

**KIBOGORA POLYTECHNIC**  
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**DEPARTMENT OF THEOLOGY**

**EXAMINING DYNAMICS OF YOUTH PARTICIPATION IN THE LIFE  
OF THE CHURCH.**

**Case study: MUYUMBU PARISH**

Undergraduate thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the Award of Bachelor's Degree with honor in Theology.

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## **DECLARATION**

We, MUHAWENIMANA Gad and HAVUGIMANA Justin hereby declare that this is our own original work and not a duplication of any similar academic work. It has therefore not submitted to any other institution of higher learning.

All materials cited in this paper which are not our own have been duly acknowledged.

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### **Declaration by the supervisor**

I declare that this work has been submitted for examination with my approval as KP supervisor

Supervisor: Rev. Dr. TWAHIRWA Mathias

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Date...../...../2023

## **ABSTRACT**

The Aim of this Research was to find out the dynamics of youth participation in the life of Free Methodist Church in Rwanda, in Muyumbu Parish. The specific objectives of this research were to determine the dynamics within the local church that weaken youth engagement, to establish the important personal characteristics of youth workers as perceived by youth, and to recommend better ways of implementing empowerment programs to bring about youth retention in Free Methodist Church Muyumbu Parish. The target population for this study was 240 Christians, and the sample size was 75 Respondents. To collect data, the researchers used questionnaires and Interview. Data were analyzed by using quantitative and qualitative approaches. On the first objective, the study revealed that the dynamics within the local church that weaken youth engagement as agreed by 58% of Respondents. The second objective, as revealed by 56% of respondents agreed that the important personal characteristics of youth workers as perceived by youth. The third objective, as revealed by 96% of Respondents, agreed that better ways of implementing empowerment programs to bring about youth retention in Free Methodist Church in Rwanda, Muyumbu Parish. The study recommends that church leaders should embrace Youths' ministry firmly and strongly by having mentorship programs to help nurture the youths. The mature youths especially those of 25 years and over should be mentors to their young ones who are below 18 years. This is necessary since mostly the young adolescents tend to copy their elderly colleagues in their model way of life.

## **DEDICATION**

We would like to dedicate this thesis to:

The Almighty God for the knowledge we have acquired through his strength he gave us in our study journey.

Our family and friends who have supported us financially to ensure that we complete this study.  
May God bless them.

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The last but not the least, we give thanks to anybody who has contributed in this and that way in the fulfillment of this work.

## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS, ACRONYMS AND SYMBOLS**

**SRQ1, 2, 3:** Specific Research Questions 1, 2,3

**UNICEF:** United Nations for Children Education Fund

**FMC:** Free Methodist Church

**INEC:** Independent National Electoral Commission

**USA:** United Nations of America

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## CHAPTER ONE: GENERAL INTRODUCTION

### 1.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter focused on the dynamic of youth ministry participation in the life of the free Methodist church in Rwanda, Case study Muyumbu parish. It includes the background of the study, problems statement, the purpose of the study, the research question, the significance, the scope as well as the limitations of the study.

### 1.1.BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

In Globally, “Young people are increasingly identifying as ‘spiritual, but not religious’. In the literature, religion is increasingly conceptualized as an organized sociolect-cultural-historical system, and spirituality as an individual’s personal quest for meaning, satisfaction, and wisdom. For instance, a widely used definition of religion is an organized system of beliefs, practices, rituals, and symbols that serve to facilitate individuals’ closeness to the sacred or transcendent other (i.e., God, higher power, ultimate truth). To bring about an understanding of an individual’s relationship and responsibility to others living together in community. From this perspective, religiousness refers to the extent to which an individual has a relationship with a particular institutionalized religion’s approach to ultimate reality. This relationship occurs through affiliation with an organized religion, participation in its prescribed rituals and practices, and reflection or embrace of its espoused beliefs. Religious development would then entail the qualitative change and growth in the engagement and in understanding of the religious community and its rituals, creeds, sacred texts, and beliefs.” **(KOENIG Et Al. 2001: p.18).**

In African, Religious involvement or religiosity refers to the degree of participation in or adherence to the beliefs and practices of an organized religion. It is a broader concept than religion and is primarily a dynamic, personal, and experiential process. Features of spirituality include quest for meaning and purpose, transcendence, connectedness (e.g., with others, nature, or the divine), and values of love, compassion, and justice” **(Emblen, 1992).**

In Rwanda, the mission of the Youth Ministry within the church is to establish a foundation for building Christian character, morals, values and behaviors in young people by using creative and innovative methods to excite, inspire, capture and ignite young people.

Muyumbu Parish with a vision for the entire church present alternative plans for youth ministry. Each one of these approaches will support and assist the church with problems with its youth ministry, to put their youth ministry on track again. The inclusive congregational approach integrates youth into the Christian community, the missional approach as a mission, the preparatory approach proposes a specialized ministry to adolescents that prepares them to participate in the life of existing churches as leaders, disciples or evangelists, and the strategic approach prepares the youth to become a new church.

## 1.2.STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The congregation, the church is putting its own leadership future in danger and is losing a significant opportunity to pass the baton of leadership to youth” (Stanley 2018, 4).

