

Efficacy of Youth Seminars, Camps and Conferences in Inculcating Moral Values among the Youth in the Methodist Church in Kenya, Meru, Region

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Abstract

This study examined the efficacy of youth seminars, camps and conferences in inculcating moral values among the youth in the Methodist Church in Kenya, Meru Region. The study was guided by the moral development theory developed by Lawrence Kohlberg in 1958 and falls in the category of cognitive-moral-reasoning theories. The theory was suitable for this study because it clarified what influences the moral decisions at each level of moral development, something that the church can take advantage of to ensure the inculcation of moral values among the youth. The study targeted youth and the clergy of the six synods of the Methodist church in Kenya, Meru Region. A descriptive survey research design was used. Stratified random sampling was used to attain the study sample size. The instruments for data collection included a questionnaire for the youth and an interview schedule for the clergy. Data analysis was done through Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 27 and presented through descriptions, tables and pie charts. The study revealed that many youth take part in the various church programmes, while some do not. Youth programmes are effective in inculcating moral values such as peace, respect, obedience, love, honesty and cooperation. It was observable that the value of sexual purity was lowly rated in most programmes. The study is significant as a contribution to the body of knowledge in the discipline of Religious Studies in the area of ecclesiology and psychology of religion.

Key terms: Camp, conference, moral decadence, seminar, synod, youth ministry.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

As a key pillar in the growth of any church, Youth Ministry develops and executes strategic programmes aimed at instilling moral values among the youth. In view of this, the Methodist Church in Kenya, Meru Region, has put in place seminars, camps and conferences to mould the youth into holistic individuals. Despite the existence of these strategies, there was insufficient current analysis on the efficacy of different church programmes within the Methodist Church in Kenya, Meru Region, in inculcating moral values among the youth. Consequently, there was no evidence that the programmes by the Methodist Church in Kenya, Meru Region, successfully served the purpose they were intended to. Thus, there was a need to examine the efficacy of youth seminars, camps and conferences as strategies used by the Methodist Church in Kenya, Meru Region, in inculcating moral values among the youth. This study, therefore, investigated the effectiveness of these strategies in instilling moral values among the young people in the MCK, Meru Region.

Indecency is no longer appalling but has been accepted as a normal thing, hence the high rate of moral decadence in America, as confirmed by Megan and Nicole (2022). Brown (2008) states that in the United Kingdom, there is evidence of an unprecedented and unsettling decline in moral values. He further asserts that social values have changed rapidly, such that things that caused outrage a generation ago are now celebrated. According to Reasul and Mofazzo (2018), it is estimated that about 30 per cent of the total population in Bangladesh are young people, and unfortunately, a significant percentage of them are involved in immorality. In China, Ethics have been compromised, leading to deterioration and disorderliness in society (Di Shang, 2016). Such a state causes worry in society.

In Africa, things are not any better. In South Africa, Mamabolo (2021) confirms that there is an alarming decline in morality among the young people in South African public schools, and there is a need to find out the causes. Van (2003) argues that in South Africa and the entire African continent, people are experiencing the impact of moral deterioration every day. As regards Nigeria, Njoku (2017) laments that moral decadence is high and there is evidence of moral laxity among the young people and moral values in the country have degenerated to the lowest ebb, to the extent that the state of Nigerian youths in terms of morality is becoming hopeless and frustrating. Britwum et al. (2020) assert that there are unethical practices in Ghana among young people, and these include occultism, consumption of obscene content, breaking laws and rioting in schools, among others.

In East Africa, the story is not any different. Guest Writer (2019) argues that declining moral standards among the youths in Uganda are becoming a challenge in the 21st century and thus a topic of discussion. Werunga and Simiyu (2021), on the other hand, posit that moral values such as honesty, mutual respect, civility and social responsibility are increasingly lacking among the youths in Kenya. This makes it difficult for individuals to live good lives as well as become productive contributors to the welfare of society. This argument is supported by Wamalwa (2016), who claims that there is an outcry concerning the declining morals among young people in the country. Moral decadence has set its roots all over Kenya, such that a day hardly passes without reports of drug abuse, violence, sexual abuse, killings, robbery, among other cases.

In Meru County, it has been observed that many young people drop out of school to engage in cheap labour. For instance, Mutuma (2010) confirms that in Igembe District, some young boys leave school to

work as casual labourers in miraa plantations. The same young boys abuse alcohol and drugs. Ihuoma (1995) feels that moral decadence is a social problem affecting many nations, and every community should put in place a mechanism to check its growth. Reasul and Mofazzo (2018) share Ihuoma's feelings as they argue that the issues of moral decadence among the youths should arouse concern in everyone.

Masanga (2010) confirms that churches have noble programs for the mental, social, spiritual and moral guidance of their members. The programs touch on areas of integrity and discipline, among others. Closely related to Masanga's argument is Mutheu (2018), who states that the Catholic Church, for instance, attempts to inculcate moral values among the youth through pastoral programs, rituals and symbolisms as well as church policies. What is not clear is the efficacy of these programmes in inculcating moral values among the youth, hence the need for this study.

