Business & Social Science
IJRBS

Research in Business & Social Science

IJRBS VOL 9 NO 5 ISSN: 2147-4478

Available online at www.ssbfn.net
Journal homepage: <https://www.ssbfn.net/ojs/index.php/ijrbs>

Influence of church policies on the economic empowerment of the youth: The case of Presbyterian church of East Africa, Nyahururu Parish, Laikipia County, Kenya

Mercy Karanu ^(a), Peter Koome ^(b), Paul Gesimba ^(c)

^(a,b,c) Department of Development Studies, St. Paul's University, Nakuru, 20100, Kenya.

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 04 August 2020

Received in rev. form 15 August 2020

Accepted 02 September 2020

Keywords:

Church Policies, Youth, Economic Empowerment, Single Parenthood, Cohabitation, PCEA, Kenya

JEL Classification:

N.A

ABSTRACT

Kenyan youths have been marginalized from mainstream economic activities since independence. This situation has had a negative impact such as slowed economic growth, a rise in crime and violence, and the spread of diseases. It is these issues that have prompted this study on the influence of church policies on the economic empowerment of youths with a specific focus on the PCEA Nyahururu Parish. The study was guided by the Positive Youth Development model. It employed the descriptive research design and targeted a population of 233 respondents comprising of 220 youths and 13 leaders (2 congregation chairpersons, 1 clergy, 1 evangelist, 1 youth coordinator, and 8 youth leaders). From this population, a sample of 94 respondents was selected using the clustered random sampling method where the two congregations that make up the PCEA Nyahururu Parish formed the clusters. Quantitative data was collected from youths using structured questionnaires while qualitative data was collected from the church administrators using interview guides. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics such as percentages and means as well as inferential statistics. Qualitative data were analyzed using the thematic content analysis technique and results reported using quotes. Findings revealed that there is a low level of economic empowerment among the youths at the PCEA Nyahururu parish. Church policies on single parenthood and divorce/ separation have a statistically significant and negative contribution towards youth economic empowerment. Church policies on the use of modern technologies have a positive and statistically significant relationship with youth economic empowerment. The study recommends that churches should re-examine its policies in single parenthood and divorce/ separation.

© 2020 by the authors. Licensee SSBFNET, Istanbul, Turkey. This article is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

Introduction

Young people are key part of the society and thus their development is critical to the overall wellbeing of the society (Iwasaki, 2015). Empowerment of youths translates to greater peace and prosperity with a given society. On the other hand, Buheji and Ahmed (2017) argue that the mismanaged of youths can shutter an entire nation by creating chronic poverty, violence and crime, deteriorating living conditions, and spread of diseases such as HIV/AIDS. Youth empowerment is a responsibility of all stakeholders in a given society. One of the institutions that have the moral responsibility of promoting the empowerment of youth is the church (Pillay, 2017).

Churches can particularly play a central role in encouraging young people to nurture their talent or engage in entrepreneurial activity. The church community can help youths to mobilize resources for financing economic activities as well as act like social capital that enable youth to gain market linkages, essential skills, and other resources that are vital to their economic empowerment (Muriungi, 2013). Anozie (2013) noted that the church has been actively involved in the assistance of vulnerable members of the society. However, the church's efforts have mainly been limited to provision of emergency aid such as food to hunger victim and shelter to displaced person. Anozie (2013) stressed that churches need to extend their effort towards promoting sustainable development of the community through long-term initiatives rather quick interventions.

* Corresponding author. ORCID ID: 0000-0002-4185-8754

In the United States of America (USA), the church played a central role in the economic empowerment of young people by initiating major national youth development organizations such as Columbian Square, Awana, Royal Rangers, and Pathfinders (McGuire, Dworkin, Borden, Perkins, & Russell, 2016). These organizations have for many years provided holistic development programmes aimed at providing youths with skills and resources needed for them to realize their full potential. In Europe, the church founded the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) in 1844 that sought to deliver initiatives aimed at developing youth through a broad range of activities such as skills training, athletic facilities, and humanitarian work (Virginia Commonwealth University, 2015). The organization was founded in London and quickly spread to other parts of Europe. Today, YMCA has become a worldwide organization with networks in all continents including Africa.

In Africa, socioeconomic conditions have hampered the development of youths. In many African countries, youths are faced with a myriad of problems such as unemployment, violence, alcohol and drug abuse, prostitution, and other ills (Karombo, 2018). The church has the potential to help the African youth overcome these challenges, develop their strengths, and learn from their weaknesses. Unfortunately, many churches have not seized the opportunity that they have to contribute to the economic empowerment and overall development of the young adults. In South Africa, Baron (2017) noted that youth involvement in churches was minimal despite their vigour and innovativeness. The low inclusion of youths in church activities has, in turn, hampered the development of the youths, the church, and communities. Weber (2015) also noted that in the African continent, youths struggle to articulate their faith because they do not understand it well. Youth in most African churches have little connection with church activities because they are often assigned peripheral roles such as ushering.

In Kenya, youths defined as people aged between 18 and 35 years, account for more than 20% of the national population; a phenomenon referred to as youth bulge (Hope & Kempe 2012). The youths encounter a myriad of challenges that hinder their development such as unemployment, harassment by police, marginalization, physical and sexual exploitation, and limited access to essential facilities and services. The majority of youths are secluded from mainstream economic activities (Samuel Hall, 2017). These challenges hamper their contribution towards the economic, social, and political development of the country. In recognition of the growing challenges, youth development has become a popular theme among state actors, non-government organizations, and religious institutions (World Bank, 2015).

Faith-based organizations have initiated a number of programmes aimed at transforming the lives of youths such as provision of entrepreneurial education and training and supporting income generating activities. Unfortunately, mainline protestant churches seemed to have been left behind in this area (Muriungi, 2013). Very few studies have been conducted to examine factors within the churches that have hampered their contribution towards the economic empowerment of the youth. The present study sought to fill this gap by assessing the influence of church policies on the economic empowerment of youth with a specific focus on the PCEA Nyahururu Parish.

