching about childhood, given within a domestic setting (Mark 9:33; 10:10), undoubtedly continued to influence the Church in its awareness of the care of Children.¹⁸ Specific actions which will broaden and deepen the child's love and respect for the Lord are needed in the character development (Holistic development).

The child raising "experts" and professionals' theories and methods are limited to the physical and mental needs of the children, and cannot deal with the spiritual and moral concepts needed for balanced development. Each of the character qualities is essential for a joyful, well-adjusted, stable, productive, and fruitful life (John 10:10; Gal. 5:22). Each character quality is essential for our children to grow up to be pleasant company to their spouses, to have friends, and to work with, for and over others.

The world today desperately yearns for people of character. The person of character stays with the job, finishes the task, does it right, and gives their best. Character is essential, no matter how intelligent and how talented a child may be, in school and in life. Character or integrity will enable a person to control himself and do right even under unbearable pressures, disappointment, stress, or in times of crisis. (Prov.11:3; 31:10-31; Ps. 15; 9:10; Dan. 11:32). A person of character or integrity has inner conviction which control their outward behavior (Matt 23:26). Character or integrity carries the ideal of a person who is the same all the way through, not just something done on the outside for the show, and for a season. It is a character that will enable a husband and his wife to weather the storms

that threaten to shake their marriage relationship (Matt 7:24-29).

The Holy Bible presents men and women of character or integrity. The Lord enabled them to live upright. (Prov.11:3;14:2; 15:8, 19; 21:29; 10-31).

All the world's religions teach and affirm that the root cause of the problems afflicting humankind worldwide is ignorance about the true nature of reality. The experts of our modern times (or rather the postmodern times) glory in human wisdom that is worldly patterns of thinking and living that exalt human intelligence or competence and cleverness, and also affirm that these can safely provide a practical guide or the formula for happy and successful living in the world.

However, Christianity (and the Holy Bible) teaches and insists that the root cause of all human problems is not ignorance but sin. That is rebellion against God and His ways (and can be traced back to the fall of man) (Is. 59:2, Rom 3:9-20;5; 12-14, cf. Gen. 3; 6). Due to the result of the fall of Adam and Eve, their posterity has been corrupted by sin so that all people are not inherently good but sinful and in dire need of God's recreation (Rom 2; 23; 2Cor. 5:17).

Even the gospels affirm the dimensions or aspects of human development "*and Jesus grew in wisdom, stature and in favour with God and men*" (Luke 2:52). Therefore, the growth of the baby Jesus of Nazareth, involved stature (physical development), wisdom (intellectual development), favour with men (emotional and social development) and favour with God (spiritual development). Jesus was the most perfectly balanced person who has ever been. There was nothing lacking in His personality and nature. He was physically, mentally, spiritually and emotionally balanced. He was the most normal man it was possible to be. He had a balanced temperance. He knew both joy (Matt. 11:25) and sorrow (John 11:35; Luke 19:41). In order to achieve a balanced and harmonious, or whole person development, or

¹⁸ David Noel Freedman, Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible. Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co. 2000. Pg 235.

holistic development and full potential, the parents, teachers, pastors and other adults must focus on the four aspects of human development (holistic development). The Biblical teachings and the findings of the 'experts' show the importance of the parents to start early to surround their child with the right influences-love for him, care for him, spending time with him, playing with him, challenging him, and enjoying him. The parents must have the proper long-term development goals for the whole child (body, soul and spirit). The parents should carry out day-to-day activities to give their child the needed experiences to develop the desired abilities, skills and character.

It is vital for parents to understand the important stages of children's development. For each stage of growth and development, the parents must understand four basic areas. These include -physical development (the development of certain physical skills and abilities); the intellectual (mental) development (particularly in the areas of language skills and awareness of the world in which the child lives); the emotional and social development; and the spiritual development (broadening of spiritual horizons).¹⁹

The development of life skills is of great significance for individual well-being. The development of a child towards becoming a responsible and sociable citizen in society is not an easy or automatic process. A number of skills and abilities must be acquired, competencies must be developed, and capabilities must be tested and strengthened. The ability to communicate is surely one of the core competencies that enables an individual to be involved in group relationships. The ability to think critically and solve problems in daily life depends on the development of one's capacity to analyse individual ideas and the opinions of others.

¹⁹Makuru Wilson. Christian Parenting Amidst the 21st century challenges. Pg 56

²⁰Athletics for Development, Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH. 2019, Kampala. Pg 20.

In addition, characteristics such as self-esteem, confidence and leadership skills are individual characteristics that, far beyond that, are part of everyone's personality. Supporting the development and manifestation of these properties is one of the aspects of the integral formation.²⁰

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

This Research was about an investigation on church intervention and the Holistic Development of children in West Ankole Diocese. Review of the related literature covered a number of publications related to the topic investigated. These views analysed the Church intervention and the holistic development of children, the existing programmes, challenges and the strategies of the Church on the Holistic development of children in West Ankole Diocese.

Existing Church Programmes for the Holistic Development of Children

The church, in partnership with Compassion International, helps impoverished children in areas using a three-phase approach. The approach goes beyond providing food and medical aid and involves education and training to prepare individuals to contribute back to their community.²¹ This only concerns those in impoverished areas, and this research seeks to intervene in all children, even those in prosperous areas.

According to Patrick McDonald (2000), "numerous Christians around the world have become involved in investing time and money often at great personal cost" for children in poverty. Projects have grown and developed.²² Even these continue to cater for a particular aspect as need arises, but not looking at

²¹ Program field manual Compassion.

²² McDonald, Patrick, reaching children in need (*easbourne.uk: Kingsway publications, 2000*).

the entire child. The frustration sometimes is with those on the ground who do not utilise funds as expected. Therefore, there is a need for the church to intervene. This research looked at all children, but McDonald is only concerned with children in poverty. Even children who seem to be in a prosperous environment should be attended to. McDonald did not show how these resources are distributed in today's corruption. This study looked at the church intervention on the holistic development of children, whether in poverty or in a prosperous environment and the distribution of resources to these children.