Of concern to the researcher is that despite the evidence of Church programs meant to inculcate moral values among the youths, moral decadence has evidently remained a pertinent issue. The study thus focused on the efficacy of youth Seminars, camps and conferences in inculcating moral values among the youth in the MCK, Meru region.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

Seminars, camps and conferences are crucial non-formal avenues through which young people are trained and offered capacity-building opportunities (Ghahremani, 2013; Daniel et al., 2014). Youth training and capacity-building programmes focus on improving skills that enable them to carry out vital functions, solve problems, and define and achieve objectives. Young people make up the bulk of the population from a demographic point of view. As such, there is a need to support the youth in harnessing their potential. Shefiu (2016) argues that capacity building should focus on morality, skills improvement, health and well-being, good governance, human rights and accountability, employment opportunities, leadership skills, empowerment and entrepreneurship.

The youth are also equipped with human and godly values that promote healthy body, healthy mind and healthy lifestyles. Through seminars, camps, and conferences, young people further attain skills in leadership, communication, citizenship, and discipline to grow in acceptable values (Clark, 2015). Observations of Lerner (2008) and Tallman (2023) are that youth seminars and conferences are opportunities the church uses to enhance positive youth development and participate in services for learning experiences. The experiences happen when young people are taught the Word of God and listened to as they ask critical life and moral questions. They are then put together to plan and pursue common goals (The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2012). This study is meant to find out whether youth seminars, camps and conferences in the Methodist Church in Kenya, Meru region are impactful in inculcating moral values among the youth.

Theoretical Framework

This study was guided by the theory of moral development established by a Christian psychologist named Lawrence Kohlberg (1927-1987). Kohlberg's concern is not with whether an action is moral or immoral but with the level of reasoning at which one can justify or explain his or her moral decisions. He used moral dilemmas to enhance moral reasoning in a given moral predicament. Thus, it was not the answer given by the subjects that made it right or wrong, but why they believed it to be wrong or right.

The theoretical emphasis is on moral reasoning. Kohlberg argued that people learn moral values through active reasoning and that moral development follows a series of stages. The framework of this theory consists of six stages organised into three general levels of moral development namely; pre-conventional morality, conventional morality and post-conventional morality (Robert, 2008).

At the pre-conventional level, people take commands from authoritative figures; hence, morality is externally controlled. Moral decisions are based on personal criteria. The second level is known as conventional morality. Here, moral decisions are dictated by an outside authority such as laws, rules and guidelines. The two stages at this level are the good boy, good girl orientation and authority orientation. People here are more inclined to the opinions of authority figures and conformity to social rules, laws and guidelines than rewards and punishment. The concentration shifts from self-interest to relationships with other people and social systems. The individual strives to support rules that are set forth by authorities such as parents, peers and institutions. They want to please and help others as they also expand their own understanding of how a good person should behave (Robert, 2008). The stage is therefore less egocentric and more socio-centric. The adolescents here acquire the need to sustain, uphold and justify the current social systems through conforming to social conventions.

The third level is called post-conventional morality. This is the level of individual moral autonomy. Unlike the previous two levels, where moral decisions were dependent upon the response or affirmation of another individual, at this level, moral decisions are based on individually applied principles (Robert, 2008). These principles are beyond personal self-interests, as is the case in level one, or laws and authorities, as is the case in level two. This calls for selflessness and reasoning beyond the limitations of law. Here, people explore inside themselves for solutions rather than relying on external sources of authority.

The church's recognition of the youths' basis of moral decisions is helpful in putting in place relevant strategies to enhance the acquisition of moral values among them. The church, as a respectable authority in society, is therefore well placed to impact the youth morally. Further, the ultimate goal of the strategies used by the church in inculcating moral values should be to enable progressive moral development in individual youths. This would ensure that one attains the autonomy stage characterised by universal ethical principles as seen in the post-conventional level of moral development. Such a person is one who understands the meaning of right behaviour and chooses to act right, not because they fear punishment or expect external rewards, or because they want approval of authorities, but because they are convinced selflessly that it is the right thing to do. This will promote responsible adulthood and order in society. Table 1 shows a summary of Kohlberg's moral development model.

Table 1: Kohlberg's Moral Development Model

Preconventional Level	Stage 1 (Ages 6-8)	Punishment and obedience orientation (Will I get caught? Will I get punished?)
	Stage 2 (Ages 8-10)	Instrumental relativist orientation. (What is in it for me?)
Convectional Level	Stage 3 (Ages 10-12)	Interpersonal, concordance orientation. (What do others expect of me? How can I please adults as the nice girl and the good boy?)
	Stage 4 (Ages 12-15)	Law and order orientation. (What does the law say? What is my duty?)
Post-convectional level	Stage 5 (Ages 15+)	Social contrast and consensus orientation. (What is the group's agreement and my personal obligation In this matter?)
	Stage 6	Universal ethical principles orientation. (What is my principle that has universal significance?)