Literature Review

Theoretical Background and Conceptual Framework

The study was guided by the Positive youth development (PYD) proposed by Benson, Scales, Hamilton, & Sesma (2006) as conceptual model for guiding youth development initiatives. It is a unique model that seeks to explain youth behaviour. Unlike other models, it focuses on what brings about bad youth behaviour instead of looking into what is wrong with the youth. The theory states that youths have equally significant relationships with fellow humans and institutions of their social surrounding. They stand a bright future which they can positively impact to themselves, their families, and to the society at large (Lerner et al., 2019). The concept came as a result of dissatisfaction with predecessor concepts that belittled the potential dexterity of youths by focussing on their shortcomings instead of their development capabilities.

PYD model posits that youth development and resilience is not a function of innate characteristics of youths but an outcome of their ecology (Benson *et al.*, 2006). Providing a favourable environment when teenagers are crossing the bridge to adulthood can be instrumental in eliminating problems. This development framework proposes the establishment of protective factors in three levels of a youth's environment: (1) within the individual, (2) within the individual's family, and (3) in the individual's broader social context. According to Bolong (2016), positive growth among youths can be realized by giving the youngsters a sense of belonging. Positive encouragement of teenagers and being involved in academic and community activities can work wonders in transforming them.

Duerden, Widmer, & Witt, (2010) further stressed that the community including the church has a critical part to play in delivering a suitable environment for positive youth development. This institution need to help youths build connection, competence, confidence, and character (Hodge et al., 2017). They should also provide care to the youth. PYD model also suggests that for churches to have a positive and noteworthy impact on youth economic development, they must engage youth in relationships, ecology, and events that nourishes their development. Church policies should create an environment that give youngsters a sense of belonging, encourage youth to be actively involved in church activities, instils in them a sense of responsibility, and recognizes their potential to make meaningful contribution to the church and society at large.

Empirical Review

Youth Economic Empowerment

Youth empowerment has become a popular research subject in Africa owing to the youth bulge phenomenon being experienced in this region. Ile and Boadu (2018) defined youth empowerment as the course of improving the capabilities of young adults to make or influence choices and transform those choices into desired outcomes. Mbae, Mukulu, and Kihoro (2016) asserted that youth empowerment can be understood from the process or outcome perspective. From the process perspective, youth empowerment is the path that young people can use to gain control over their environment and issues that affect their lives. This perspective is preoccupied with actions that young adults can take either collectively or individually to increase their influence and control (Mbae *et al.*, 2016).

The outcome perspective views youth empowerment in terms of consequences that should be observed when a young person gains greater control of his or her life and environment (Mbae *et al.*, 2016). These consequences include increased income, greater asset ownership, enhanced skills, and increased academic achievement among others. Hope and Kempe (2012) also linked youth empowerment with benefits such as overall economic development, reduction in crime, decline in disease burden, increased innovation, and political transformation.

In Kenya, there are an estimated 10 million youths which translates to more than 20% of its overall human population (Samuel Hall, 2017). The bulge in the population of youths could have been a major asset in the development of the country if these youths would have been able to find opportunities that guarantee their economic independence. Unfortunately, this has not been the case. Mugure (2013) observed that youth economic empowerment is hindered by a myriad of factors including inadequate employment opportunity, lack of capital, small business network, limited skills and experience, and slow growth of talent and sports sector. The study by Mugure (2013) provides a snapshot of youth economic development in Kenya, but does not show the role played by the church towards this development.

It is the responsibility of all stakeholders in the Kenyan society to ensure that youth are economically empowered so as they can assume their rightful place in the development of the country (Ile & Boadu, 2018). The church is not exempted from this role. According to Muriungi (2013), churches are expected to take a leading role in the development of communities in response to God's command to serve the disadvantaged. Similarly, a lot is expected of the church when it comes to the development of youths who have been disadvantaged and marginalized for the longest time. The present study examined how three practices within PCEA Nyahururu parish namely church policies, leadership practices, and youth programmes have contributed to the economic empowerment of youths.

Church Policies and Economic Empowerment of Youths

The term policies refer principles, guidelines, regulations, rules, or laws created to govern the conduct of members of a given entity such as an organization or country (Hernandez, Noruzi, & Irani, 2011). Policies define how a given entity operates. In the context of the church, policies define how members are expected to conduct themselves in and outside the church premises. The policies also guide how the church operates including how leaders are selected, how different services are conducted, and how church programmes are run (Welch, 2011). Policies can apply to general operations of the church or specific issues such as weddings and marriage, dressing, management of finances, and management of church personnel.

Policies may either be formal in that they are well documented in a written format or they may be informal where they are just conveyed by word of mouth. Church policies act as guides to the administration of the church when it comes to making decisions on various issues in a given set of circumstances (Burger, 2004). They convey the philosophy of the church and support its mission and vision. Welch (2011) also asserts that policies create consistency and certainty within the church by communicating how the church conducts its business and what is expected from each member.

CSTYD theory asserts that one of the prerequisites for realizing youth empowerment is creating a safe and welcoming environment where youths can feel valued and comfortable (Trivelli & Morei, 2019). One way of creating such an environment is by developing youth friendly policies. Tshabalala and Patel (2010) found that church policies regarding praise and worship had a significant implication on perception of spiritual well-being among youths in a Pentecostal church in South Africa. In this study, the respondents reported preference for policies that permit youth involvement in praise and worship. The surveyed youth also preferred that churches play music that gives them a sense of connection. Muriungi (2013) also found that music ministry was critical to the retention of youths in churches in Tigania East District, Kenya. Results showed that the youth preferred churches that allowed music that they considered to be entertaining. The two studies (Tshabalala and Patel 2010; Muriungi, 2010) provide evidence regarding the influence of church policies governing the kind of music that is played in the church plays in shaping the retention of youth and consequently their empowerment.

The study by Vaughn (2016) also found that church policies on contemporary issues such as sex before marriage, single parenthood, divorce, and family planning were contributing to the exit of young people from church. The study utilized a qualitative approach where data was collected through multiple focus groups involving participants drawn from Appalachian State University and the Wild Goose Festival in the USA. Results revealed that sex before marriage, divorce, and family planning were hot topics among the

young generations (Vaughn, 2016). Therefore, the church's stand on these issues has a major implication on youth's perception regarding the inclusiveness of the church.