The movement involved caring for children at risk has a very strong partnership with Viva Network. It improves and increases existing efforts by connecting and mobilising all Christians to meet the challenge of helping children at risk. This is done through a variety of networking initiatives which give Christians working with "children at risk" opportunities to get others involved, encourage and challenge each other, share ideas, information and resources, engage in joint ventures, and launch new initiatives on behalf of "children at risk." This networking initiative takes place locally, regionally and internationally.²³ The church should take up its responsibility and ensure that services are delivered to these children who are in need. However, these are only concerned with children at risk, leaving a big percentage of children not at risk but lacking, as far as holistic development is concerned.

The church, in partnership with Compassion International, helps those in impoverished areas using a holistic three-phase approach.²⁴ One thing

left out here is that even children who are not in impoverished areas need attention.

Strategy for the Holistic Development of Children

Gallagher, in his book (2007), says that children have to be considered full members and participants in decision-making and life experiences in the main church. He continues to say that Children's participation in congregational prayers, sermons, and reading texts reinforces congregational commitment and expresses the goodness of values associated with the Church.²⁵ However, Gallagher is not mindful of the appropriate age that should be considered for this duty. This research looked at the children's age and what they can do in the church programme to develop their life skills and the knowledge of God.

Adyegu Daniel wrote about the law to be accorded to the special protection of orphans and other children. Therefore, the Church is responsible for supporting the rights of children since they are citizens and members of the church. This research was concerned with all children, but specifying orphans because all children are vulnerable, even those in a well-to-do environment. It is not only the responsibility of the church but also her mandate to advocate and defend the cause of children.²⁶

Byaruhanga, writing about the Church women's ministry, quoted Olive Parker, pointing out the objectives of the Mothers' Union. One of the 3 central objectives of the Mothers' Union in the church is to stir up all mothers about their great responsibility in the training of both genders.²⁷ However, fathers should also have been included in this responsibility for the holistic development of

²³ [Http://www.viva.org](http://www.viva.org) (accessed Jan. 4.2005)

²⁴ Programme field manual compassion

²⁵ Sally, K. Gallagher. (June 2007). Children as Religious Resources: The role of Children in the social Reformation of Class, culture, and Religious Identity. *Journal for the study of Religion*. Vol. 46(2) pp. 169-183.

²⁶ The thesis made by Kebirungi Ellon. 2018. The contribution of Church towards The Holistic development of impoverished Children. Page 43

²⁷ Byaruhanga and Nassaka, 2013. Building a great future: A legacy of Bishop Tucker Theological college; Mukono, Uganda Christian University publications. Pg 70. Quoted in Olive Parker, For family's sake: A history of the Mothers' Union 1876-19769 (Folkestone: Bailey Brothers and Swinfen, 1975), 27 and 122.

children. This objective caters for all children in Christian families. This objective is commended for covering all children regardless of their conditions. They all need the attention of the church to develop holistically.

There is a need for the church to reach out to the youth in the Diocese to develop them in a holistic way spiritually, physically, socially, academically and above all economically. It is the divine role of the church to invest in the youth because they are the foundation for the church, especially today, when there are many social aspects which are diverting the youth from societal core, appreciation, trust, love, and tolerance, among others. There is rampant corruption in most organisations, including churches, because the human resources employed fall short of these values.²⁸

Also, the twenty-first century is witnessing a world of increasing multicultural and multiracial societies or communities. The application of Christian ideals is a sure solution to promote multiculturalism. Although very often Christians do not live up to the standard of their beliefs, Christianity can offer the most reliable guide to live in community, provided that it is not applied by force. To apply our Lord Jesus Christ's teachings is a guarantee of success not only among races and cultures, but for all types of human relationships, as well. The basic Christian ideals include, among others: love to friends and enemies, peace not only as the absence of war, but as a way of life and interaction and understanding of all tiers of class, race, culture, religion, age, gender and lifestyle.

Through intimate communication with God, the Holy Spirit progressively transforms believers into Christ's likeness until His attributes become part and parcel of our character. These attributes of "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control" (Gal.

5:22) or Christians' identity (1Peter 2:9).²⁹ However, this is limited to the spiritual and social needs of children living out the cognitive and physical aspects to have a balanced, holistic development.

According to Deutsche (2019), "Sport is recognised for its rising influence towards the awareness of growth and peace objectives in the advancement of acceptance, respect, and empowerment of young people. It improves the health and well-being of children and youth. It is enjoyable and transmits values such as fairness, team spirit, tolerance and understanding. When utilised in an educational and appropriate manner, sport enhances self-esteem and self-confidence and promotes readiness to take on responsibility".³⁰

Children learn to handle victory as well as defeat, and they acquire life skills that empower them to handle challenging situations and improve their future perspective through sports. The heart of civil society is connected to sport and facilitates participation. It creates a sense of belonging that transcends ethnic and social divisions. It is an innovation for development. The strength of the sports for development approach lies in its cross-cutting nature, where it can contribute to designated development goals like health, gender equality or social cohesion. Several sports disciplines, such as Athletics, can be adopted in play situations to develop life skills so as to contribute to the realisation of certain development objectives.³¹ The church has contributed to the holistic development of children through sports, whereby in most church founded institutions, sports are one of the activities given priority, especially in the West Ankole Diocese. Although church-founded schools have embraced physical education. Though there is no spiritual aspect in all this.

²⁸Rwasheema. E. An expert view on church founded schools; The voice Diocese of West Ankole, 2018. Volume 3. Page 38.

²⁹ Makuru Wilson. Christian Parenting Amidst the 21st century challenges. Pg 104

³⁰Deutch: Athletics for Development, 2019, Kampala

³¹Athletics for Development, Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH. 2019, Kampala. Pg 3

Children and adolescents are interested in participating and seeking comparison with others through multiple movement abilities. Athletics promotes health and encourages children to play and expend their energy for long-term health benefits. The growing demands for forms of games and play activities provide and contribute to the harmonious general development of children.