Source: Robert (2008).

3.0 METHODOLOGY

This study used the descriptive survey research design. The design was appropriate since it was useful in getting evidence concerning an existing situation or a current situation (Kombo & Tromp, 2006). Creswell (2012) posited that descriptive survey design was useful in describing the characteristics of a population or a phenomenon being studied. The study was conducted using qualitative and in-depth interviews in order to examine individual persons' views on the efficacy of youth seminars, camps and conferences strategies used by the MCK Meru Region in inculcating moral values among the youth. The study was carried out in the Methodist Church in Kenya, Meru Region, which covers Six Synods within the administrative structure of the Methodist Church in Kenya. The Synods are Nkubu, Tharaka, Kaaga, Miathene, Nyambene North, and Nyambene. The target population for this study was the youth and the clergy in the six Synods of the MCK, Meru Region. The table below gives a summary of the youth and the clergy of the MCK Meru Region according to Synods.

Table 2: The Distribution of the Target Population by Synods

Synod	Number of Youth Members	Number of Clergy Members
Nkubu	1678	42
Kaaga	1887	75
Miathene	1256	40
Nyambene North	1145	34
Nyambene	1240	32
Tharaka	1120	28
Total	8326	251

Source: Synod Statistical Return 2023

A representative sample for the study was attained from the targeted population through stratified random sampling. The sample that corresponds with the target population of 8326 is 369. There were 251 members of the clergy; hence, the sample size for such a population was 151. In each stratum, the appropriate representation was proportionate to the study population.

Table 3: Appropriate Representation per Stratum

Synods	Youth Number	Size	Clergy	Size
Nkubu	1678	74	42	25
Kaaga	1887	83	75	45
Miathene	1256	56	40	24
Nyambene North	1145	51	34	21
Nyambene	1240	55	32	19
Tharaka	1120	50	28	17
Total	8326	369	251	151

An interview schedule was conducted with the clergy. The study adopted a questionnaire as the main tool of data collection from the youths. The questionnaires had both open-ended and closed-ended questions. The closed-ended questions made it possible to collect quantitative data for statistical analysis, and the open-ended questions evoked qualitative responses about the respondents' views on the issue being studied.

Data was entered using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 27 for the purpose of analysis. The study ensured that ethical considerations were adhered to by getting voluntary informed consent from the respondents. The researcher respected privacy and upheld the confidentiality of the respondents through the maintenance of anonymity by not disclosing individual identity.

4.0 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Effectiveness of Seminars, Camps and Conferences in Inculcating Specific Moral Values

The study sought to determine the extent to which youth seminars, camps, and conferences were effective in inculcating specific moral values among the youth. The values targeted were peace, respect, obedience, honesty or truthfulness, love, cooperation and sexual purity. The results are provided in Table 4.

Table 4: Extent to Which Youth Seminars, Camps and Conferences were effective in Inculcating Specific Moral Values

N=335	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Peace		
Not at all	14	4
Not sure	32	10
To a large extent	195	58
To a very large extent	95	28
Total	335	100
Respect		
Not at all	10	3
Not sure	18	5
To a large extent	157	47
To a very large extent	150	45
Total	335	100
Obedience		
Not at all	4	1
Not sure	7	2
To a large extent	213	64
To a very large extent	112	33
Total	335	100
Honesty /Truthfulness		
Not at all	0	0
Not sure	11	3
To a large extent	210	63
To a very large extent	114	34
Total	335	100
Love		
Not at all	3	1
Not sure	6	2
To a large extent	178	53
To a very large extent	148	44
Total	335	100
Cooperation		
Not at all	1	0
Not sure	13	4
To a large extent	133	40
To a very large extent	188	56
Total	335	100
Sexual Purity		
Not at all	0	0
Not sure	9	3
To a large extent	261	78

To a very large extent	65	19
Total	335	100

Effectiveness of Seminars, Camps and Conferences in Inculcating the Value of Peace

From the responses, it was clear that 95 (28%) of the respondents indicated that the programmes were effective to a very large extent, 194 (58%) said the programmes were effective to a large extent and those who were not sure were 32 (10%). Further, the study findings revealed that 14 (4%) of the respondents felt that the programmes were not at all effective in inculcating the value of peace. It is therefore evident that the programmes by the Methodist Church in Kenya, Meru Region, are conducive to acquiring and spreading peace.

Responses from the interviewed members of the clergy agreed with what was noted from the questionnaires above. Munene (2025) argued that the programmes were effective since they were organised with the goal of achieving specific purposes such as team spirit and spiritual growth. Peaceful co-existence is possible where there is harmonious living as a result of people valuing one another. Findings agree with the assertions of Korir and Koech (2022), who state that other than the family, the church is key in teaching its members the value of peace. Better still, the church is looked upon in society to provide a conducive environment that promotes and safeguards peaceful co-existence. The church provides peace through the presence of the Holy Spirit, who helps people attain inner peace and relate harmoniously with one another as they embrace peace, unity, love, and mutual encouragement.