In Kenya, Wakanyi (2018) noted that single parenthood is on the rise with a significant portion of the youths being raised by single parents. A good number of young adults in the Kenyan society today are single parents. Wakanyi (2018) observed that despite this trend, most churches have maintained rigid policies and attitude regarding single parenthood where single parents are viewed as sinners and children raised in such family are seen as illegitimate children. Some churches refuse to conduct consecration ceremonies for children born out of wedlock. In the study by Kagendo (2017) examining single parenthood in Kenya, one of the respondents reported being prevented from partaking the Holy Communion because she was separated from her husband. The discriminatory policy that most mainstream protestant churches have maintained against single parenthood and children born of wedlock tend to create an environment where a significant portion of youth feel secluded and isolated. Consequently, these youths cannot engage fully in church activities including those aimed at empowering them.

Another contemporary issue that has turned the youths against the church is cohabitation; a phenomenon where a man and a woman live together without being officially married. Moller (2013) pointed out that cohabitation has become common in the modern society. Many churches have found it difficult to reconcile this trend with traditional Christian values. A good number of churches have shunned couples involved in these relationships while others have remained silent. Given that the cohabitation phenomenon is more common among the youth, the church's stand on this issue has created a feeling of anxiety, confusion, guilt, and sin among a significant portion of the youth. Maina (2015) recommended that church ministers should be ready to listen to the stories of young people and adopt church policies and procedures to accommodate the circumstances in which modern youths are living. Instead of condemning and looking down on youths afflicted by single parenthood or cohabitation, the church should provide a safe place for these people to nurture their potential.

Research and Methodology

The study made use of the descriptive research design, which entailed describing the phenomenon of interest as it exists in the setting of the study (Bryman, 2016). Specifically, the data was collected through the survey approach that entailed gathering the opinion and views of church members regarding the issues of interest. The study focused on gathering both quantitative and qualitative data. The study site was PCEA Nyahuru Parish. PCEA is one of the mainstream protestant churches operating in Kenya. It had an estimated membership of over 3 million spread across 49 presbyteries and 320 parishes in 2012 (PCEA, 2019). The Nyahururu PCEA Parish serves the communities in Nyahururu Municipality and its environment. The municipality is located 197 (by road) kilometres, northwest of the capital city of Kenya, Nairobi (County Government of Laikipia, 2018). It has an estimated human population of 58,943 people. This location was selected because of the numerous challenges that youths in this area are experiencing including unemployment, insecurity, alcoholism, substance abuse, and early marriages. These challenges highlight the need to strengthen the capacity of institutions within the area to economically empower the youths. The church is one of the institutions that can have a noteworthy impact on youth empowerment. The PCEA church is selected because it has strong and vibrant network and following within the area.

Target Population, Sample Size and Sampling Technique

The target population were all the 233 youths (individuals aged between 18 and 35 years) that are part of the PCEA Nyahururu Parish congregation and 13 leaders (2 congregation chairpersons, 1 clergy, 1 evangelist, 1 youth coordinator, and 8 youth leaders). Therefore, the total population was 246 respondents. Due to their small number, all the 13 leaders were included in the study sample. The sample size for youths was determined using the Nassiuma (2000) sample size formula:

$$n = \frac{NC^2}{C^2 + (N - 1)e^2}$$

Where: n= Sample size, N= Target population (233) , C= coefficient of variation (25% or 0.25 for this study), e= Margin of error (2% or 0.02 for this study). Therefore, the appropriate sample size will be:

$$n = \frac{233(0.25)^2}{0.25^2 + (233 - 1)0.02^2}$$

$$n = 93.7 \approx 94 \text{ youths}$$

The sample thus comprised a total of 107 respondents including 94 youths and 13 leaders. The clustered random sampling technique was used to select the 94 youths. This technique entailed dividing the population into internally heterogeneous groups known as clusters and selecting respondents randomly. The two congregations that make-up the PCEA Nyahururu Parish were treated as clusters and in each cluster the researcher picked every 2nd youth that was present in youth classes during the day of the data collection until the required number was attained. The data collection was done on a Sunday where all the youth had congregated in their classes. All the 13 leaders were included in the study sample. Table 1 presents a breakdown of the sampling plan.

Table 1: Sampling Plan

Congregation	Population of Youth	Youth Sample size	Leaders' Population	Leaders Sample size
Town	182	73	8	8
Chemichemi	51	21	5	5
Total	233	94	13	13

Data Collection Instruments

Structured questionnaires were used to collect quantitative data from youths. The questionnaires were divided into three sections with the first section containing questions about the respondents' demographics, the second section comprising questions regarding youth economic empowerment, and the last section containing information relating to church policies. Interview guides were used to gather qualitative data from youth leaders and members of the clergy. The guide was also divided into three sections with the first section covering the demographic traits of the respondents and the remaining sections addressing the variables of the study.

A pilot study was conducted at the PCEA Mairoinya Parish to assess the validity and reliability of the research instruments. This Parish was selected because it is adjacent to the Nyahururu Parish and thus has similar characteristics in terms of membership profile, youth profile, church practices, and similar catchment area. Validity of the research instruments was enriched by examining the data collected during the pilot study for clarity, relevance, and comprehensiveness in terms of addressing the objectives of the study. Dividing the instruments into sections that correspond to each study variable also enhanced validity by ensuring that the instruments had adequate questions for each variable. Validity was also enhanced through expert judgement where the researcher obtained the views of university research supervisors regarding the quality of the instrument.

Reliability of the research instruments was improved by assessing the pilot test data using the test retest method. This method entailed administering the research instrument twice on the same respondents in an interval of one week and then comparing the data from the two waves of data collection using the Pearson product moment correlation test. The correlation coefficient between the two sets of data was 0.854, which according to Berchtold (2016) shows that the instrument is reliable.

Data Collection and Analysis Procedures

The researcher obtained a research authorization from all relevant authorities. Once permission was granted, the research recruited youths and administered the questionnaire using the on-the-spot administration method. This is where the youth were requested to complete the questionnaire on the spot after he or she agreed to participate. The researcher agreed on appropriate date, time, and venue for the interview with each leader. The interviews lasted between 25 to 30 minutes. Data was captured through note-taking.

The questionnaires were sorted and assessed for completeness. All duly completed questionnaires were coded and entered into the Statistical Packages for Social Science (SPSS) version 25 program. Descriptive statistics such as percentages and means were used to describe the current state at the churches in respect to youth empowerment and church policies. The independent sample t-test and analysis of variance (ANOVA) methods were used to assess whether there is a relationship between the independent variables of the study and youth economic empowerment.