Athletic activities are profitable for the incorporation of children in a given social setting. The team events and relays in which everyone contributes their effort are opportunities for children to meet, appreciate and accept their differences. The effortlessness of the guidelines and the friendly nature of the offered situations allow children and youth to play the part of officials and team coaches ably. This also builds their competence to lead others.

Athletics contributes to the opportunity for adventure to be stimulated, where children and youth need to have the feeling to master the event they take part in. The play situations conspire to keep the event outcome impulsive until the last event. This is the driving element of children's motivation. Overall development in leadership, decision making, self-realisation, trust, teamwork and motivation are necessary in daily life for children as well as youth. Training in athletic activities presents an opportunity to incorporate life skills for the wholesome development of children and youth.³² All this contributes to the holistic development of children, and it can be embraced by the church in partnership with the education sector. However, the spiritual aspect is not included in this.

According to the UNESCO Charter on Physical Education and Sports (1978),³³ the practice of physical education and sports is a fundamental right for all, and the charter further states that every human being has a fundamental right to access

physical education and sports, which are essential for the full development of personality. The freedom to develop physical, intellectual and moral powers through physical education and Sports must be guaranteed both within the education system and in other aspects of social life.³⁴ This is an opportunity for the church to partner with UNESCO on the cause of holistic development of children, since both have the same objectives.

However, only three aspects are considered, that is, physical, intellectual and moral powers, leaving out the spiritual aspect. This would be the opportunity for the church to come up with the spiritual aspect, in addition to other aspects, for the holistic development of children. The church must also understand the worldwide growing trends in the twenty-first century, which impinge on or impact the growth and development of adolescent children.

There is a worldwide growing trend of corruption on the part of politicians who should be unblemished examples or role models of behaviour to all citizens, including adolescents. There is a worldwide growing trend of hooliganism and violence and violation of games and sports' rules and ethical codes on the part of athletes, sportsmen and women, who should be role models of disciplines for all citizens, including adolescents. The use of violence and aggression, either by the juvenile delinquents or gangbusters, is driven by selfishness to break the law or by the political systems that attempt to impose their dogmatic ideologies on the citizens, including the adolescents, by force.

The use of the legal systems to achieve selfish goals that do not correspond to the spirit and essence of God's moral law. Think of the legislation of abortion, homosexuality, change of sex (transsexuals), divorce, (Ps 12:8), and many others. The laws should be designed to uphold the value

³²Athletics for Development, Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH. 2019, Kampala. Pg 9.

³³ National Physical Education and sports 2021

³⁴ IBID

and dignity of human life from conception to the grave. There is the violation of ecological systems through unlimited and indiscriminate use of natural resources; this is done out of simple convenience and personal interest or greed, without taking into account contemporary or future generations.

There is a worldwide growing trend of rejection of biblical values, principles and ideas on the part of education systems that leave them out of the school curriculum (or curriculum), or syllabi (or syllabus), thereby depriving the adolescents of spiritual guidance towards high aims (godly life or hope in the life after death). It is rare today to find people of any age with clear and firm beliefs on ideas that are able to submit their desires and personal impulses to biblical values, principles and ideas.

According to the report of research carried out by Prof. Andy Bilson (2013), one district respondent said: The Orphans and Vulnerable Children programme is not friendly on the ground, orphans are not being reached. A lot is theoretical. There is a need for practical solutions, not to raise the expectations of people. However, in this report, only the orphans are talked about. Even if other children have parents, they are somehow impoverished in one way or another. This research seeks to look at all children in their different capacities.

Dan Brewster points out that poverty is one of the problems that shows gaps in the holistic development of children. The poor lack things like food, shelter, land and clean water, or ideas, skills or knowledge. It is true that deficits and shortages, ineffective economic or distribution systems, ignorance, warfare or ethnic conflicts and other evils all contribute to much suffering and misery of the poor³⁵. On this note, I expected Brewster to bring the Church on board and show how the Church can come in to bridge this gap. This research

will show the intervention of the Church in the Christian holistic development of children.

According to President John Quincy Adams, 'So great is my veneration for the Bible that the earlier my children begin to read it, the more confident will be my hope that they will prove useful citizens to their country and respectable members of society.'³⁶ The Bible is one of the strategies the church can use for the Holistic development of children. However, the method of reading it is not suggested by the writer because children should have material which can help them understand the Bible Better.

Stewart writes on the character traits suiting future professions, saying that by carefully observing behaviour and classroom performance for various children, one can accurately predict the professions aligning with their dominant interests and passions. Here are some examples. Where most parents want their children to score 100% in mathematics, under-average performers are not lazy or foolish. God does not give abilities which people will not need to use in their calling. A child who scores 10% in mathematics is not foolish, but that simply indicates that their future jobs require less accuracy, such as farming, performing arts, name it. Stewart advises parents not to harass low scores, but to encourage all to work hard. Scoring 100% in mathematics points to a child who is in future called to be a surgeon, engineer, and such professions as demanding extreme accuracy.³⁷

The new curriculum focuses on developing a well-rounded child or citizen with desirable employability skills who is competitive in the job market. The curriculum explicitly states the attributes that young people will develop by the end of the educational process, which include: Confident persons who display self-motivation, self-management, and self-esteem. Responsible and patriotic citizens consider the environment and

³⁵ Brewster Dan. 2005. Child, Church and Mission.

³⁶ Ultimate Bible Guide 2018. Holman Bible Publishers.Naasville,Tennessee.

³⁷ Robert Stewart, (1942). Personality and Character Building; Light and Life Press.

health when making personal decisions and learning. Life learners are capable of planning and reflecting on their own learning. Learners who are possible societal contributors and who have gained and can apply general abilities. Learners who embrace Uganda's 2013 National Ethics and ideals Policy ideals such as humanity, honesty, integrity, hard work, justice, and fairness. Learners who can think critically, evaluate and solve problems in school and at work, be creative and inventive in their approaches to learning and life, and communicate well in all formats, among other things. Learners who have obtained the desired competencies and abilities through the Directorate of Industrial Training (DIT) and project work. However, the new curriculum does not include the spiritual aspect of a child, which is why there is a need for the Church to intervene.³⁸

An Analysis of the Church of Uganda Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy: Children's Ministry Education Directorate.