The relationship youth have with others affect their participation and engagement in the church. Parent’s attitudes and behaviors towards appears to significantly impact their children’s perception and engagement in church (Hoge and Petrillo 1978, 376). Given the literature which demonstrates a decline in youth engagement in church, this study will analyze the dynamics of youth participation in the Free Methodist Church in Rwanda, in Muyumbu Parish. Yet the way in which Muyumbu Free Methodist youths are currently being given opportunities they deserve to develop their respective skills and talents is below standards. A talk with some of the youths in Muyumbu FMC parish and few others who have already left the parish to other churches confirmed that most of the youth’s programs such as entrepreneurship, talent development, life skills training, etc. are never taken as of helpful to the church and therefore the church leaders neglect them. Some of these young people confessed that they opted to join other churches where they feel appreciated. Discouragement and little guidance regarding youth participation are some of the witnessed issues in Muyumbu Parish. The researcher is therefore determined to find out the extent to which the Muyumbu Parish is in reality implementing youth empowerment programs and also propose some ways in which the church can help the young people serve God and the congregation.

### **1.3.OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

#### **1.3.1. General Objective**

The main objective of this study was to examine the dynamics of youth participation in the life of Muyumbu Free Methodist Church.

#### **1.3.2. Specific Objectives**

Three specific objectives are:

First, to determine the dynamics within the local church that weaken youth engagement.

Second, to establish the important personal characteristics of youth workers as perceived by youth.

Third, to recommend better ways of implementing empowerment programs to bring about youth retention in Free Methodist Church in Rwanda, in Muyumbu Parish.

### **1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

The study of this scientific work is composed with research questions connected to general and specific objectives.

#### **1.4.1 General Research Question**

What are the dynamics of youth participation in the life of Muyumbu Free Methodist Church?

#### **1.4.2 Specific Research Questions**

- 1:** What are the dynamics within the local church that weaken youth engagement?
- 2:** What are the important personal characteristics of youth workers as perceived by youth?
- 3.** What are the measures taken to implement youth empowerment programs which will lead to youth retention in Muyumbu FMC parish?

### **1.5. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

This study is of paramount important for youths, church leaders, church members and future researchers. First, this study bears positive impact for youths in the sense that it seeks to help young

people to overcome hindrances that they face in their service within the church. It intends to help young people to grow in their relationship with the Lord body by serving Christ in all they do. It also searches for equipping them to become future leaders, but also allows them to contribute to the church. Second, findings from this research will educate the church leaders on what they need to do or incorporate to ensure the participation. This study reminds church authorities that they are responsible for setting up youth programs that meet physical and spiritual problems of youths. Third, this study is relevant for the church members because it supports them to recognize the area in which young people are affected by the challenges that face them in the church. It will also be significant to the parents of these young people in the church and church leaders who do not bother to involve youth in decision making programs that can affect their well-being positively.

The last but not the least, this research will also serve as a resource base to other scholars and researchers interested in carrying out further research to an extent to provide new explanation to the subject of study.

## **1.6. DELIMITATION**

The delimitation of this study is centered on content, geographical and time scopes. Regarding content scope, this study emphasizes on challenges faced by young people in Rwanda Free Methodist Church due to the fact that it was not feasible for the researcher to handle all aspects connected with youth participation. In addition, the research partners are young people aged between 10 years up to 25 years and adults. Children are not involved in this research.

Geographically, this study was delimited on one denomination, one parish (Muyumbu FMC parish) which is located in Rwanda because there are many Free Methodist Churches in Rwanda. Then, it was not feasible for the researcher to conduct his research in all those churches due to time and budget constraints. Finally, the time scope of this research was six months. The findings of this study are valid for a period of two years because researchers' books need to be readopted. The actual situation concerning youth empowerment in FMC can change at any time.

## **1.7. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

Limitations are matters and occurrences that arise in a study which are out of the researcher's control. Language was a limitation since not all respondents could clearly understand and interpret

English. In the course of study, the researcher also faced the challenges of fear of the interviewees in expressing the problems they were facing in their church involvement and also getting sufficient number of interviewees. To overcome these limitations, the researcher worked in haste but also sought donors to finance this thesis project.

## **1.8. SCOPE OF THE STUDY**

**Content scope:** The study was examining dynamics of youth participation in the life of the church

**Geographical scope:** This study was conducted at Muyumbu parish is located western province, Rwamagana district, Muyumbu sector, Murehe cell and Rweza village.

**Time scope:** The scope of this study is 2020-2023.

## **1.9. THESIS ORGANIZATION**

Thesis organization of chapter one are general introduction, background of the study, statement of the problems, objectives of the study, research questions, significance of the study, delimitation, limitations of the study, scope of the study and thesis organization. In chapter two are review of the literature, conceptual framework of youth participation and importance of youth engagement. In chapter three are research methodology like research approaches and design, target population, sample and sampling techniques, data collection process, data analysis and ethical considerations. In chapter four are analysis and discussion of findings. in chapter five are conclusion and recommendation.



## **CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE**

### **2.0 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter reviews literature which pertains to various issues related to youth engagement within the local church. The literature review consists of nine main sections. The first three sections deal with the definition of key concepts, theoretical and conceptual framework of youth participation combined together with the areas of youth participation.

### **2.1 DEFINITION OF KEY CONCEPTS**

The key concepts to be defined in this research are namely: Dynamics, youth participation and Church.

#### **2.1.1 Dynamics**

Etymologically, Dynamics is the Greek word for power. It is the origin of our English words dynamite, dynamo and dynamic. Dynamite blows things up. A dynamo generates electricity. Something dynamic is not laid back. It's on the move! (.....)