Data Analysis, Presentation and Interpretation

A total of 91 individual responded to the study out of the expected sample size of 107. This figure translates to a response rate of 85%. The response rate for youths was 89.4% as 84 youths participated in the study while the expected number was 94. The response rate of leaders was a bit lower at 53.8%. The low response rate is attributed to the relatively busy schedules of the leaders and the logistical challenges associated with setting up the interviews. Unlike the questionnaire that were administered to many youths at a time, the interviews were conducted one at a time and thus required a lot of time to complete.

Table 2: Sample Characteristics

Variable	Youths	Leaders
Response rate	89.4%	53.8
Gender	Male=31% Female= 69%	Male= 71.4% Female= 28.6%
Age	Mean=25.21 years Youngest= 18 years Oldest = 35 years	Mean= 33.53 years Youngest= 22 years Oldest= 42 years
Highest Education Level	Primary or below= 27.4% Secondary = 42.9% Tertiary= 29.7%	

The majority of the youths (69%) were female while males constituted 31%. Given that the respondents were selected randomly; the findings suggest that the youth congregation at the PCEA Nyahururu parish comprises of more females than males. Using data from 192 countries, a study by Pew Research Centre (2016) however found that throughout the globe, women are more likely than men to

be religious, attend religious services regularly, and remain committed to their religion. This implies that the gender disparity in church attendance is not a phenomenon that is confined to Kenya or the Christian religion but is a universally observed pattern. The study theorized that the gender difference in religion may be explained by biological differences between the sexes.

The leadership positions at the church were dominated by males at 71.4% with females comprising 28.6% of the leaders. The low representation of women in leadership position maybe explained by the fact that churches have for a long time barred off the women participation in leadership (Daniel, 2010). The situation has been compounded by that patriarchal nature of most Kenyan communities that has hindered women from ascending to leadership positions. The situation is however changing as witnessed by an increase in female participation in education, labour force, political, and church leadership.

The youth had an average age of 25.21 years. At this age, most of youth are expected to be through with their education and to have joined the labour market (Samuel Hall, 2017). The youngest respondent among the youth was 18 years while the oldest was 35 years old. These statistics show that the sample was diverse in terms of age and thus offer a perspective that represents youths of different age groups. The leaders were a bit older with an average of 33.53 years. The mean age was however pushed upwards by the ages of the clergy, congregation chairpersons, and the evangelist who were part of the sample but did not fall under the category of youth. The youngest leader was 22 years old while the oldest was 42 years.

Many of the respondents (42.9%) had the secondary level of education. The findings also show that most of the youth have attained basic education with 72.6% having attained secondary education and above. These findings are consistent with a national survey by Awiti and Scott (2016), which showed that 78% of the sampled youths had post-primary education. The survey also showed that 39% of the sampled youth had tertiary education as compared to 29.7% observed in the current study. These findings suggest that the proportion of youths with tertiary education in the study area is lower than the national average and thus stakeholders need to invest more in tertiary education.

Economic Empowerment of Youths

Economic empowerment of youths was the dependent variable of the study. Three indicators were used to measure economic empowerment namely employment status, income, and asset ownership.

Employment Status

In this study, the term employment referred to engagement in any income generating activity including casual labour, trading, agribusiness, and artisan works. Respondents were asked to indicate whether they are engaged in any income generating activity. The majority of the youths (59.5%) were involved in some income generating activities. Unemployment among the youths at the Parish was 40.5%. This rate is lower than the 55% that was found by Awiti and Scott (2016) in their nationally representative sample. The findings suggest that unemployment rate among PCEA youths is lower than the national unemployment rate. It implies that the youths at the church are more economic empowered than the average youth in the country. To further assess the employment issue, the youth who were employed were asked to indicate the kind of occupation in which they were involved. Figure 2 presents the findings.

Figure 1: Type of Occupation; Source: Field Data (2020)

Figure 1 shows that most of the employed youths (40%) at the PCEA Nyahururu parish were in casual employment. Another 32% were in self-employment while only 28% are in permanent employment. The findings are consistent with the qualitative data collected during the interview with the leaders. Majority of the leaders expressed that most of the youths in their church were employed but many were in the informal sector. Leader4 expressed that:

Some are in formal employment; very few in government institutions. A few are self-employed and quite a number are unemployed (Leader4, 2020).

Leader6 also articulated that:

Most of the youths in the church are casual labourers or run small businesses like retail shops, selling of second hand clothes, and boda boda (Leader6, 2020).

These findings are consistent with Hope and Kempe (2012), who observed that the majority of the employed youths in Kenya working in the informal sector. Although the informal sector has helped to bridge the employment gap in Kenya, it does not offer stable source of livelihoods to the youths. The jobs are often characterized by low income, little protection, no job security, and absence of benefits such as health insurance or retirement schemes.

Income

The income of the employed youth was also examined. This analysis was founded on the premise that economic empowerment is not just about having a job. The job should translate into reasonable income that enables the youth to meet basic needs and have a voice in their communities. To assess this issue, respondents were asked to state their average monthly income.

Table 3: Youths Monthly Income Statistics

Statistic	Value
N	40
Mean	Kshs. 18,151
Minimum	Kshs. 5,000
Maximum	Kshs. 70,000

Source: Field Data (2020)

Results presented in Table 3 showed that the average income of the working youth was Kshs. 18,151. This amount is reasonable given that it is above the minimum wage of Kshs. 13,572. The results should however be interpreted with caution as the average income statistics is highly influence by outlier and thus the statistic may not reflect what an average youth earns when there are a few youths within the dataset who high income. It is also worth mentioning that that there were 10 youths who reported being employed but did not state their monthly income. The missing data may have affected the average income.

Asset Ownership

Economic empowerment was also assessed using asset ownership. This indicator was informed by the premise that youths who are economically empowered should be capable of acquiring own assets. To assess this issue, respondents were presented with list of assets that are common and considered valuable in Kenya and were asked to indicate whether they own such. Their responses are summarized in Figure 4.5.