According to section 1.0 Policy Mission Statement, the Church of Uganda is committed to safeguarding children. The Church should select and train ordained and lay ministers: volunteers and paid workers with children and young people, using referees and checking the background of each person. This agrees with the toolkit for Churches that the body of Christ is in an ideal position to be able to support children to remain in families, even if one or more parents are absent. Through the care and support of struggling families, the Church has the potential to influence the whole community with God's values. Where children are unable to stay with their biological family or next of kin, the Church is ideally placed to offer alternative families through fostering or adoption³⁹. In doing this, the

child is able to grow holistically. Therefore, there is a need for church intervention, and it is a reason I am writing this thesis.

One of the objectives of the Church of Uganda is to reach children in order to facilitate spiritual learning and growth for Christian witness among children. This involves equipping Children's workers and children so that they will grow to maturity: developing strategies for nurturing, discipleship and sensitising the Church and the community about the importance of children. Children are recognised to be the future of the church, and as such, they hold a unique and privileged position. The Church of Uganda's Child Protection and Safeguarding policy is a key aspect of our Ministry so that our young people are ministered to holistically. The Church ensures that the body, mind and soul are all glorifying God. Many people, however, are still not aware of the role of building child protection measures into their work.⁴⁰

The church of Uganda takes children's issues seriously because Jesus valued them and called them to himself. "Then little children were brought to Him and he laid his hands on them and prayed, but the disciples rebuked them. But Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not forbid them: for such is the Kingdom of heaven." Matthew 19:13-14. This is in agreement with CRANE (Children at Risk Action Network) that God cares for them greatly and they are precious to God (Psalm 139:13-14); God works through them to fulfil His purposes and will; Jesus welcomes children (Matthew 18:5).⁴¹

According to section 2.0 (a), the Church of Uganda "believes that each child is an individual created in the image of God (Genesis 1:26-27)," special and with a purpose for his or her life.⁴² This is in line

³⁸ The Blossom Magazin, St.Mark's College Namagoma. Tripod Media Group Limited, Printers Arcade, Nasser Road. Pages 10-11

³⁹ Why Children matter. A toolkit for Churches. 2016 Viva in partnership with CRANE. www.viva.org www.cranenetwork.org

⁴⁰ COU Child protection policy 2013. Pg iii

⁴¹ Guide on Child protection safeguarding and wellbeing implementation for Church leaders and stakeholders 2020. Page 17

⁴² IBID PG 2

with the toolkit for churches that every child is a precious, unique gift from God. Section 2.0 (b) states that COU is committed to working with children to help them discover their potential to receive healing and restoration where needed, and aims to provide each child with a warm, loving and safe environment. The Church also recognises the unborn Child as a created being with life from God. Induced Abortion is unacceptable and should never be an option given at any moment to any young person.⁴³ A child thrives when they are raised in a loving family. Yet this is not the experience of every child.

Section 2.1 states that the Church recognises parents as the main caretakers of children in their homes (families). This is based on the Biblical foundation (Psalm 127:3). Their role is to provide basic needs such as love, food, housing, medical care, and education. Children, too, are encouraged to honour and obey their Parents Deuteronomy 5:16, Ephesians 6:1. The parents and Godparents are charged with the responsibility of nurturing their children through teaching, being good examples and through their prayers. They have a big role in the upbringing of their children and making sure that they are trained and guided in what is Godly living, Christian values and life skills. All this should be done in love for the children because they are just stewards. Children belong to God, our Heavenly Father. Ephesians 6:4. This is in agreement with CRANE who supports the Church to be God's representative in the world, take lead in caring for and protecting children by supporting them to live in safe families; creating child friendly churches and safe spaces in communities; responding to abuse and trauma that children face, welcoming and engaging them in the community of faith;

advocating for their God-given rights; and teaching them their responsibilities and godly values.⁴⁴

The International School Sport Federation deliver online and onsite capacity-building activities for teachers, sports representatives, coaches, officials, and students around the world. Its main objective is to recognise and or upgrade the knowledge and skills of any of these stakeholders involved or planning to be involved in national, continental, or international sports, educational networks, institutions, events, or organisations.⁴⁵ This would be enriching if the Church could subscribe to this or partner with them for the holistic development of Children. However, the Church need to embrace technology to get such services on board since some programs are online.

ISF has activities which include: Protecting children in Sport, Anti-Doping prevention in sports and Mental health in sports.

According to ISF, children have the inner resources if educated, to fully understand, identify and react in front of negative behaviour such as racism, gender inequality or violence and abuse. ISF plays a role in finding the right way to express difficult ideas and present complicated topics to young people in order for them, not only to understand but also to appropriately apprehend this issue and be able to react if facing it. By emphasising the importance of honesty, integrity, and personal responsibility, anti-doping education contributes to the moral development of young athletes. It encourages them to make informed choices, stand up against cheating, and develop a strong sense of integrity that extends beyond the realm of sports and into other aspects of their lives. Anti-doping education plays a crucial role in shaping the

⁴² Why Children matter. A toolkit for Churches. 2016 Viva in partnership with CRANE. www.viva.org, www.cranenetwork.org

⁴⁴ Guide on Child protection safeguarding and wellbeing implementation for Church leaders and stakeholders 2020. Page 17

⁴⁵ Isf, gymnaside bahrain 2024 forum, block 1062, road 6204, sakhir, bahrain

attitudes and behaviours of young people involved in sports.