In the context of this study, the term dynamics is used to express the power in the word of God that gives meaning to living and it is a power that produces change in every area of life.

#### **2.1.2 Church**

This expression “church” requires defining. It is more than an Association as it has a divine origin and higher calling. It is the church of Christ and the living God. The church's work is not merely for men's salvation, but the praise of God's glory (**Merrill 1967, 170-171**).

#### **2.1.3 Youth**

The term ‘youth’ is problematic to define because of its relative importance and policy implication. For instance, the United Nations uses the 15-24 years' age bracket, whilst the commonwealth uses 15-21 years age category. In this thesis, the term includes all those who are within the 13 to 25 years' age bracket, who have the potential to stimulate social progress, church growth in quality

and quantity and oversee national development definition of Youth. (UNICEF. March 25th, 2023).

This study uses the term youth in a Christian context. A Christian youth is a youth whose life is total example of Christ follower in speech, action, thoughts, relational, dressing (an all-round living for Christ Jesus irrespective of the challenges around) as Paul instructs his fellow child Timothy to be a good example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith and in purity (1 Timothy 4:12) aged between 10 and 25 years.

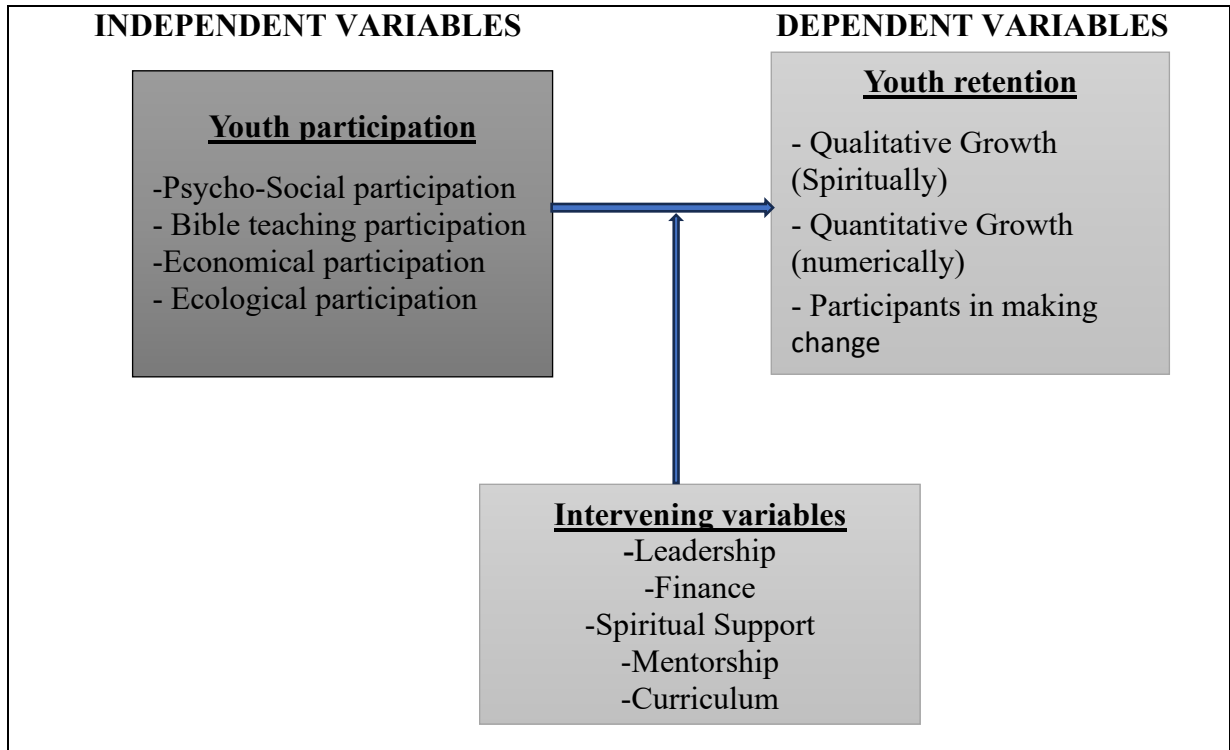
### **1. Theoretical Framework of Youth Participation**

On this part the present researcher tried to review some of the developed theories surrounding changes in human behaviors and what stimulates them. The theories described in this part are meant to give a general overview of what can be the results of certain activities whether by push or by observations. As is the case with young people, these theories were found to be relevant in this study because they are at a stage where they change their behaviors depending on what they observe or get pushed to do by either someone or by situations.

### **2. Conceptual Framework of Youth Participation**

Investing in today's youth is necessary in growing the body of Christ. Involving young people in the church programs enable them to grow in their relationship with the Lord, prepares them to serve Christ in all they do. As a result, this nurtures the congregation and allows the church to flourish. The future church is greatly dependent on the spiritually growing youths. The Christian youths are the future of the church and the society as illustrated by:

**Figure 1: Conceptual Framework of Youth Involvement in the Church**



Resource: Researcher’s Investigation, 2023

### 3. Importance of Youth Ministry

Chap Clark said that: “A longtime student ministry strategist defines youth ministry as, “Ministry to and for teenagers, typically middle and high school students aged eleven to eighteen, and sometimes includes college ministries” (Chap Clark 2016, 5).