Further, Korir and Koech (2022) argue that in order to achieve peace in and among the youth, the church management needs to involve them in meaningful participation, as they are key actors in preventing and resolving conflicts. When the young people find peace in church, there are positive personal and communal changes which include reduced stress, increased resilience and a stronger sense of belonging (Davis, 2025). In Matthew 5:9, Jesus Christ teaches that those who promote peace are blessed and they will be called children of God. This means that God values peace, and those who promote it gain a relationship with Him. Similarly, Romans 12:18, Hebrews 12:14, 2Corinthians 13:11, 1Thesalonians 5:13-15 and Ephesians 4:1-3 encourage Christians to seek peace and pursue this virtue. These verses underscore the significance of people for an individual and also among people. The move by the Methodist Church in Kenya, Meru Region, to engage their youth in programmes that inculcate the value of peace is therefore commendable. Young people are an undeniably important part of society whose influence, whether negative or positive, cannot be ignored. If they team up and use their strength towards a goal, their impact will be felt. For instance, some politicians use the power and strength of the youth to cause violence, especially during riots and campaigns, to achieve selfish and political gains. Whenever young people are restless, there is chaos and enormous destruction. Other than using the youth to cause chaos, encouraging the youth to uphold peace is a worthwhile pursuit which would enhance progress in society. A peaceful society is a productive society in aspects such as economic progress. Peaceful youth are also mentally healthy and therefore more useful in society.

Effectiveness of Seminars, Camps and Conferences in Inculcating Respect

Concerning the value of respect, it is clear from Table 4 that 157 (47%) of the respondents stated that the seminars, camps and conferences were effective to a very large extent. 157 (47%) respondents felt that the programmes were effective to a large extent, and 18 (5%) were not sure. The number of respondents who

indicated that the programmes were not effective at all was 10 (3%).

The researcher also sought the opinion of the members of the clergy on the effectiveness of seminars, camps and conferences in inculcating the value of respect. Lucy, a member of the clergy, said the following;

Most of the young people who attend these church programmes that are organised for them benefit a lot. For example, the church mostly prioritises teaching the youth about moral values, with respect being one of them. Other than teaching, we also put effort into practising respect as a way of ensuring that our young people are mentored. So, it is true that seminars, camps and conferences help to inculcate the value of respect in our youth. Of course, there are those who are difficult to help, but for such, we always know that there are many other issues to deal with. Such issues include poor upbringing, wrong associations and drug and substance abuse.

From the responses above, it is evident that seminars, camps, and conferences are good forums through which young people can learn the value of respect. From the Oxford dictionary, the term respect refers to the ability to accord due regard for the feelings, wishes or rights of others. Perna (2023) further defines respect as a feeling or understanding that someone is important and should be treated in an appropriate way. Perna explains that young people who feel respected give back respect to others. Respect is important because it enhances a person's feeling of worth and makes other people feel worthy. Additionally, respect promotes positive relationships, builds trust and promotes harmony in society (Orlando, 2022). As a core value, respect is important in the development of moral character because it helps young people to develop into responsible and kind human beings who can be relied upon in various aspects of life (Perna, 2023).

The Bible supports the importance of the value of respect in scriptures such as Exodus 20:12: "*Honour your father and mother that you may live long in the land the lord your God is giving you*" This verse underscores the commandment to respect and honour parents. A person who respects parents would similarly be better placed to respect other people in the community. Proverbs 23:22 also says, "*Listen to your father who gave you life and do not despise your mother when she is old*" Leviticus 19:3 states, "*Each of you must respect his mother and father*" 1Peter 2:17 states, "*Honour all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honour the King*" This verse emphasises the importance of respecting all individuals, fellow believers and those in authority. Matthew 7:12 "*In everything do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the law and the prophets*" This is the golden rule, which emphasises treating others with the same respect one would want for themselves.

For Christians, respect has its foundation in the fact that human beings are made in the image and likeness of God and therefore have value, which consequently means that humans are special in God's sight and need to be respected as such. The value of respect in young people would ensure fewer vices and more authentic relationships at the family level, church fellowships, schools, and society at large. Respect for human beings would appeal to visitors such as investors from outside the country, hence, more development. A respectable and respectful young person is also reliable and therefore easy to entrust with responsibilities, thus minimising cases of idleness and joblessness.

