

# ROLE OF RELIGIOUS SPONSORS IN DEVELOPMENT OF HOLISTIC SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN NYERI COUNTY

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## **ABSTRACT**

*Historically, religious sponsors have played a significant role in promoting holistic growth of students through emphasizing Christian based values in learning institutions. This have been showed by ever increasing seasonal social, moral, and ethical challenges facing students which include early pregnancies among female students, drugs and substance abuse, religious radicalization, burying, arson, among others. However, there has been a great concern from the public discourse on the laxity of the church as religious sponsors in schools from the frequent moral decay displayed by the students today. This article assesses the role of religious sponsors in development of holistic secondary school students in Nyeri County, Kenya. This study adopts a descriptive approach through collecting primary data from 68 CU/CA patrons, 99 students and 68 school administration. This article confirmed that various religious sponsors promote students' moral, social and spiritual development to students through organizing frequent prayer sessions, Biblical expositions, as well as offering Christian based guidance and counseling. However, this have not been to the maximum as could be expected in religious contexts. This study recommends for revitalized pastoral reforms from both the schools and the church. This will ensure that secondary schools fully utilize the rich valuable chaplaincy ministry based on pastoral care and counseling services as facilitated by the respective religious sponsors.*

**Keywords:** *Religious Sponsor; Pastoral Care, Pastoral Counseling, Holistic Development*

## **INTRODUCTION**

The role of the church in the contemporary learning institutions has been vital. Based on the doctrinal and theological foundations of church's understanding of practical theology, the church has been called to promote acquisition of positive values to its people which will facilitate social balance.

Since the inception of the church, education has been emphasized as one of the main aims of the church behind propagating the Christian faith.

The main aim of this is to enable the learners, in conjunction with the school community, to bring up children who are not only knowledgeable but also who fear God with sound moral values.

Religious sponsors, hence, play a key role in the provision of a conducive learning environment as they majorly work to provides education programme that is life centered, broad, multifaceted as well as personal growth which promotes spiritual development (Mabeya, Ndiku, and Njino 2010).

In Kenyan social context, there has been a great call for the need to have secondary school students who are moral upright, resilient, emotional competent, spiritually equipped, socially competent, problem-solving skills and who is autonomous in nature. Nyabwari (2016) observed that in 1990s to 2001 and even up to date, Kenya has reported varied indiscipline issues in a number of secondary schools. These has included riots, murder, rape and violence among others, manifested in heavy destruction of property. This has made the successive Kenya governments to call for an effective guidance and counselling, along with pastoral care programmes to be introduced into all schools (Owinyo 2008).

These challenges manifested in Kenyan secondary schools gives a clear image of poorly organized and emphasized chaplaincy services as supposed to be propagated by the respective religious sponsors. This leaves many questions on the Diakonian ministerial role of the church that emphasizes the Gospel in action based on pastoral responsibility alongside identify alarming cases in the society and take action to address the problems.

This research article was motivated by the social contexts that have been taking place in Nyeri County secondary school. For example, Kuria and Muthui (2019) who undertook a study to assess various forms of conflicts in Nyeri County. They established that the failure to address students' issues through students' council have resulted to some schools among others; Giakaibei secondary school in 2016 burning dormitories and Kirimara Boys High school injuring the deputy principal, both schools in Mathira, Nyeri County.

This study holds the following objectives: to evaluate the role played by religious sponsors in the holistic development of secondary school students in Nyeri County: to assess the challenges

facing to religious sponsors in secondary schools in Nyeri County.

The study is therefore, guided by the following questions: what is the role of religious sponsors in the holistic development of secondary school students in Nyeri County? And what are the challenges facing to religious sponsors in secondary schools in Nyeri County?

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Development of Religious Sponsorship in Kenyan Secondary Schools**

Church sponsorship in Kenya had its foundation during the eighteenth century with the first visitation of Christian missionaries. Ouma (2015) points out that the missionary clergy in the late eighteenth century managed education in Kenya, through building and financing schools, provided training role, recruited, and deployed teachers in the established schools. He, however, notes that besides promoting their religious traditions, the church was at the forefront in supervising the rolling out of the set curriculum, taught catechism and guided the new teaching strategies that were Christian based. By 1920, the missionaries were hence increasingly committed to the education not only to meet the demands of converts, but also envisioned attempts by the government to monopolize education. This was later promoted by different missionary groups who established schools to promote literacy on Africans.