Youth ministries hold valuable weight in the churches and various literature not only discuss this value but also express the effect youth ministries have on the church and why they should be included in the church. Shifting from the common assumption of youth ministry being a separate entity of the church, authors Mark H. Senter III, Wesley Black, Chap Clark, and Malan Nel stated, “Youth ministry is not about finding an extra place for yet another ministry, but about finding a place for youth within every ministry and among the people that the ministries are designed to reach and serve the people to whom God comes by means of the ministries” (Senter, Black and Nel 2001, 6).

The youth ministry belongs within a church and holds value in the future of youth who attend church. In an effort to show the effect of youth ministry in the church, Cole and Nielson stated, “There is a place for a youth ministry in the church! The future of our churches depends on the way we integrate our young people into the inter-generational people of God today”.

In addition to the relevance of the youth ministry, it is recommended that, “Our understanding of youth ministry must be a theological reflection built around two questions, one of identity (Who we are?) and the other of mission (**Moser and Nel 2019, 5**).

The youth ministry is important and holds value in the church because of what Cole and Nielson identify as, “The primary role of the youth pastor and the student ministry in the local church is to make disciples of Jesus Christ” (Cole and Nielson 2016, 39). Cole and Nielson identify how youth ministry growth and discipleship is a life journey, and therefore require building relationships with youth.

#### **4. Importance of Youth Engagement**

Youth ministry is important in the local church. However, research stress the importance of equipping students to move beyond their youth ministry and engage in other areas of the church and worship at-large. David Csinos voiced the pressing news of inclusion saying, “Including children in corporate worship isn’t a matter of choice or changing trends; it’s a matter of justice” (Csinos 2016, 26). The engagement of students equates to that of inclusion as well as their worship. Csinos proposed various forms of inclusion of youth in the church on a spectrum from no inclusion, nominal inclusion, moderate inclusion, and finally radical inclusion. As for the final radical inclusion, Csinos emphasizes, “Congregations at this mark are rare, for to be radically inclusive is not only to allow children to participate in worship but to be open to having congregational worship be changed by their full presence and participation” (Csinos op. cit,2).

#### **5. Youth and Prayer in the Church**

Prayer is known to be quite an affectionate expression toward God and for youth, prayer is a relationship. Aside from all other religious activities experienced by youth, prayer should be understood as most essential and it is through prayer the sacred world becomes real for believers (Mason et al. 2015, 25). Jeannie Oestreicher and Larry Warner co-wrote a book for youth ministries

the reasons and methods for incorporating Imaginative Prayer into their life. They sought to provide a substantial amount of information for teaching prayer in a different format but also highlighting the important factor that prayer is a form of communication and is the way we connect with God, come into God's presence, hear from God, or speak to God. Imaginative prayer is connecting with and hearing from God through mental images (Oestreicher and Warner 2006, 11). While this form of prayer practice is provided, there is no acknowledgment and implementation of it actually being used in churches.

## **6. Youth Ministry/Youth Worker**

Youth ministry plays a major role in the lives of young generation in the church by helping to shape, mold, and raise youth awareness of worship, Christianity, and discipleship. Senter and his co-authors describe youth ministry as an important entity that, "belongs to the church. In a sentence, youth ministry is the holistic Christian ministry of the local church under its leadership to young people and those who influence their spiritual growth" (Senter III et al. 2001, 53). While youth ministries have a dynamic responsibility in the lives of young people, there are concerns as to their ineffectiveness in retaining youth via their missional work. Some factors which contribute to the lack of participation within youth ministry are ineffective leadership, failure to establish relationships, and decisions without a purpose and process.

A Director of Youth Ministry in Columbia, South Carolina, David Olshine, has shared concerns and solutions regarding youth ministries. He addressed twelve problems within the Youth Ministry, one of them being related to the leadership involved. He stated that, "We must address the problem the body of Christ (the universal church) has in becoming impotent in attracting and keeping young people. This is related to ineffective leadership in nearly all congregations and organizations. The shepherds and leaders in the body of Christ have become too safe in reaching out to youth" (Olshine 2013, 2). A renowned worship leader, Ross Parsley, stated that, "Helping young leaders is extremely challenging because it demands accountability, it involves some risk, and it can be downright messy" (Parsley 2012, 98).

Therefore, leaders of the ministry should desire and seek effective accountability. Cole and Nielson state, "According to various studies, the normal tenure of a youth minister at a local church lasts approximately eighteen months" (Cole and Nielson op.cit., 23). This is a concern to which many

churches undergo. The leadership within youth ministry have to be filled with leaders who are approachable and are qualified. In a study on youth church participation, authors Hoge and Petrillo stated, “The impact of youth programs sponsored by the church depends greatly on the qualities of the adult leaders. Jarvis and Strommen both found that pastor and youth leaders, who lacked approachability and understanding, were a strong factor in their participation” (Hodge and Petrillo 1978, 361).

## CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### 3.0. INTRODUCTION

This chapter explains the methodology used to conduct the qualitative to examine reasons for youth disengagement in an effort to find strategies for effective retention and engagement that may benefit youth and the church. The research design, list the research questions, identify the participants, and explain how surveys were conducted. The research method also will include the procedure used for distributing the surveys, how information was protected, and data analysis is disclosed.