Figure 2: Asset ownership by the Youths; *Source: Field Data (2020)*

Results presented in Figure 2 showed that 9.5% owned land while 4.8% owned livestock. Land and livestock are very important economic resources in rural areas and their ownership is critical to the economic empowerment of youths. On the other hand, a house, microwave, refrigerator, and television are outcome indicators of economic empowerment. The study assumed that youths who are economically empowered would have higher income that would enable them to purchase these assets. Findings however show that less than 10% of the youth own a house, a microwave, or refrigerator. However, 52.4% of the youth owned a television which indicates that they had reasonable level of self-sufficiency. A vehicle can be considered as both an input as well as an output indicator of economic empowerment. A vehicle becomes an input when it is used in income generating activities such as ferrying of passengers and goods. However, only 2.4% of the youths owned a vehicle.

Youth Economic Empowerment Score

To obtain a general view of status of youth economic empowerment, an aggregate youth empowerment score was computed by summing up data on employment status and asset ownership. Data on income was left out becomes it had several missing cases.

Being employed and owning each of the asset was given a score of 1 while being unemployed and not owning an asset was coded as 0. Since there were 7 assets and one question on employment, the aggregate economic empowerment score ranged from 0 to 8. Table 4 presents a summary of the aggregate economic empowerment score

Table 4: Aggregate Economic Empowerment Statistics

Statistic	Value
N	84
Mean	1.88
Minimum	0
Maximum	6

Source: Field Data (2020)

The economic empowerment mean score is 1.88 out of a highest possible score of 8. This mean would translate to a percentage score of 23.5%, which suggest that there is a low level of economic empowerment among the youths at PECA Nyahururu parish when measured in terms of employment and asset ownership. This position is also supported by the qualitative data where interviewees used several adjectives such as not stable, struggling, and below average when they were asked to describe the economic position of the majority of youths in their church. Leader4 recounted that:

It varies ranging from those who are really struggling to them that are employed. None would be said to be fully empowered. Majority are in the struggling level (Leader4, 2020).

The account provided by Leader4 affirms that most youths at the PCEA church are not economically endowed. These findings are consistent with the study by Hope and Kempe (2012), which observed that despite constituting a significant section of the Kenyan population, youths play a peripheral role in the economic development of the countries. They are grossly underrepresented in the mainstream activities of the country. The findings are also congruent with Mugure (2013), who observed that youth economic empowerment is hindered by a myriad of factors including inadequate employment opportunity, lack of capital, small business network, limited skills and experience, and slow growth of talent and sports sector.

Church Policy and Youth Economic Empowerment

The study sought to establish the influence of policies of PCEA Nyahururu Church have played in the economic empowerment of youths. It sought to determine whether existing church policies have supported or hindered the economic empowerment of youths. The study focused on church policies relating to three key issues namely style of worship, family and marriage, and policy on technology.

Style of Worship

Examination of policies related with style of worship was founded on the premise that these policies may attract or alienate youths from the church. For the church to be successful in empowering youths, it must first be successful in drawing them to the church. To examine this issue, respondents were asked to indicate the style of music that is commonly played in their church. Their responses are presented in Figure 3.

Figure 3: Style of Music Commonly Played at the Church; *Source: Field Data (2020)*

The majority of the respondents (90.5%) reported that their church commonly plays contemporary praise and worship style of music. About 7.1% reported that their church mainly played brief choruses while 2.4% said that the church plays traditional hymns. The findings suggest that most of the music played at the PCEA Nyahururu parish is contemporary music that most youths are able to connect with and find to be pleasant. To ascertain whether this was the case, respondents were asked whether they were satisfied with the style of music at their church.

The majority of the youths (85.7%) enjoy the kind of music that is played in their church. Tshabalala and Patel (2010) found that church policies regarding praise and worship had a significant implication on perception of spiritual well-being among youths in a

Pentecostal church in South Africa. In this study, the respondents reported preference for policies that permit youth involvement in praise and worship. The surveyed youth also preferred that churches play music that gives them a sense of connection. Muriungi (2013) also found that music ministry was critical to the retention of youths in churches in Tigania East District, Kenya. Results showed that the youth preferred churches that allowed music that they considered to be entertaining. Current findings suggest that the music being played that the PCEA Nyahururu parish meets the expectation of most of the youths and should thus attract and retain more youths at the church. This position is also reinforced by qualitative data where most of the interviewees alluded to the fact that the church plays music that accommodates all groups within the church. When asked to speak about the style of worship, Leader1 disclosed that:

Its fare because we are accommodated in all church groups concerning worship. Again, we have worship experience that brings us together (Leader1, 2020).

Leader2 also described that:

Recently, policies of worship have taken a shift towards modern music with many instruments. This has impacted most youth to join the praise and worship team and develop interest in learning instruments like the piano and guitar (Leader2, 2020).

The sentiments expressed by Leader2 suggests that the style of worship that has been adopted by the PCEA Nyahururu parish has not only helped to attract and retain the youths at the church but has also encourage them to participate in praise and worship. It has also encouraged them to learn how to play music instruments, which could have a direct impact on their economic conditions. To establish whether there is a relationship between style of music and youth empowerment, the economic empowerment mean score of youths who found music in their church to be entertaining was compared to the empowerment mean score of youths who felt that the music in the church was not entertaining using the independent sample t-test. Results are presented in Table 5.

Table 5: Influence of Style of Worship Policy on Youth Economic Empowerment

Category	N	Mean Economic Empowerment Score	Mean Difference	DF	t	Sig.
Music enjoyable	72	2.67	0.92	82	1.732	.087
Not enjoyable	12	1.75				

Source: Field Data (2020)

Table 5 shows that the mean economic empowerment score of youths who found the music in their church to be enjoyable was 2.67 while that of youths who found it not enjoyable was 1.75. The t-test gave a p-value ($t=1.732$, $p=0.087$) that is greater than 0.05, which indicate that the difference in the economic empowerment score is not statistically significant. These findings suggest that the style of music at the PCEA Nyahururu parish does not have a statistically significant influence on youth empowerment. The findings imply that despite the church adopting worship policies that favour the youth, there may be other issues that have a more substantial impact on youth economic empowerment. The youths were asked to recommend ideas that they feel would improve the style of worship in the church. The most frequently recurring idea was increased involvement of the youths in praise and worship and leading of the service in church. It was evident that most youth felts that they are not given adequate opportunities to participate in the main activities of the church. The respondents proposed that youth should be given more time for presentation, the chance to lead praise and worship, and more opportunities to lead church service.