Effectiveness of Seminars, Camps and Conferences in Inculcating Obedience

Table 4 reveals that 112 (33%) of the respondents felt that seminars, camps and conferences were effective to a very large extent in inculcating the value of obedience among the youth. The number of respondents who indicated that the programmes were effective to a large extent was 213 (64%), and those who were not sure were 7 (2%). Finally, 4 (1%) respondents stated that seminars, camps and conferences were not effective at all in inculcating obedience among the youth. The interviewed members of the clergy argued that youth seminars, camps and conferences were effective in inculcating the value of obedience. Jotham said;

Yes, I can boldly say that the seminars, camps and conferences that we plan for youth help in instilling the value of obedience in most of our young people. First, these activities entail rules and regulations which the attendees must observe. The requirements range from the set dates, the attendance fee that must be paid, to the time management during the programmes, among other things. We start by refreshing their minds on the importance of adhering to the set schedules. We also teach the discipline of obedience, and we mentor it. Of course, there are those who might not catch the virtue, but those are the minority. And concerning the few who may not embrace obedience, we do not give up. We try other approaches, like involving their parents and suggesting counselling sessions for them.

From the findings, it is evident that the youth are able to acquire the value of obedience through seminars, camps and conferences. Kuwali (2019) states that obedience is the ability to adhere to instructions, whether written or spoken. It is the ability to consistently align one's life with standards and beliefs that are outside of oneself. In the context of following instructions and respecting authorities, obedience is an indicator of a person's readiness to receive new knowledge and skills (Erik, 2022).

Engelmann (2019) emphasises that the culture of obedience needs to be developed and maintained at home, school and church because a person's attitude is ideally based on applicable norms. Seminars and conferences are useful in teaching and encouraging obedience since they provide a structured environment for learning and discussions, all of which are done according to stated guidelines. The events foster a sense of community, provide positive role models and offer opportunities for young people to explore the benefits of obedience in various contexts (Thomas, 2019). The seminars, camps, and conferences addressed in this study are programmes that are achieved through clear instructions and guidelines for the attendees.

Young people who attend the programmes are required to adhere to the guidelines governing the programmes. Additionally, facilitators in the seminars, camps and conferences have good opportunities to explore the concept of obedience in contexts such as at home, authorities, school, among others. A good number of the respondents felt that these programmes are able to inculcate the value of obedience, which means that the youth follow the rules and regulations that govern the programmes. However, as Steven (2023) observes, people ought to apply critical thinking and obey instructions with understanding because blind obedience can be retrogressive, especially in the era of indoctrination and various cultic practices in society.

The Bible underscores the importance of the value of obedience as seen in various scriptures, such as 1Samuel 15:22, which clearly states that obedience is better than sacrifice. This means that God values

those who do what he commands more than those who focus on religious observations, neglecting obedience. Likewise, Proverbs 19:16 teaches that those who obey instructions guard their lives. This implies that obedience has the ability to preserve a person's life from the consequences of disobedience. From John 15:10, it is clear that those who obey God remain in His love. Also, Matthew 7:24-27 highlights the importance of putting the teachings of Jesus into practice, comparing those who do so to a wise man who built his house on a rock. This could be understood to mean that obedience establishes a Christian in firm faith in God. On the same note, Ephesians 6:1-3 exhorts children to obey their parents in the Lord, for it is the right thing to do. Obedience is therefore a requirement in day-to-day life, and a lack of it could lead to negative consequences. Obedience among the young people is crucial in that it helps them grow responsibly and also be able to relate with their seniors, whether at home, church, school or even at work with their supervisors. This would ensure a more orderly society.

Effectiveness of Seminars, Camps and Conferences in Inculcating Honesty

Table 4 reveals that 114 (34%) respondents felt that seminars, camps and conferences are effective to a very large extent in inculcating the value of honesty or truthfulness. Those who indicated that the programmes were effective to a large extent were 210 (63%), while 11(3%) were not sure. When asked whether the seminars, camps and conferences were effective in inculcating the value of respect, Joyce, a member of the clergy, said;

I would say that they do. This is one of the virtues we teach the young people during the seminars, camps and conferences. A number of the young people display this virtue, but we still have others struggling. Acquisition of values such as honesty is a lifelong process. Better still, a person's background and orientation are very important. Some of the young people in the church are dishonest because that is the way they were brought up. The environment they live in at home, school and general society also influences their level of honesty. But we are trying, and we shall keep trying to instil this virtue into our youth.

The study found that seminars, camps, and conferences are effective settings for promoting honesty among young people. These forums provide opportunities for learning and reflection on key values such as honesty, responsibility, and love through structured activities and discussions. This is because the forums are also good opportunities for teaching and preaching on pertinent matters in the church and society. The Holy Bible also strongly emphasises honesty as a core value, which is linked to God's character, thus calling believers to live truthfully. In Deuteronomy 32:4, God is revealed as truthful and hating dishonesty. Christians who claim to love God should also be committed to shunning dishonesty in their lives. Further, the Ten Commandments in Exodus 20:16 include a prohibition against lying. The ten commandments serve as God's guide to believers on what is good to follow and what is bad to avoid.