### 3.1. RESEARCH APPROACHES AND DESIGN

According to **Harper and McCunn**, “Qualitative research is a methodological approach used in a wide range of disciplines, predominantly to investigate human behavior and the factors influencing behavioral processes” (**Harper and McCunn 2017, 990**). A qualitative was selected for this study to investigate varied dynamics of youth engagement in the church, focusing more on youth disengagement from the church.

### 3.2. TARGET POPULATION

**Burns and Grove (2005, 203)** refer to population as the total group of persons or group of persons that meet the designated sets of criteria established by the researcher. The target population for this study of Muyumbu Parish was 240.

### 3.4. SAMPLING PROCEDURES

**Burns and Grove (2005, 304)** refer to sample as a small portion of the intended population that the researcher focuses on in the empirical research undertaken. They also maintain that sampling involves selecting the events, behavior, and the group of people or materials with which to conduct a study (**Burns & Grove 2005, 305**). Sampling is a process of assembling few representations

from a population to test the research instruments to determine whether the intended questions were well understood (**Johnson & Christensen 2004, 156**)

To get a sample size, **Yamene’s (1964)** provide a formula as found in the paper publisher by University of Florida. The formula is given as follows:

$$n=N: 1+N (e)^2$$

Where: n= sample ;where n is sample size , N- the population size and e- the acceptable sampling/ Margin error varies between 10% and 20% . the researcher used the margin error of 10%=0.1, then ,the confidence level of 90%.

**n=240:1+240(0.1)<sup>2</sup>=71 Respondents+3 Evangelists (purposive sampled)+ 1 pastor (purposive sampled).** the total number of Respondents are equal to 75 individuals.

**Table 1: presents the sample size.**

<b>Nature of the Population</b>	<b>Number of Population</b>	<b>Sample Size</b>	<b>Percentage of the Total Sampling</b>
Evangelists	3	2	3%
Christians	235	72	96%
Pastor	2	1	1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>240</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: Field Survey

### **3.5. DATA COLLECTION PROCESS**

In this study, the researcher used interview and questionnaires of study. The method that the researcher used was face-to-face conversation, note taking, participation observation, and comparative analysis The questionnaires were prepared considering the research questions on which the whole thesis is based. Oral interview was addressed to church members and leaders. This interview was conducted at different times based on the appointments with concern subjects.



### **3.6. RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY OF MEASUREMENTS**

The questionnaire was based on the objectives of the study in ensuring that every question was relevant. The questions on the questionnaire were led by the researcher to respondents who were not able to read and understand the questions and answers were recorded to ensure clarity because some of the respondents were unable to express themselves clearly in bringing out their ideas. In this study, the researcher constructed the questionnaires in harmony of the study and then handed them to supervisor for verification.

### **3.7. DATA ANALYSIS**

The data analysis for this study reflected personal experiences of youth within their church. Results showed frequency of youth participation and attendance within their church. In this study we used Microsoft Excel, Microsoft word, and questionnaires for to analyze data.

### **3.8. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

Protecting the confidentiality of the participants was of importance in this study. Respondents were assured of their anonymity when the researcher sought permission for their participation. He/she reassured the interviewees of this both before and after the interviews. He/she also assured the participants that he was the only one involved in analyzing the data, and their identities were not revealed in this study. He/she assigned the participants each a number and stored the transcripts in his computer with password protected. He/she was the only one who could access the computer. After the study was completed, he stored the data in a safe place with protection.

### **3.9. RESEARCH GAPS**

A research gap is defined as a topic or area for which missing or inadequate information limits the ability of reviewers to reach the conclusion for a given question. A research gap may be further developed, such as through stakeholder engagement in prioritization, into research needs **(Robinson KA, Akinyede O, Dutta T, et al. 2013)**.

The research gaps to be filled are thus:

1. Church members needs for a range of information about survival basics such as housing, access to medical services, other programming; and what types of communication media are most likely to be effective.
2. Youths' decision-making patterns relating to finding employment and budgeting or managing income, cross-referenced to age, gender, sexual orientation, and aboriginal ancestry.
3. Investigation of the role of discrimination in the experiences of youth within the local church whether internalized attitudes, or the attitudes and behaviors of peers, service providers, the justice system, educational system or other key players in the life of the Christian youth.
4. In-depth study of street- involved youth with disabilities, incidence, types, impacts on the life on the street, potential programming to assist these youths.
5. In-depth "meta-analysis" of methodologies used that most incorporate youth, but which still utilize accepted standards of methodological rigor.

## CHAPTER 4: ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

### 4.0 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to present the findings related to the engagement of youth in the church in an effort to find strategies and methods for their retention. Demographic Information of Respondents, Data analysis and interpretation of findings and discussion of findings.

#### 4.1. DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

In this study, the demographic information emphasizes on age, church membership duration, sex, age and professional status of the respondents.

**Table 2. Demographic Information**

Age			Gender			
Years	Respondents	%	Male	%	Female	%
12-15	9	12	3	4	6	8
16-18	11	15	5	7	6	8
19-25	19	25	8	11	11	15
26-30	21	28	8	11	13	17
31-35	15	20	5	7	10	13
<b>Total</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>57</b>

Source: Field survey

From the table above we have found 43% of men and 57% of women in Respondents.