Family and Marriage Policies influence on Youth Economic Empowerment

The study also sought to establish whether church policy on family and marriage foster or hinder the church's ability to empower the youths economically. Respondents were present with a list of four area related to family and marriage and asked to check all area that they feel that church had adopted policies that discriminate against modern youths. The respondents' views are summarised in Figure 5.

Figure 4: Policies on Family and Marriage that Discriminate Youths; *Source: Field Data (2020)*

Figure 4 shows that respondents considered the church policy on cohabitation to be the most discriminatory towards the youths with 42.9% of the respondents indicating that they were not comfortable with the stance that their church had adopted towards this issue. Cohabitation is the practice where a male and female live together in a marriage-like relationship without being formally married. Waweru and Wamukoya (2018) found that cohabitation had become prevalent among modern day youths as they find the tradition

dowry process and church marriage too economically demanding. Consequently, many youths choose to just cohabit because they cannot afford the convention process of marrying. Many churches however remain oblivious of the challenges that push modern youth to opt for cohabitation rather the conventional marriage process. The churches tend to discriminate youths who live in cohabitation relationships and view them as sinners. This stance by churches has excluded many youths from the church and thus limiting their impact on the youth. This issue was also brought out during the interview where most of the interviewees confirmed that their church expects all youths to get married through a church wedding. Leader2 narrated that:

For a couple of years, most young people have embraced marriage and have gotten encouraged to walk down the aisle and develop families (Leader2, 2020).

These sentiments by Leader2 assert that the PCEA Nyahururu still has a strong expectation that all its youth would get married through the church. The interviewees suggest that many youths are heading to the churches expectation. The study however recognizes the reality that there are still a good number of youths who cannot afford to go through the conventional marriage process and thus maintaining a rigid stance towards this issue is bound to alienate such youths. When referring to the church's demand that youths should get married through the church, Leader5 recited that:

In some cases, it has affected in a negative way since they see it as more expensive and therefore the youth start moving backward in engaging in marriage without receiving the blessing through a church wedding (Leader5, 2020).

Leader 6 also expressed that:

It is so expensive to have a church wedding thus creating a room for fornication and unplanned pregnancies (Leader6, 2020).

The sentiments by Leaders 5 and 6 highlight that most church leaders still believe that youths who do not get married through the church are sinners. Moller (2013) pointed out that while cohabitation has become common in the modern society; many churches still find it difficult to reconcile this trend with traditional Christian values. A good number of churches have shunned couples involved in these relationships while others have remained silent. Maina (2015) recommended that church ministers should be ready to listen to the stories of young people and adopt church policies and procedures to accommodate the circumstances in which modern youths are living. Instead of condemning and looking down on youths afflicted by cohabitation, the church should provide a safe place for these people to nurture their potential.

Figure 5 also illustrate that another area in which a sizeable number of respondents felt that the church had adopted policies that discriminate against the youth is divorce and separation. About 33.3% of the respondents indicated that they were not comfortable with their church's policies on this issue. In its 21st General Assembly held in 2015, the PCEA leadership recognized rising cases of divorce as one of challenges that are threatening the institution of marriage today (General Assembly Moderator, 2015). The Assembly did not however consider the option of allowing divorce.

It instead proposed strategies for addressing issues that lead to divorce such as providing mentorship and counselling to members on family issues. Although this can be an effective strategy for reducing divorce cases, it does not address the plight of individuals who become church members while already divorced or in wrong relationships. It also does not address the plight of individual who joined the church while already divorced and would like to remarry. The policy adopted by the church on divorce promotes continued discrimination of such individuals.

Figure 4.6 further exhibits that 31% of the youths feel that the church policy on children born out of wedlock is discriminatory towards the use. The number of children born out of wedlock has increased in recent years. Wakanyi (2018) observed that despite this trend, most churches have maintained rigid and punitive policies towards these children with some churches refusing to conduct consecration ceremonies for children born out of wedlock. The study by Wakanyi (2018) reported a case of a woman who had to abandon the church because the church elders rejected the baptism of her children she had separated from her husband. Such policy tends to alienate many youths and exclude them from benefiting from empowerment programmes offered by the church.

Figure 5 also shows that 14.3% of the respondents felt that the church's policy on single parenthood is also discriminatory to the youth. Although there are no explicitly published policies by the PCEA church on single parenthood, cases of discrimination against single mother have been documented in various studies.

Wakanyi (2018) observed that single mothers were subjected to the stereotype that they were immoral by other church members. Some single mothers reported being treated with suspicion by married women who viewed them as threats to their marriages. Some said that they were denied entry to some women groups due to their single parenthood status. In the present study, 14.3% of the youth feel that similar problems could be afflicting youths at the PCEA Nyahururu parish.

To examine whether there is a relationship between the church's policies on the four issues and youth empowerment, the economic empowerment scores of youth who felt that the policy were discriminatory was compared to the economic empowerment scores of those who felt that the church policy were not discriminatory using the independent sample t-test.

Table 6: Influence of Church Policy about Family Issues on Youth Empowerment

Issue	Where respondent believes issue is discriminatory	Mean Score	Mean Difference	t	df	p
Cohabitation	No	1.71	0.403	1.065	82	.290
	Yes	2.11				
Divorce and separation	No	2.18	0.893	2.304	82	.024*
	Yes	1.29				
Children born out of wedlock	No	1.83	.172	0.423	82	.673
	Yes	2.00				
Single parenthood	No	4.00	2.472	5.323	82	.000**
	Yes	1.53				

**Significant at the 0.01 level, *Significant at 0.05

Source: Field Data (2020)

Results presented in Table 6 show that two out of the four policy issues had p-values that are less than 0.05 level of significance; divorce and separation ($t=2.304$, $p=.024$) and single parenthood ($t=5.323$, $p=.000$). These findings imply that there was a statistically significant difference in the economic empowerment mean scores of youths who felt that the church policy on these issues were discriminatory to the youth and mean scores of youths who felt that the policy were discriminatory.

On both issues, respondents who felt that church policies were not discriminatory had higher economic empowerment mean scores than those who felt that the policy were discriminatory. These findings indicate that the church policy on the two issues have a negative influence on youth empowerment. Since the policy apply to church members on individual basis, findings show that youth who feel discriminated by the policies have lower economic empowerment score than those who do not feel discriminated. Findings in Table 6 show that Cohabitation ($t=1.065$, $p=0.290$) and children born out of wedlock ($t=0.423$, $p=0.673$) do not have a statistically significant influence on youth economic empowerment.