Educating them about the risks, consequences, and ethical implications of doping promotes health, fair play, and integrity while providing them with the necessary tools to make informed decisions that align with their long-term well-being and athletic aspirations. In a world where 1 in 5 children faces mental health challenges, many do not receive the care they need. ISF believes that granting young people access to information about mental health is crucial for empowering them to understand and manage their well-being. It emphasises that mental health is just as essential as physical health. Children learn that physical performance cannot thrive without mental resilience, highlighting the interconnectedness of how we feel physically and emotionally.⁴⁶ This could be adopted by the Church as a strategy for the holistic development of Children. However, there is no spiritual aspect, and that is why there is a need for the Church's Intervention in the holistic development of children.

METHODOLOGY

Research methodology refers to the guidelines which researchers follow when approaching and performing research activities. It provides the principles for organisation, planning, designing and conducting good research, which makes it a science and philosophy behind all research.⁴⁷

This chapter describes the methodology which was used in carrying out the study. It presented the research design, study population, determination of sample size, data collection methods and instruments, validity and reliability, procedure of data collection and analysis.

This study employed qualitative techniques of data collection. This method was preferred because it allowed me to better understand the experiences of

people; it allowed me to explore how decisions are made and provided me with a detailed insight into how interventions may change the situation. The qualitative method also helped me to access the thoughts and feelings of research participants, which could enable the development of an understanding of the meaning that people ascribe to their experiences, as far as the Holistic Development of Children is concerned.

Both Quantitative and Qualitative techniques were applied to data collection using questionnaires and interviews. Questionnaires offered a fast, efficient and inexpensive means of gathering large amounts of information from a sizeable sample scope, while an interview tool would allow me to gather rich information and draw more detailed conclusions.

Population is an aggregate or totality of all the objects, subjects or members that conform to a set of specifications that is the main focus of a scientific query.⁴⁸ Other researchers define a population as a totality of persons, events, organisations, case records or other sampling units with which the research problem is concerned.

The population of this study was made up of Child development workers, church leaders and church members (parishioners) in selected archdeaconries of West Ankole Diocese. These respondents were utilised because they had the necessary information that could answer the research questions and fulfil the study objectives. Child development workers are involved in the holistic development ministry of children, and they watch how the church members participate in the same ministry. The church leaders are at the centre of the ministry and oversee the entire ministry. Church members are witnesses to what the church contributes to the holistic development of children. Therefore, I am convinced that all these give enough information on the church and the holistic development of children in the

⁴⁶ ISF GYMNASIADE BAHRAIN 2024

⁴⁷ Legesse, B (2014). Research Methods in Agribusiness and Value Chains. School of Agricultural Economics and Agribusiness, Haramaya University

⁴⁸ Hanlon, B. & Larget, B. (2011). Samples and Populations: Department of statistics University of Wisconsin-Madison. Retrieved from [<http://www.stat.wisc.edu/~st571-1/03-samples-4.pdf>], pp.1-21

Diocese. The population of the study was 450 people, out of which 280 were sampled as shown in the table below.

Table 1: Study Population, Sample Size, Sampling Method and Instruments.

Category	Population	Sample size	Sampling Methods	Instrument
Church members	10 x 20=200	150	Cluster sampling	Questionnaire
Child Development Workers	15 x 10=150	50	Convenience sampling	Questionnaire
Church leaders	10 x 10=100	80	Purposive sampling	Interview guide
Total	450	280		

Source: Primary data modified according to the table of determination of sample size from a given population developed by Krejcie and Morgan.⁴⁹

Sampling is the process of selecting elements from a population in such a way that the sample elements will be selected to represent the population. This means that as much as possible, most characteristics of the population will be represented in the sample selected.⁵⁰ Purposive, Convenience and group sampling techniques were used to get information from the respondents, depending on the category in which they belonged, as shown in the figure above. The sample size was determined using tables.

The respondents were chosen in three groups. The first group consisted of the church leaders in West Ankole Diocese. Out of 100 church leaders, only 80 were given questionnaires. This is because the group was expected to have enough information from the children since they interact with them in church, in their homes, and during home visitations. More to that, many respondents from this group are themselves parents and always discuss children's matters in church and in different meetings.

The second group was children development workers because they interact with children and their parents in Child Development projects and churches. Therefore, they were expected to know much about the state of the church as far as the holistic development of children is concerned, and the challenges faced in the Diocese. Out of 150

workers, only 50 were sampled. The third group consisted of church members of different age groups in different churches in the West Ankole Diocese. Simple random sampling was used to get these respondents. This gave a chance to all of being selected since they were all involved in the children's ministry. All these mentioned groups had first-hand information about the study. The total sample size was 230 respondents.

This refers to the activities connected to the storage, organisation, documentation and distribution of data, which is intended to maximise the value of research and to address the concerns associated with the integrity of the research process. Data management practices help in making the research process extra efficient, facilitate collaboration, and help prevent the loss of data. The researcher applied qualitative techniques to the data that would be collected using both Primary and secondary data collection methods.

The qualitative technique of data collection was used. This was applied to the data collected using a questionnaire and an interview. This was done qualitatively, taking into consideration the nature of the underlying response using primary methods. The collection of primary data involved the use of a

⁴⁹ Krejcie, R.V., & Morgan, D.W. (1970). Determining Sample Size for Research Activities. *Educational and Psychological Measurements*, 30-607-610

⁵⁰ Amin, M. E. (2005). *Social Science Research: Conception, Methodology and Analysis*. University of Yaounde I, BP 755 Yaounde Cameroon Makerere University.

questionnaire and interviews to gather information from the selected respondents.

The researcher distributed the questionnaire to the intended respondents. This I desired owing to the fact that it offers a great assurance of privacy because the target sample was to give sensible information without fear, as their identity was needed on the questionnaire. The questionnaire has an advantage in terms of low cost. Questionnaires were self-administered to children ministry workers and church members to find out the intervention of the church in the holistic development of children. Questions were structured, of which some were open and others were closed-ended. This instrument was preferred because it was time-saving.

The interview method basically relied on face-to-face interviews with the respondents in a bid to generate detailed and firsthand information in addition to giving more information which were given through the questionnaire. This involved the researcher visiting the selected respondents with a set of pre-determined questions and holding interviews on a one-on-one basis.