**Table 3: Education**

Respondents		none	%	primary	secondary	university	%
Christians	71	7	9	27	29	8	86
Evangelists	3	0	0	0	2	1	4
Pastors	1	0	0	0	0	1	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>27 (36%)</b>	<b>31 (41%)</b>	<b>10 (13%)</b>	<b>91</b>

Source: Field survey

From the table above, education of Respondents we have 36% in primary level, 41% in secondary level and 13% in university. Found 91% of Respondents are intellectual.

#### 4.2 DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF FINDINGS

**Table 4: To determine the dynamics within the local church that weaken youth engagement.**

Respondents	numbers	Strong disagree	%	Disagree	%	Neither agree nor disagree	%	Agree	%	Strongly Agree	%
Evangelists	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1
Church members	72	7	9	13	20	10	13	28	39	13	17
Pastor	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
TOTAL	75	7	9	13	20	10	13	29	39	15	19

Source: Field

From the table above, the study revealed that determine the dynamics within the local church that weaken youth engagement as agreed by 58% of Respondents.

**Table 5: The important personal characteristics of youth workers as perceived by youth.**

Respondents	numbers	Strong disagree	%	Disagree	%	Neither agree nor disagree	%	Agree	%	Strongly Agree	%
Evangelists	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	3	0	0
Church members	72	9	12	13	17	11	15	24	33	14	19
Pastor	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0
TOTAL	75	9	12	13	17	11	15	27	37	14	19

Source: Field

From the table above, as revealed by 56% of respondents agreed that the important personal characteristics of youth workers as perceived by youth.

**Table 6: Better ways of implementing empowerment programs to bring about youth retention in Free Methodist Church in Rwanda, Muyumbu parish.**

Respondents	numbers	Strongly disagree	%	Disagree	%	Neither agree nor disagree	%	Agree	%	Strongly Agree	%
Evangelists	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	3
Church members	72	0	0	2	3	1	1	38	51	31	41
Pastor	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>45</b>

Source: Field

From the table above, as revealed by 96% of Respondents, agreed that better ways of implementing empowerment programs to bring about youth retention in Free Methodist Church in Rwanda, Muyumbu Parish.

#### **4.1.2 Dynamics that weaken Youth Engagement**

A descriptive analysis using table representations was conducted to determine the answer to the first research question: What are the dynamics within the local church that weaken youth engagement? In response to this research question, it was hypothesized that various aspects that weaken youth engagement in the church include lack of social interactions, unfavorable music, and ineffective teaching.

**Table 7: How often do you attend Youth Bible Study classes in the year?**

Answers	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Almost every week	14	19
Once a month or so	24	32
Less than once every two months	9	12
Never	28	37
<b>Total</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: Data from field survey

From table above, 63% of respondents attend Youth Bible Study classes in the year. In addition to this question, participants were given an opportunity to explain what parts of their relationship with Christ has improved. Results revealed behavioral thematic responses that included “talking to God more”, “praying”, “reading the Bible”, and “understanding God’s protection.” From these results it can be noted the participants received an instruction that helped to improve their knowledge about Christ. Participants were also asked, “On a scale of 1 to 10, how would you rate your relationship to Christ right now?” The results of this questions varied greatly. There were more participants who have identified their relationship with Christ a level 10. Other responses were rather differently spread across the table.

#### **4.1. 3. Characteristics of Youth Workers Perceived by Youth**

The purpose of this study was to not only find what caused youth disengagement but to also determine the necessary characteristics of youth workers as perceived by youth. This would serve as a benefit for youth ministries and churches to ensure their youth workers are equipped to serve. In response to the second research question, it was hypothesized that the important personal characteristics of youth workers as perceived by youth include personal charisma, relational connection, mentorship, and have an effective method of instruction. Based on participant’s responses, the researcher could not determine youth perceptions.

##### **Relational Connection**

Relational, or social connection is vital for youth. Educators Collins and Dandelion stressed that, “The things young people considered most importantly were close relationships with friends and family, an exciting life and helping others” (Collins and Dandelion, 57). A relational connection occurs between people when there is an experience of leveling, understanding, and peace. The survey included some questions to determine if youth participants felt a relational connection with their youth worker. One of the questions asked “How well do you get along with their youth leaders?” There were 63.2% of the participants who replied “very well” and 36.8% who stated, “somewhat well”. This implies that there is an overall connection between youth leader and the participants.

The researcher felt it was also important to determine how the youth perceived how their leaders cared about them. Participants were asked to rate on a scale from 1-10 how much their leaders

cared about them (See Table 7). Results show that 2 participants rated level 8, 8 participants rated level 9, and 14 participants rated their youth leader's care a 10. It can also be determined from these data that youths have a relationship with their youth leaders to the extent of feeling compassion.

### **Effective Method of Instruction**

The researcher assumed that youth perceive an important characteristic of youth workers as one who can teach well. Participants were asked, "Has the Youth Ministry at your church helped to improve your relationship with Christ last year?" Results showed that 17 participants replied "yes", 5 participants replied "maybe" and 2 participants replied "no". It can be concluded from these data results that the majority of youth participants receive effective methods of instruction which lead to their knowing the importance of having a relationship with Christ.