Policies on Technology and their influence on Youth Empowerment

The final policy issue that was investigate was the church's policy on the use of technologies such as musical instrument, projectors, videos, broadcast, and social media had an influence on youth economic empowerment. To assess this issue, respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which their church had embraced the use of modern technologies. Their views are summarized in Table 7.

Table 7: Extent to which Church Has Embraced use of Modern Technologies

Extent	Frequency	Percent
Little extent	12	14.3
Moderate extent	24	28.6
Great extent	48	57.1

Source: Field Data (2020).

The majority of the respondents (57.1%) reported that their church had adopted the use of modern technologies to a great extent, 28.6% said that their church had adopted the use of modern technologies to a moderate extent while 14.3% said that their church use modern technologies to a little extent. These findings suggest that the church has largely embraced the use of modern technologies. Since there are two congregations in the PCEA Nyahururu parish, the differences in the respondents' views on whether their church has adopted new technologies suggest that there may be difference in the adoption of new technologies in the two congregations. This position is supported by qualitative data where most of the interviewees reported that their churches had acquired new technology to assist in their mission. Leader3 disclosed that:

We need to embrace new technology and we have seen the church has introduced the new technologies such as WiFi, which has really shaped the youth. The church has also introduced digital cameras, which are run by youths (Leader3, 2020).

Leader 4 also revealed that:

Technology has been well incorporated thus the youth ministry is impacted positively (Leader4, 2020).

These accounts indicate that the PCEA Nyahururu congregations have adopted the use of modern technologies in ministry. To establish whether the adoption of new technologies by the congregations under the PCEA Nyahururu parish has played a role in the empowerment of youth, the youth empowerment mean score for youths who said that their church had adopted technologies to a great extent was compared to the mean score of those who said adoption was moderate and those who said there was little adoption.

The ANOVA test was used to establish whether the difference in mean score was statistically significant. Results are presented in Table 8.

Table 8: Influence of Technology Policy on Youth Economic Empowerment

Extent of Technology Adoption	N	Empowerment Mean Score	df	f	sig
Little extent	12	0.67	2(between group)	3.779	.027
Moderate	24	2.04	81(within group)		
Great extent	48	2.17	83 (Total)		

Source: Field Data (2020)

Table 8 shows that youth who reported that their church had adopted technology to a little extent had an economic empowerment mean score of 0.67 as compared to 2.04 for youths whose churches had adopted technology to a moderate extent, and 2.17 for respondents who said that their churches had adopted technologies to a great extent. The F-test gave a p-value ($F=3.779$, $p=.027$) that is less than the 0.05 level of significance, indicating that the difference in economic empowerment mean scores of the three groups of youth is statistically significant. These findings imply that having a policy that encourages adoption of modern technologies promotes the empowerment of youths. It can be argued that adoption of modern technologies tends to attract more youths to the church and increase their participation in church activities including economic empowerment programmes. The narration from the interviewees also revealed that adoption of technologies such as digital cameras also equip youths with skills that may enable them to enable them to earn a living such as video recording and editing.

Conclusions

Findings of the study lead to the conclusion that there is low level of economic empowerment among the youths at the PCEA Nyahururu parish. Over 40% of the youths are unemployed while most do not own economic assets such as land, house, and vehicle. Findings also lead to the conclusion that the policies of the church on divorce/ separation and single parenthood have contributed negatively towards the church's effort to economically empower the youths. Findings showed that the policies adopted by the church in this issue were intolerant to the realities of most modern youths and thus tend to discourage youths from benefiting from church programmes. The study also concludes that the church policy on use of modern technologies have a positive contribution towards youth economic empowerment.

Based on the findings and conclusions, the study recommends that the PCEA Nyahururu parish and all churches in general should consider revising their policies on single parenthood and divorce and separation. Findings have shown that the policies adopted by the church on these issues do not accommodate the reality of most modern youths and have a negative influence on youth economic empowerment. The church should adopt policies that do not victimize and make single parents and divorcee feel secluded.

Churches should also consider revising its policies on cohabitation. Although results showed that church policies on this issue do not have a significant association with youth economic empowerment, a large section of the youths felt that the policies adopted by the church on this issue are discriminatory to the youth. The church should adopt policies that accommodate the situation that modern youths are living in. The church should embrace youths living in cohabiting relationship and guide them on how to formalize their union rather than barring them from ceremonies like consecration of children.

Churches should strengthen their policies that support the use of modern technologies as finding show that these policies have a significant and positive influence on youth economic empowerment. The church should strengthen policies that encourage the use of modern music equipment, telecommunication technologies, mass and social media.

References

- Anozie C. (2013). Christian church: A catalyst for economic development in Nigeria. *African Research Review*, 7(4), 274- 287. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.4314/afrrrev.v7i4.17>.
- Awiti, A., & Scott, B. (2016). *The Kenya youth survey report*. Nairobi: The Agha Khan University.
- Baron, E. (2017). The role of church youth in the transformation agenda of South African cities. *HTS Theological Studies*, 73(3), 1-7. <http://dx.doi.org/10.4102/hts.v73i3.4771>.
- Benson, P., Scales, P., Hamilton, S., & Sems, A. (2006). Positive youth development: Theory, research, and application. In Q. Damon & R.M. Lerner (ED). *Handbook of Child Psychology: Theoretical models of human development* (6th ed. Pp. 894-941). Hoboken, NJ: Wiley. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1002/9780470147658.chpsy0116>.
- Berchtold, A. (2016). Test-retest: Agreement or reliability. *Methodological Innovations*, 9. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2059799116672875>.
- Bolong, J. (2016). Potential Benefits of ICT towards Rural Positive Youth Development in Malaysia. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*, 6(5), 2222-6990. <https://doi.org/10.6007/IJARBSS/v6-i5/2141>.
- Bryman, A. (2016). *Social research methods*. London: Oxford University Press. ISBN: 9780199689453.