The method was applied to only church leaders. The method was desired owing to the fact that the interview could clarify any problems, and the person understood the questions in relation to the above. An interview followed up on the questions whenever it was deemed necessary to clarify the answers. This instrument was used for interviews, which were carried out with purposively selected key informants. It contained both structured and non-structured questions for convenience. Enquiry questions were included to create rapport between the interviewer and the interviewees. This instrument was preferred because it had a better completion rate, and the interviewer was sure that the selected respondents were the ones who would answer the questions, unlike the case of questionnaires. It was intended to tap the knowledge and experience of respondents regarding the church and the holistic development of children.

The interview method basically relied on face-to-face interviews with the respondents in a bid to generate detailed and firsthand information, in addition to giving more information which would not be given in the questionnaires. This involved the researcher visiting the selected respondents with a set of pre-determined questions and holding interviews on a one-on-one basis. The method was applied to the church's top management. The method was desired owing to the fact that the interviewers could clarify any problem, and the person understood the questions in relation to the above; an interviewer asked follow-up questions whenever it was deemed necessary to clarify answers.

This instrument was used for interviews, which would be carried out with purposively selected key informants. It contained both structured and non-structured questions for convenience. Probe questions were included because it created rapport between the interviewer and the interviewees. This instrument was preferred because it had a better completion rate, and the interviewer would be sure that the selected respondent would answer the questions, unlike the case of a questionnaire. It also tapped the knowledge and experience of respondents regarding the contribution of the church's stand concerning the Holistic development of children in West Ankole Diocese.

For each data collection method mentioned above, the researcher developed a corresponding data collection instrument, which was used to collect the necessary information for the study. This was achieved by designing the questions in sections that fully correspond with the research objectives, questions and hypotheses for this study.

Questionnaires were administered to church leaders and child development workers. Questions here were semi-structured, of which some were open and others closed-ended. This instrument was preferred because it was time-saving during data collection from respondents, unlike using an interview guide. Questionnaires could reach a large number of

respondents, represent an even larger population, allow for comparisons, generate standardised data, generate qualitative data through the use of open-ended questions, and be confidential and even anonymous. The researcher observed that respondents are literate enough to fill them in their free time.

The reason for an interview guide when collecting data included the following: it was the most widely used technique for obtaining qualitative data from participants, it was relatively economical, had questions for all participants, it could ensure anonymity and used statements or questions, but in all cases, the participant responds to something written for specific purposes. An interview guide was used to collect data from the church leaders.

RESULTS

The study sought to examine the challenges the church has in the holistic development of children in the Diocese of West Ankole. Using thematic content analysis, the in-depth interviews yielded three themes, each with a couple of sub-themes.

Theme 1: Home Environment-Related Challenges (HERC)

The home environment-related challenges were grouped into three subthemes: economic challenges, social challenges and communication and information challenges. These are further explained below, with verbatim excerpts from the participants.

HERC Subtheme 1: Economic Challenges.

The participants revealed that the economic challenges of parents and caregivers of children totally undermined the church's influence on the holistic development of children. Among the notable economic challenges were poverty and a high level of illiteracy. Most respondents indicated that poverty and a high level of illiteracy affected parents and caregivers of children, and this hindered the church from fully partaking in the holistic development of children. The following quotations

illustrate this fact. Respondent 1: *Most parents and caregivers are poor and have low levels of education, and, for that matter, they don't know the importance of the holistic development of children. Eventually, they are not cooperative with church leaders on the matter.* This means that a deliberate effort needs to be made to alleviate poverty levels within the households and encourage adult education in West Ankole Diocese.

HERC Subtheme 2: Social Challenges

Another challenge noted to affect the church in an attempt to intervene in the holistic development of children is the social challenges, which include: drug abuse, Poor upbringing of children and parents not being role models to children. This was manifested in children being rebellious and having little interest in church. They eventually become hard to be disciplined by the church, as revealed by one of the participants: Respondent 2: *Children are proud and rebellious; they are under the influence of peer influence by being involved in vices like smoking and drinking alcohol. Children don't want to listen to what their teachers in church tell them to do. Some children don't value church activities, and they seem to be possessed.*

HERC Subtheme 3: Information and Communication.

Another challenge noted to affect the church intervention in the holistic development of children in West Ankole Diocese was concerning information and communication. This was manifested in the ignorance of parents and caregivers and the negative attitude towards the holistic development of children due to the limited sensitisation by church leaders. One of the participants revealed that:

Respondent 3: *Most of the Parents and caregivers are ignorant concerning the holistic development of children due to low sensitisation, and this has led to a negative attitude. This has led to the development of children's talents. In addition to that, children have been sidelined.*

Theme 2: Church Environment-Related Challenges (CERC)

The church environment-related challenges were grouped into three subthemes: economic challenges, leadership and administration, and information and communication. These are further described below, with precise excerpts from the participants.

CERC Subtheme 1: Economic Challenges

The participants revealed that economic challenges undermine the church's intervention in the holistic development of children, among others. Among the notable challenges were poverty and corruption. Most respondents mentioned that poverty and corruption hindered the holistic development of children. Respondent 4: *One of the challenges that has hindered the church in its attempt to intervene in the holistic development of children is poverty in the local community and corruption among the church leaders. This has led to unlimited facilities for sports and a lack of materials to use, for instance, teaching aids in the Diocese.* Respondent 6: *As a result of poverty, there is corruption, limited capital, limited resources, a lack of funds, and high levels of illiteracy among parents and caregivers. The materials for children's churches are not enough. Eventually, this led to limited services for Sunday school. There is an inadequately skilled labour force and low facilitation of teachers.*

CERC Subtheme 2: Leadership and Administration

The participants reported a number of leadership and administration challenges that the church encountered in its endeavours to intervene in the holistic development of children in West Ankole Diocese. These included less concern for children, inadequate motivation to volunteer, less mobilisation, gender balance issues, limited time, Disagreements among church leaders, inadequate trainers, less interest in children's matters, low sensitisation, less networking, low children's

involvement, less value given to children and low outreach programs.