## **4.2. Discussion of Findings**

Data were analyzed by using quantitative and qualitative approaches. Findings on the first objective, the study revealed that determine the dynamics within the local church that weaken youth engagement as agreed by 58% of Respondents. The second objective, as revealed by 55% of respondents agreed that the important personal characteristics of youth workers as perceived by youth. The third objective, as revealed by 96% of Respondents, agreed that better ways of implementing empowerment programs to bring about youth retention in Free Methodist Church in Rwanda, Muyumbu Parish. This qualitative study examined reasons for youth disengagement in an effort to find strategies for effective retention and engagement that may benefit youth and the church. The intent of the survey was to help the researcher determine whether youth participants were disengaged from their church, what were the factors which caused their disengagement, and understand what helps them become more engaged at their church. The researcher hypothesized that various dynamics that weaken youth engagement were social interactions, unfavorable music, and ineffective teaching.

**Social Interactions.** There is a need for social interactions for building student ministries in the church which, in turn, could create positive spiritual formation among youth. In a 2017 article, Santi Rodriguez described one of the ways to build relationships in Youth Ministry was through socially interacting as he shares, "Get together and get connected. Use big and fun events as

vehicles for personal connections with the teens in your youth ministry” (Rodriguez 2017). Results showed youth participants were engaged in numerous activities and events in the past year. However, there is no evidence which supports the youth enjoyed them or they were engaged.

**Unfavorable Music.** With music ranking second highest of choices given, then that supports that they enjoy music and music is beneficial. If music interest’s youth more than other categories, then it can be generalized how unfavorable music in the church could turn away youth from focusing on the church or even participating in church. Churches should be persuaded to come out of their norm, traditional way of ministry and offer more intricate ways of improving youth’s spiritual growth.

**Ineffective Teaching.** The researcher was able to gain insight with how youth were receiving their biblical instruction through Bible Study and Sunday school. With more participation occurring during Sunday school, the researcher felt it may have been convenient for parents to drop their kids to attend before worship service starts. On the other hand, Bible class typically occurs during the week and is more of a challenge as youth do not attend, or better yet, their parents are not bringing them. In addition, hypothetical reasons could be the Bible classes are not offered for youth, transportation is limited, or they are just not interested. Content that is taught in both Sunday school and Bible study is not revealed nor were participants able to express if they enjoyed it. It cannot be assumed they are engaged in either class simply because of their presence. However, if the classes were entertaining and planned intricately, youth would want to be in attendance. The researcher wondered after looking at the responses how are the classes being taught and how effective they were.

**Personal Charisma.** Youth do not want to be led by people who show no effort in leading them. The closest survey question to connect this hypothesis was the one regarding youth satisfaction toward their leader. Based on the results given, youth were overall satisfied with their leaders. Students are more receptive of the spiritual teachings and thoughts of the youth worker if they are satisfied with their teachings. Researchers agreed that Youth workers are generally viewed differently than from teachers—they are ‘softer’ authority figures, mentors and ‘critical friends’ (Sylvia and Pink2013, 196).



While this data does not validate that personal charisma is a desired characteristic of youth workers perceived by the youth; it does lead to youth exhibiting acceptance to their leaders. It gives partial insight of youth perception.

**Relational Connection.** The results from the data revealed that a majority of participants felt a connection with their youth leaders and expressed their youth leaders cared about them. However, this does not conclude the participants have an effective relational connection with their leader. Based on results, it appears that youth workers at the participating churches are showing efforts in connecting and establishing a relationship with their youth. It also demonstrates good leadership qualities exist among those youth leaders. However, the concern should now be how to reach those few who responded differently. There has to be an assessment approach given to help those few individuals feel a sense of belonging and establish a closer connection with their ministry leaders. What else could youth leaders do differently about their methodology to capture the interests of all youth and show compassion? Also, are youth leaders aware of these feelings of those under their leadership?

**Mentorship.** To address this theme, the researcher lacked evidence to support whether participants perceived their youth leaders as their mentors. However, participants had opportunity to lead which could determine their youth leaders instilled that mentorship quality in building their confidence. Mentorship is more than teaching but also providing support and training others to be leaders. Youth need more than a relationship but also look for role models and someone who can positively influence them. Kevin Navarro states, “The first step to being an influencer is modeling what we want our followers to become” (Navarro 2001, 123).

**Effective Method of Instruction.** Majority of participants responded they had a relationship with Christ and were able to explain on what parts of their relationship improved.

Due to their ability to convey their relationship with Christ, the researcher assumed that the participants valued the instruction they were given. It is possible that the participants’ current expression of having a relationship with Christ is an effect of their youth leaders’ instructional practices. The literature reviewed in this study emphasized the importance of effective teaching

methods within the church for youth. Spiritual education equips youth to closely connect with Christ and understand the meaning of worship.

## **CHAPTER 5 : CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **5.1. INTRODUCTION**

This research examined various dynamics for youth engagement in the church. These levels of engagement sprouted into challenges and supportive measures that affected the youth and their involvement in the church. This chapter concludes the study and stabilises some recommendations for different Stakeholders.

### **5.2. CONCLUSION**

Although many churches and organizations have youth as a part of their membership and attendance, there are challenges which prohibit them from engaging and retaining youth. There appears to be a declination of youth participation and attendance in the church. Professor Lester agreed that, “While the drop has been seen in all ages, races, and ethnicities, millennials and youth have seen the largest change. They are less involved, less interested, and many are leaving their faith once they reach adulthood. For anyone involved with a Christian church, the decline in the quality and quantity of the next generation is obvious” (Lester 2017,1).