- Buheji, M., & Ahmed, D. (2017). Investigating the importance of youth economy. *International Journal of Current Advanced Research*, 6(3), 2405- 2410. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.24327/ijcar.2017.2410.0018>.
- Burger, F. (2004). *Church management basics*. Bloomington, IN: iUniverse. ISBN: 9780595307531.
- County Government of Laikipia (2018). *County integrated development plan for Laikipia*. Nairobi: Government Printer.
- Daniel, K. (2010). The role of women in the church in Africa. *International Journal of Sociology and Anthropology*, 2(6), 126- 139. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/228675417_The_role_of_women_in_the_Church_in_Africa.
- Duerden, M., Widmer, M. & Witt, P. (2010). Positive youth development: What it is and how it fits in therapeutic settings. *Journal of Therapeutic Schools and Programs*, 4(1), 1698. <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/280386101>.
- General Assembly Moderator (2015). *Moderator's report to the 21st General Assembly-April 2015*. Nairobi: PCEA.
- Hernandez, J., Noruzi, M., & Irani, F. (2011). What is policy, social policy and social policy changing. *International Journal of Business and Social Science*, 2(10), 287- 291. HAL Id: hal-00817798 <https://hal.archives-ouvertes.fr/hal-00817798>.
- Hodge, C., Kanters, M., Forneris, T., Bocarro, J., & Sayre-McCord, R. (2017). A Family Thing: Positive Youth Development Outcomes of a Sport-Based Life Skills Program. *Journal of Park & Recreation Administration*, 35(1). DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.18666/JPRA-2017-V35-I1-6840>.
- Hope, S. & Kempe, R. (2012). Engaging the youth in Kenya: Empowerment, education, and employment. *International Journal of Adolescence and Youth*, 17(4), 221-236. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02673843.2012.657657>.
- Ile, I., & Boadu, E. (2018). The paradox of youth empowerment: Exploring youth intervention programme in Ghana. *Cogent Social Sciences*, 4(1), 1528709. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/23311886.2018.1528709>.
- Iwasaki, Y. (2016). The role of youth engagement in positive youth development and social justice youth development for high-risk, marginalised youths. *International Journal of Adolescence and Youth*, 21(3), 267- 278. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02673843.2015.1067893>.
- Kagendo, P. (2017). *Single mothers and parenting in Kenya: The case of Zimmerman, Nairobi County* (Unpublished thesis). Nairobi University, Kenya.
- Karombo, T. (2018). *Current situations affecting the lives of young people in Africa and their expectations*. Rome: The Synod of Bishops.
- Lerner, R., Wang, J., Hershberg, R., Buckingham, M., Harris, E., Tirrell, J., ... & Lerner, J. (2017). Positive youth development among minority youth: A relational developmental systems model. In *Handbook on positive development of minority children and youth* (pp. 5-17). Springer, Cham.
- Maina, M. (2015). *Challenges of ministering to the youth: A case study of Presbyterian Church of East Africa Langata Parish, Nairobi County* (Unpublished thesis). University of Nairobi, Kenya.
- Mbae, F., Mukulu, E., & Kihoro, J. (2016). Critical literature review on how individual socio-economic empowerment occurs in youth groups. *International Journal of Academic Research in Accounting, Finance and Management Sciences*, 6(3), 119-130. <http://dx.doi.org/10.6007/IJARAFMS/v6-i3/2204>.
- McGuire, J., Dworkin, J., Borden, L., Perkins, D., & Russell, S. (2016). Youth motivation for program participation. *Journal of Youth Development*, 11(3), 7-25. <https://doi.org/10.5195/JYD.2016.457>.
- Moller, F. (2013). Cohabitation and Christian faith. In *the Scriptural Light*, 47(1), 18-26. http://www.scielo.org.za/scielo.php?script=sci_arttext&pid=S2305-08532013000100003&lng=en&tlng=en.
- Mugure, J. (2013). *Effectiveness of socio-economic projects on youth empowerment in Nakuru Municipality Kenya* (Unpublished thesis). University of Nairobi, Kenya.
- Muriungi, N. (2013). *Influence of empowerment programmes on youth retention in the church: The case of churches in Tigania Sub-County, Meru County* (Unpublished thesis). University of Nairobi, Kenya.
- Nassiuma D. (2000). *Survey sampling: Theory and methods*. Njoro, Kenya: Egerton University Press.
- PCEA (2019). *About us*. Retrieved 21 November 2019 from <http://pcea.or.ke/index.php/about-us>.
- Pew Research Centre (2016). The gender gap in religion around the world. Retrieved 10th May 2020 from <https://www.pewforum.org/2016/03/22/the-gender-gap-in-religion-around-the-world/>.
- Pillay, J. (2017). The church as a transformation and change agent. *HTS Theological Studies*, 73(3), 1-12. <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v73i3.4352>.
- Samuel Hall (2017). *Youth employment in Kenya*. Retrieved 20th November, 2019 from https://www.britishcouncil.co.ke/sites/default/files/ng_kenya_youth_employment_in_kenya.pdf.
- Trivelli, C., & Morei, J. (2019). *Rural youth inclusion, empowerment and participation*. Rome: International Fund for Agricultural Development.
- Tshabalala, B., & Patel, C. (2010). The role of praise and worship activities in spiritual well-being: Perceptions of a Pentecostal youth ministry group. *International Journal of Children's Spirituality*, 15(1), 73- 82. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13644361003603074>.
- Vaughn, S. (2016). *Why millennial are leaving the church: A qualitative study analysing multiple factors contributing to the decline in millennial engagement within the church* (Unpublished thesis). Appalachian State University, USA.
- Virginia Commonwealth University (2015). *Young Men Christian Association*. Retrieved 3 October 2019 from <https://socialwelfare.library.vcu.edu/youth/young-mens-christian-association/>.

- Wakanyi, L. (2018). *Christian response to the phenomenon of single-parenthood in Nairobi* (Unpublished thesis). Kenyatta University, Kenya.
- Waweru, H., & Wamukoya, J. (2018). Theology of cohabitation among the youth in the Kenyan Catholic Church. *International Journal of Innovative Research and Knowledge*, 3(4), 94-107.
- Weber, S. (2015). A South African voice on youth ministry research: Powerful or powerless? *Theological Studies*, 71(2), 1-6. <http://dx.doi.org/10.4102/hts.v71i2.2973>.
- Welch, R. (2011). *Church administration: Creating efficiency for effective ministry*. Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group.
- World Bank (2015). *Youth as emerging development issue in Kenya*. Nairobi: World Bank.