That truthfulness is part of the Ten Commandments implies that honesty is a key virtue to embrace. Additionally, scriptures like Ephesians 4:25 and Colossians 3:9 command believers to be truthful. Honesty is a value that should still continue to be cultivated in such camps for its crucial role in the church and society. Young people who are honest are reliable and dependable, and they can be trusted with valuable information and responsibilities. Honesty among the young people would help fight some of the disturbing issues in society today, such as a lack of integrity in families, schools (like cheating in examinations), the church, and key sectors in government. Honesty among the youth would be a good step towards correcting issues of integrity in a country like Kenya.

Effectiveness of Seminars, Camps and Conferences in Inculcating Love

From table 4, it is clear that 148 (44%) of the respondents felt that seminars, camps and conferences were very effective in inculcating the value of love. Those who indicated that the programmes were effective to a large extent were 178 (54%), while those who were not sure were 6 (2%). Finally, only 3(1%) indicated that seminars, camps and conferences were not at all effective in inculcating the value of love among the youth.

Responses from the interviewed members of the clergy revealed that seminars, camps and conferences for the young people helped to inculcate the value of love. On this, Muguongo said:

During seminars, camps and conferences, we teach and preach first about the love of God to humanity. We also emphasise the need to love one another, as it is a requirement in the holy scriptures and Christian principles. We challenge the young people to practice the virtue of love during these seminars and conferences by intentionally interacting with one another positively through speaking affirming words, attitudes and sharing what they have with those who do not have. We further call on the young people to practice love in their families, schools and general society. I can confidently confirm that most of our young people have caught this value.

It is therefore clear that seminars, camps, and conferences were useful forums for promoting love among the youth in the Methodist Church in Kenya, Meru Region. Christian love, also known as agape, is a central theme in Christian theology and practice. It entails selfless, sacrificial, and unconditional love, both for God and for fellow human beings. John 3:16 (*For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten son that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life*) presents God as the best example of love. Because God loved humanity, he offered a solution for their redemption through Jesus Christ, who died for human beings to be reconciled to the Father. Christians should therefore learn from God and show love to fellow human beings through good actions.

1Corinthians 13:1-3 clarifies that whatever other good things a Christian may do (such as speaking good language, prophesying, or even giving to the poor), if one fails to love, the good deeds will amount to nothing and they will benefit no one. In John 13:34-35, Jesus Christ commends His followers to love one another as a way of setting standards for Christian love. This implies that Christians should love their fellow Christians so as to set a good example for non-Christians. It further implies that non-Christians would respond better to messages on love if they found out that Christians are practising love amongst themselves. This love should be exemplified in homes, churches, schools, and society, as young people are everywhere. Failure to practice love by Christians could easily keep non-Christians away and discourage them from joining the church. 1John 4:8-16 teaches that God is love and therefore, Christians ought to show love to one another because God first loved them. Genuine love among the youth is advantageous in a society that often experiences disintegration, hatred, jealousy, and destruction of life and property.

According to Chellapanian (2024), the church, which is the prophetic voice of society, has a responsibility to ensure a morally balanced society by promoting vital values such as love, respect and peace. These values are achieved among the youth through intentional role modelling so that the young people can emulate what they observe and hear. Further, the church ought to establish a culture that is uplifting and supportive, an environment that encourages people to show love. Seminars, camps and conferences organised for the youth by the church provide the above culture and environment. Thomson (2017) argues

that joint efforts are required from both the church and the general society to ensure that the young people in our society embrace values that equip them for a responsible and fruitful life.

Effectiveness of Seminars, Camps and Conferences in Inculcating Cooperation

Table 4 further reveals that 188 (56%) respondents indicated that seminars, camps and conferences were very effective in inculcating the value of cooperation. Those who indicated that the programmes were effective to a large extent were 133 (40%), while those who were not sure were 13 (4%). Finally, only 1(0%) indicated that seminars, camps and conferences were not at all effective in inculcating the value of cooperation among the youth.

Through an interview schedule, the researcher asked the members of the clergy whether seminars, camps and conferences were effective in inculcating the value of cooperation. Daniel, a member of the clergy, said the following;

Yes, I have observed that youth seminars, camps, and conferences are effective forums for developing cooperation among our youth. This is a value that is intertwined with other values, such as obedience and love. In the seminars, camps and conferences, there is a lot that calls for the young people's cooperation, and while there, we still teach them the need for cooperation as Christians. I cannot say that all the young people who take part in these programmes have caught the value, but I can confirm that a good number are cooperative.

It was therefore clear from the responses above that seminars, camps, and conferences are effective in inculcating the value of cooperation among the young people in the Methodist Church in Kenya, Meru Region. Cooperation is the ability of people to interconnect in a shared mission. The value of cooperation is deeply rooted in the body of Christ, where each member has a unique role and contributes to the overall functioning of the church. 1Corinthians 12 uses the analogy of the human body to show how each part is essential, emphasising that believers should work together in unity. Psalm 133:1-3 underscores the importance of cooperation, stating that cooperation attracts the blessings of God.