The study revealed several reasons for youth disengagement as lack of unsuccessful methods of teaching, the church’s inefficient implemented practices, parental and worldly influences, and ineffective youth leaders. In response to youth levels of disengagement, Assistant Executive Director of the Association of Theological Schools, Carol Lytch proposed three factors that attracted youth and maintained consistent attendance in church as having a sense of belonging, sense of meaning, and opportunity to develop competence (Lytch 2004, 25).

Research has demonstrated the impact that relationships can have on youth involvement in the church. Reverting back to the Bible, we can find and understand God’s passion for relationships with Him as well as with others. Relationships is necessary within the church. Highly educated scholars, David Wheeler and Vernon M. Whaley emphasized, “What the church needs are men and women who want to make a difference in the lives of people for eternity. What the church needs is men and women who live and breathe Great Commission worship. They have experienced

formational, transformational, relational, missional, and reproducible worship” (Wheeler and Whaley 2011, 195).

As youth ministry leaders strive to become the described worshipper who is passionate about creating and sustaining relationships with youth, there is a better chance for their retention and interest in not only church, but with God.

#### **5.4. RECOMMENDATIONS**

The recommendations of this study are addressed to Muyumbu Church leaders, young people, Church members and future researchers.

##### **To Church Leaders**

- the study recommends that church leaders should embrace Youths’ ministry firmly and strongly by having mentorship programs to help nurture the youths.
- the study recommends that church leaders ought to well equip the youths’ leaders with more skills and competencies that make them better in influencing the youths.
- Leaders ought to foster team work within the church and consult the youths during the decision-making process.
- to be transparent with the youths and be their role models

##### **To Youths**

- youths especially those with 25years and over should be mentors to their young ones who are below 18 years.
- youths should seek advices and support from their leaders and other church members on the issues which they seem not able to handle for themselves especially on spiritual matters and their planned programs.

##### **To Church Members**

- To support young people programs by physically participating and offering financial support where necessary

## **Area for Further Study**

The following recommendations for future study are made based on the findings and limitations of this study:

1. There should be action research conducted at a local church to further investigate youth participation and involvement during a church service. Observations should be conducted along with a series of field notes over time to determine the extent of how much youth are engaged and involved in youth ministry.
2. Further study should also include personal interviews with young generation to understand their perspectives more and allow them to elaborate on their feelings about church.
3. Churches should also be interviewed to reveal their history of youth engagement, method of teaching, and youth leadership.
4. Additionally, expanding the research survey to include more numerical evidence to retrieve correlations between various categories and themes such as relationship, attendance, biblical knowledge and teaching, and engagement.
5. Conducting a study that specifically involve various methods or approaches to engage youth through a series of spiritual workshops that centers on worship and spiritual growth. This study would be geared more toward the needs and interests of the youth to find newly developed ways to interact, engage, and enjoy experiencing God.

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## Appendix A : RESEARCH QUESTIONNAIRE

Dear Respondents,

We MUHAWENIMANA Gad and HAVUGIMANA Justin, are students of Kibogora Polytechnic (KP), we would like to ask you your cooperation and willingness to fill this questionnaire based on the topic “Examine dynamic of youth participation in the life Church. Case study of Muyumbu Parish”. All the information obtained through this questionnaire will be kept strictly confidential and will be used for the purpose of research to write my dissertation. So please kindly provide the confidential answer.

Instructions: Read carefully each statement and decide the extent to which you agree with it. Tick the appropriate response for each question.

1. A lack of social interactions weakens youth engagement in Muyumbu FMC?

Strong disagree	
Disagree	
Neither agree nor disagree	
Agree	
Strong agree	

2. Unfavorable music weakens youth engagement in Muyumbu FMC?

Strong disagree	
Disagree	
Neither agree nor disagree	
Agree	
Strong agree	

3. Not having a sense of belonging weakens youth engagement in Muyumbu FMC?

Strong disagree	
Disagree	

Neither agree nor disagree	
Agree	
Strong agree	

4. Not experiencing captivating biblical teaching weakens youth engagement in Muyumbu FMC?

Strong disagree	
Disagree	
Neither agree nor disagree	
Agree	
Strong agree	

5. The youth worker's personal charisma is what draws the attention of many youths?

Strong disagree	
Disagree	
Neither agree nor disagree	
Agree	
Strong agree	

6. Mentorship is another characteristic that is conducive to the youth worker?

Strong disagree	
Disagree	
Neither agree nor disagree	
Agree	
Strong agree	

7. Another characteristic necessary for youth ministry includes the ability to develop healthy relational connections with students in the church?

Strong disagree	
Disagree	
Neither agree nor disagree	
Agree	
Strong agree	

8. The last characteristic required of effective youth workers directly relates to the ability to clearly develop lessons and teach Biblical principles?

Strong disagree	
Disagree	
Neither agree nor disagree	
Agree	
Strong agree	

9. How many youth activities/events have you attended in the last year?

Strong disagree	
Disagree	
Neither agree nor disagree	
Agree	
Strong agree	

## **INTERVIEW GUIDES**

10. How often did you attend Sunday School in the last year?
  11. How often do you attend Youth Bible Study classes in the last year?
  12. How well do you get along with your Youth Ministry leader(s)?
  13. How satisfied are you with the Youth Ministry leaders at your church?
  14. Were you ever given the opportunity to lead at church?
  15. What was your favorite activity you were involved in at your church?
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