Inadequate Mobilization

Most respondents asserted that mobilisation is not enough, and this was confirmed by the following quotation from different respondents: Respondent 6: *Most church leaders do not even know the number of children in their churches due to poor mobilisation.*

Less Concern for Children

Respondent 7 had this to say on the issue of church leaders having less concern for children.

Most church leaders are more concerned with other church programs than with empowering the young generation. Children are not given a platform to give their opinions. There is limited time given to children. There is a challenge of limited attention given to high-quality child care. There is a limited number of children's teachers compared to the number of children. Low value is given to children. Some church leaders concentrate on developing other things rather than uplifting the holistic development of children. There is a problem of not involving children in the church programs, and they are not allowed to sit inside the main church building. Another respondent added: Respondent 8:

There is low facilitation of teachers and no children's churches at the parish and sub-parish level. There are no trained teachers and enough material to use. There is no time given to children to share their problems with church leaders.

Inadequate Motivation for Volunteers

On this issue, Respondent 9 had this to say: *There is a lack of motivation in people who come to volunteer in the children's ministry.* Concerning gender balance, the respondent revealed that female children are the only ones given the opportunity to

participate. There are disagreements among church leaders, which have affected the ministry.

Low Sensitisation and Networking

Low sensitisation and Networking were one of the challenges that were revealed by the participants during the process of data collection. The majority of the respondents said that the church rarely networks with the local government concerning the holistic development of children. This hindered her intervention in the holistic development of children in West Ankole Diocese.

Low Outreaches

During an interview with the church leaders, most respondents confirmed that the church does not do outreaches. The following words were said by respondent 9 to confirm what it: Respondent 9:

There are no outreaches done by the Diocesan Youth and children's staff. It would be better if they reach out to archdeaconries, parishes and sub-parishes to do sensitisation to Christians about the importance of Holistic development of children. They only write letters to them asking for financial support. This hindered the church leaders, especially at the parish and sub-parish level, from sensitising the parishioners about the holistic development of children.

CERC Subtheme 3: Information and Communication

Information and communication was revealed by most respondents as one of the challenges that hinder the church in her intervention in the holistic development of children. Respondent 10 confirmed it by his words. Respondent 10:

There is limited time and a lack of information from church leaders towards the holistic development of children. There is little awareness, and people are not allowed to give their own opinions. There is a lack of trained educators.

No time is given to children to share their problems with the church leaders. Children have been sidelined in church. They call them when the need arises. The church would reach out to children, but this is a challenge because they are always in boarding schools. They are not available at church for discipleship. Hence, a challenge to be reached.

This means that the church has to work and improve its communication and information services in its intervention in the holistic development of children.

Theme 3: Children-Related Challenges (CRC)

The children-related challenges were grouped into two subthemes: Social-emotional, communication, information and technology challenges. These are further explained below, verbatim excerpts from the participants.

CRC Subtheme 1: Social-Emotional Challenges

The participants revealed that social-emotional challenges grossly undermine the intervention of the church in the holistic development of children. Among the notable social-emotional challenges were rebellion, peer groups, orphaned children, low self-esteem and Trauma. Most respondents alluded to the fact that children's rebellion hindered the church from intervening in the holistic development of children. The following excerpts illustrate this fact. Respond 11:

Children are proud and rebellious. They are in peer groups, like smoking and drinking alcohol. Children don't want to listen to what their teachers in church tell them. Children resist coming to church when they are called upon. Some children are under the influence of peer pressure and drug abuse. Respondent 12:

Most children below the age of 15 lost one or both parents. Some are affected by domestic violence, especially divorce and fights at home. Their parents are not role models to them. Hence, children are traumatised to the extent that they lose interest in trusting the church

leaders. Eventually, they do not listen to advice. This challenges the sharing of the Gospel. Due to domestic violence, they don't access education and end up being street children who don't go to church on Sundays and have low self-esteem.

According to the Strategic Plan 2023-2027 section 3.2, the Diocese of West Ankole experienced challenges during the implementation of the strategic Plan 2018-2022. The main challenges during the period included the following: Insufficient dissemination of the Strategic Plan to the lower levels.

Unemployment, especially amongst some youth, leads to limited resources available to support the various projects in the Diocese. Natural disasters, Negative influence of social media, Poverty amongst the local communities, Reduced support from external supporters, Lockdown due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Resurgence of false teaching and beliefs, and Inadequate staffing levels in schools and health facilities.⁵¹ These challenges confirmed what the majority of respondents mentioned.

DISCUSSION

Strategies for the Holistic Development of Children in West Ankole Diocese.

To find out whether there were strategies put in place by the church for the holistic development of children, a number of questions were asked of the respondents. They were asked to tell if there were strategies for the social, spiritual, economic and cognitive development of children in the Diocese. Participants were asked to indicate if the church networked with the government and NGOs for the purposes of holistic development of children.

It was pointed out by a participant that one of the strategies for the holistic development of children was that children should be included in the plans and budgets of the church and should be considered as part of the church. This was in line with the findings of Gallagher, '*Children as Religious Resources in the social Reformation of Class, culture and Religious identity (2007)*.' He says that children have to be considered full members and participants in decision-making and life experiences in the main church. He continues to say that Children's participation in congregational prayers, sermons, and reading texts reinforces congregational commitment and expresses the goodness of values associated with the Church.⁵²

Deutsche (2019) recognises that Athletics contributes to the opportunity for adventure. To be stimulated, children and youth need to have the feeling that they can master the event they take part in. The play situations conspire to keep the event outcome unpredictable until the last event. This is a driving element of children's motivation. Overall development in leadership, decision making, self-realisation, trust, teamwork and motivation are necessary in daily life for children as well as youth. Training in athletic activities presents an opportunity to incorporate life skills for the wholesome development of children and youth.⁵³ This is in line with what the respondents mentioned, that there is a need to have sports clubs and resource centres for aerobics in the Diocese.