Seminars, camps and conferences serve to bring young people together, thus creating an environment conducive to cooperation. Young people are an important group of people in the church and society. Their cooperation, if used with the right motive, can bring progress in society. However, there is a need to ensure that young people embrace other values, such as integrity, so that when they cooperate, they do so for a noble purpose. In Genesis 11:5ff, people cooperated to build the Tower of Babel, but God was unhappy. Whereas the task was good, the people's motive was bad as they were full of pride, arrogance and disobedience. This bad motive attracted the wrath of God upon the people, whereby He confused their language and scattered them. Caution should be taken to ensure that young people cooperate in good things and for good reasons.

According to Mulwa (2018), young people acquire values such as cooperation and teamwork through shared responsibilities in decision making, programme planning, participation in community projects and outreach. Young people are usually involved in the planning of seminars, camps, and conferences. The planning activities offer a conducive environment where their ideas are valued. Through the planning process, the youth are able to suggest their ideas as well as listen to other people's ideas amongst themselves, as well as their pastors.

Effectiveness of Seminars, Camps and Conferences in Inculcating Sexual Purity

On whether seminars, camps and conferences are effective in inculcating the moral value of sexual purity, 65 (19%) respondents indicated that seminars, camps and conferences were very effective. Those who indicated that the programmes were effective to a large extent were 261 (78%), while those who were not sure were 9 (3%). There were no respondents who indicated that the programmes were not at all effective in inculcating the value of sexual purity.

Responses from the interviewed members of the clergy were different from those from the questionnaires. This is because when they were asked whether youth seminars, camps and conferences were effective in inculcating sexual purity, Joan said;

Sexual purity is one of the values young people are struggling with in this church. We have had countless young girls dropping out of school due to teenage pregnancy, yet they are members of the church and church youth groups. Even those who are not pregnant, some people could be sexually active. For some of them, their parents have requested counselling and guidance, while other cases have been reported by their own leaders. It's a dilemma for the church and the pastoral team.

From the responses above, the youth members felt that seminars, camps and conferences were effective in inculcating the value of sexual purity. On the other hand, the members of the clergy felt that the above forums were not effective in inculcating the value of sexual purity.

The Bible addresses the dangers of sexual immorality (Proverbs 5:15-20). Also, 1Thesalonians 4:3-5, 1 Corinthians 6:18-20 and Romans 13:14 emphasise the importance of embracing sexual purity. The youth who embrace the teachings from these scriptures are likely to uphold sexual purity. Further, sexual purity requires exercising discipline at a personal level. Young people who value personal discipline can abstain from sexual relationships up to the appropriate time. One can also abstain from sexual relationships as a teenager if they have been oriented and taught about the same from childhood. The church should emphasise the need for sexual purity among the youth because lack of it has consequences such as teenage pregnancy, dropping out of school, sexually transmitted diseases, conflicts with parents or guardians, stress and depression, among others.

In a nutshell, seminars, camps, and conferences organised for the young people in the Methodist Church in Kenya, Meru Region, helped inculcate a good number of moral values. For example, Miriti said;

I would like to confirm that our churches are doing very well in the programmes organised for the young people. These programmes have been playing key roles in instilling important moral values among our youth. This is because we have time with them to talk, teach and even answer pertinent questions on issues affecting youth morality in the current society. Through our interactions, the young people reason and share their ideas. They also listen, and they are listened to. We have witnessed some of them grow socially and spiritually such that they have taken bigger roles in family and community.

Munene and Kaimenyi (2025) confirmed that seminars, camps and conferences were effective in inculcating certain values, such as respect, love and obedience, but not effective in inculcating values such

as honesty and sexual purity. Munene (2025) said;

There is a general problem in regard to sexual immorality among the young people in the society and the church is affected too, but we remain optimistic that as we continue to interact with them, they will be helped. Concerted effort is, however, necessary for sustainable positive moral changes among the young people. We note with concern that there are changing attitudes towards various things in the society today, for example sexuality, and unfortunately, the people who are affected most are the youth.

Munene asserted that often the church is faced with challenges of achieving its goals of inculcating moral values, such as sexual purity, because of modern trends and attitudes concerning the same. Nevertheless, Munene asserted that the church, together with families, remains the hope of society in regard to many aspects of growth. Munene's feelings are true because there are many challenges to play against the efforts by the church to equip young people with relevant values and skills in contemporary society. For example, Lu Han and Zhang (2023) confirm that a key challenge hindering the church from empowering young people with values is secularisation. They define secularisation as a process in which religious consciousness, activities and institutions lose their importance in society. Some youths are affected by this vice in modern society.

Religious secularisation indicates the decline of religion, such that religion becomes compatible with the modern market economy, from content to form. With secularisation, religion becomes a purely private affair, and the sanctity of religion changes. Of the many conflicts that characterise contemporary intellectual discourses, the one between secularisation and religion appears to be the most crucial (Shang, 2016). As it is, the phenomenon of secularism is no longer the concern of the West. Although a few decades ago Africa was booming with various forms of religions such as Christianity, Islam, and traditional African religions (ATR), it would be strange for one to believe that secularism was not here (Shang, 2016). In the recent past, there have been debates on the relationship between the state and the church, mosque, shrines and temples. The debates have majored on issues such as the rights of homosexuals, reproductive and family rights of women, regulation of religious preaching, morning religious devotion in schools, and recognition of atheists, among others (Kang'entu, 2017). The young people are either part of the debates or are affected by them, making it difficult for them to embrace moral values like sexual purity.

According to Kang'entu (2017), secularisation is a global challenge, and it has been on the rise in Kenya, making it difficult for the church to instil moral values among its members. Shang (2016) argues that until a few years back, the church was the unsurpassable life signpost influencing social, moral, economic and political systems in Africa. Nowadays, it is undeniable that the influence of the church on public life has declined. Shang further argues that this trend, characterised as secularism, poses a serious danger, especially among today's youth who consciously or unconsciously are swallowing up secular culture in huge gulps to their own peril. Many young people view the secularisation thesis underlying contemporary thought as the belief that the decline of religion is a permanent and irreversible process. Many confidently believe that solutions to life challenges are found anywhere else but in Christianity. Thus, making it an uphill task for the church to make sense in embracing Christian values in life (Kang'entu, 2017)

Shang (2017), while quoting McTernan (2008), argues that many young people today object to church teachings because they feel that religion lingers only as a comforting myth for those who need support in

times of personal crisis, but it has no impact on social or political life. It is an epiphenomenon in that it represents something different from what it appears to be. In the pre-secular era, it might have been true to argue that to be human is to be religious and to accept one's values to be moulded by religious principles. However, this is not true anymore since Jace (2014), while quoting Taylor (2009), argues that the natural state of a human existence is to be without religion. This denotes that it is becoming increasingly challenging for the church to impact its followers with moral values.

According to Kang'etu (2017), secularisation is on the increase in Kenya, and it has continued to erode the ecclesiastical authority, especially in the urban centres. This is so especially since there is open criticism of the church by the public, journalists and atheists. Atheists have strongly fronted their interests to be recognised and have also strongly opposed religion, especially Christianity, in the country. A recent case is the Atheists' condemnation of a Christian interdenominational programme titled "Rhema Feast" that took place in Nairobi from 1st to 5th September 2025. The words were: "*Atheist in Kenya Society (AIK) has condemned the recently held Rhema Feast, urging Kenyans to shun such religious gatherings. The society argues that the event promotes superstition and undermines critical thinking, calling on the public to prioritise reason over blind faith*" (People's Daily: 6th Sept.2025). If care is not taken, it can attract the attention of many young people, especially university students and young adults.

Kang'entu (2017) laments that preaching and prayers have been prohibited in many public transports (matatus) as indicated by clear large font stickers reading "preaching and hawking prohibited here" He wonders how preaching can be equated to hawking. He argues that secularism and secularisation have several negative effects on the church, which consequently makes it difficult to inculcate moral values among its members, youth included. Such effects include relativism, Christian nominalism and religiosity of a double standard, such as being in church but still practising sexual immorality. This is similar to what Apostle Paul is condemning in Philippians 3:19 when he tells the believers that they are proud of what they should be ashamed of.

5.0 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion: It was confirmed from the study findings that the Methodist Church in Kenya, Meru Region, held youth seminars, camps and conferences. The study findings revealed that a good number of the youth (91%) enjoyed taking part in the youth seminars, camps and conferences. The few youths who did not participate in the seminars, camps, and conferences stated that the activities were repetitive and boring. Other youths argued that they sometimes felt judged and unaccepted during the youth programmes. On the extent to which youth seminars, camps and conferences were effective in inculcating moral values such as peace, respect, obedience, love, honesty, cooperation and sexual purity, the study findings, both from the questionnaires and the interview schedule, confirmed that the programmes were effective in inculcating most of the moral values.

Recommendations: Based on the study findings and conclusions, the researcher recommends that:

- i. The Methodist Church in Kenya, Meru Region, should consider ways of ensuring that the young people in the church are motivated and encouraged to participate in various church programmes.
- ii. The Methodist Church in Kenya should find ways of improving the programme of games and sports so as to attract more young people.
- iii. The Methodist Church in Kenya, Meru Region, should explore other ways of promoting the value of sexual purity. This is because, from the study findings, the available strategies do not seem

effective in inculcating sexual purity.

- iv. The church leadership should consider forums to teach the youth on personal time planning and management. They will improve youth availability to attend Christian programmes in the church.

Future studies could focus on:

- i. Impact of Sunday school Christian programmes on the acquisition of moral values among the youth in the church.
- ii. Factors leading to moral decadence among Christian youth in Kenya.

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