Also, the UNESCO Charter on Physical Education and Sports (1978)⁵⁴ asserts that the practice of physical education and sports is a fundamental right for all. The charter, further, states that every human being has a fundamental right to access physical education and sports, which are essential for the full development of personality. The freedom to

⁵¹ Diocese of West Ankole Province of the Church of Uganda Strategic Plan 2023 to 2027. Pg 13

⁵² Sally, K. Gallagher. (June 2007). Children as Religious Resources: The role of Children in the social Reformation of Class, culture, and Religious Identity. Journal for the study of Religion. Vol. 46(2) pp. 169-183.

⁵³ Athletics for Development, Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH. 2019, Kampala. Pg 9.

⁵⁴ National Physical Education and sports 2021

develop physical, intellectual and moral powers through physical education and Sports must be guaranteed both within the education system and in other aspects of social life.

Children, churches and conferences were mentioned as strategies for the holistic development of children. This is where children can be evangelised through Bible studies and Christian literature. This was supported by President John Quincy Adams. He treated the Bible as the key educational resource in the lives of children: 'So great is my veneration for the Bible that the earlier my children begin to read it, the more confident will be my hope that they will prove useful citizens to their country and respectable members of society.'⁵⁵

CONCLUSION

From the findings of the study, it has been shown that there is considerable engagement of the church in the holistic development of children in West Ankole Diocese. It then goes without saying that church leaders should be encouraged to engage in several aspects of holistic development of children including holding children and Youth conferences, including children in the plans and budgets, organizing tours and travel, constructing good facilities for children, children churches counselling services, involving children and youth in sports, doing outreaches, considering children as members of the church, employing children workers, training children income generation skills.

Effective church intervention programs in the holistic development of children are built upon a careful consideration of the unique needs of children. Though specifics may vary, all the church intervention programs in the holistic development of children share the goal of increasing church-parent collaboration in order to promote healthy child development and a safe church community for children.

The study has shown that there are different ways of church intervention in the holistic development of children based on the social-economic status of the church and the home environment of the children. This implies that the church's intervention in the holistic development of children needs to be defined and evaluated while keeping in mind a mixture of culture and the individual characteristics of parents and children. A one-size-fits-all approach to the design of church intervention in the holistic development of children is very likely to fail in the modern world, which registers a number of influencers ranging from children's peers, friends, relatives, the internet, technology gadgets and challenges like poverty, mass media, corruption and low level of literacy.

It is evident from the study that there are existing programs for the holistic development of children in the Diocese of West Ankole, which shows the intervention of the church. These range from networking with NGOs like Compassion International, Sunday school, child sponsorship, signing the Memorandum of Understanding with the government for the establishment of seed schools, children and Youth Conferences, etc.

Wilson highlights that the application of Christian values at all levels of child development is a sure solution to bring well-balanced children. To follow Jesus' teachings is a guarantee of success not only among races and cultures, but for all types of relationships. The necessities and the foundation of stable families and societies, such as obedience, respect for authority, truthfulness, respect for elders and parents, resilience, zero tolerance for sin like telling lies, hard work, time cautiousness, self-reliance, and dependability, which are basically all Bible based principles.

The study has indicated a number of challenges to the church intervention in the holistic development of children, including home-based challenges,

⁵⁵ Ultimate Bible Guide 2018. Holman Bible Publishers.Naasville,Tennessee.

church-based challenges and children-based challenges. These challenges limit the effectiveness of the church and consequently have a negative impact on the holistic development of children in the Diocese. A number of generalised and specific strategies have been suggested by the church leaders, children's workers and parishioners to abate these challenges. It is therefore important that policies regarding the church's intervention in the holistic development of children are formulated and implemented on the basis of these strategies in favour of promoting the holistic development of children. I cannot end without quoting Wilson: *'Well-developed character and personality will produce the right person who does the right thing, in the right place, at the right time. The kind of people your children will be should be the concern of every parent, family, church and even the government.'*

And this is what the Bible presents as abundant life, in this life and ultimately in the life to come (John 10:10; 1 Tim 4:8; 6:6; 1Cor 15:19).

The apostle Paul exhorts us believers,

Now may the God of peace Himself, sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ' (1 Thess. 5:23).

RECOMMENDATION

The following recommendations are based on the findings of the study. The general aim is to get the church leaders encouraged to get engaged in the holistic development of children to supplement the efforts of their parents and caregivers. This can be done through establishing children's churches, training children's workers, sensitising parents and caregivers on the issues affecting the holistic development of children, making outreaches, networking with the government and NGOs and involving children in the church activities. It is recommended that children should be included in the plans and budgets of the church to cater for their needs.

It is recommended that children are both key to the great commission and an essential expression of the Great commandment. Most children at the turn of the century are 'children at risk' or children who need more than mere words to demonstrate the love of God. There are children and hurting children faced with an urgent need to nurture and protect. Therefore, the church should respond compassionately and even sacrificially to care for them. It is important for the church to care for children because the childhood years are the shaping years. Children are made in the image of God, and therefore must be protected and nourished by the church.

To revitalise Children and Youth ministries to appropriately address their unique needs, attractive safe, secure children's church premises should be established, outreach programs to attract more children to the church should be designed, children's church curriculum for different age groups should be designed, well-trained well facilitated children pastors should be provided to all churches, participation of children in the church life should be enhanced, youth should be encouraged to participate in existing programs and empowered to develop new programs that nurture their skills in teaching and preaching, co-curricular activities in churches to enhance development of talent and skill in Christian perspective should be incorporated, music and ICT should be enhanced and developed as tools to preach the gospel, promote unity, and appreciate Anglicanism.

The church should continue to sensitise the Christian families about positive parenting and the importance of the holistic development of the children, especially. We have seen that poverty is most fundamentally a spiritual, rather than a physical or material problem. Holistic development responds to the needs of the whole person, and the work of holistic development has to do not only with meeting physical needs, but is part of the saving, redeeming and reconciling work that God wants done with all of His creation.

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