After independence and with the policy of Africanization in Kenya, the mission schools were put under the management of the local people. The independent government recognized the respective churches on spiritual sponsorship for the learners. As such, both Lugulu (2013) and Muoki (2017), observes that the word 'sponsor' came to be synonymous with church's role in Kenyan education system. They note that the phrase 'sponsor' was first used in section 8 (1) of the Education Act of 1968 to

describe new role of the church in relation to schools that were formerly owned by missionaries and were transferred to a local authority. In addition, Ouma (2015) notes that the former managers of the Church schools were to be regarded as sponsors of the schools, subject to the choice of the local community to continue having the Church's influence in the school. From the post-independence era, various churches have been incorporated in the school learning and management process as religious sponsors. Under the Basic Education Act (2013), religious sponsors have been participating in giving direction in the prescription of moral, ethical and spiritual wellbeing and safety of students for a satisfactory environment in education.

It is within these key responsibilities of the church as mandated by the government, that the church, in collaboration with the school administration, have been developing pastoral care programmes that aim to address the moral, social, emotional and spiritual needs among the learners. However, this has not been achieved to its satisfaction.

### **Religious Sponsors Roles in Holistic Development of Students in Schools**

One of the main contributions of the church in education sector as guided by practical theology is its role and involvement in pastoral care and counseling programmes. This is confirmed by the Catholic Commission for Education and Religious Education (2015) that argues that Christian pastoral care and counseling attempts to address positively, contemporary issues and educational values. For example, social justice, cooperation, sacrifice, self-control, mutual helpfulness, sensitivity to the distressed members and those with disabilities, among other values. Therefore, the church, as a custodian of moral regeneration, becomes a vehicle that can regenerate the morality of children and teachers who are challenged by different factors. It is within this context, that Parke (2015) observes

that churches and other religious groups must be mobilized to promote the values needed to strengthen the common good.

Koenig in his study (2014) emphasizes the great benefit of religious values acquired through religious involvement by analyzing various studies on the role of spirituality in society. He notes that religiosity or spirituality is related to less depression in over 60% of 444 quantitative studies; greater well-being and happiness in nearly 80% of 326 studies; greater meaning and purpose in over 90% of 45 studies; greater hope and optimism in over 75% of 72 studies; 75% of 141 studies conveyed that religious involvement promotes greater meaning, purpose, and hope, religious beliefs and activities are related to less suicide, fewer suicide attempts, and more negative attitudes toward suicide. Spirituality was also found to promote less alcohol or drug use/abuse in over 85% of nearly 300 studies. These findings, therefore, justifies the great need for the church to invest its resources, personnel and time to promote religiosity among students. This is because major religious belief systems in the community contain bans on promiscuity, substance use, violence, stealing among others. As such, young people who adopt these values and norms are less likely to engage in risky behaviors even when circumstances motivate them to do so.

Aerika, Lewis, and Noris (2013) emphasizes the view that the church may influence adolescent's moral direction in several ways. These may include among others; enhanced development of moral order, promoting learned completeness, increasing social and organizational ties and providing emotional and social support. In this case, he argues that lessons on proper moral duty, should begin early and continue throughout childhood and adolescence which will promote uninformed moral understanding. Muthamba (2017) supports this by arguing that moral

education in schools ought to be geared towards enabling students to locate transcendent truths outside human subjectivity. As such, *ibid* asserts that students need to be developed holistically to promote self-dialogue of the mind. This means that they must be in a position to conceive an idea in its inchoative stage and weigh its pros and cons before acting on it. Students, however, must be taught to subject opinions and choices into criticism and make a logical conclusion in life.

Within the secondary school context, church as religious sponsor plays an important role in the promotion of spiritual development of students in the school. This may take different perspectives as the students actively participate in different church activities within and without the school. Most of the active religious sponsors carry out prayer sessions, organize worship and Bible study activities and practicing different church rituals within the school academic calendar. These pastoral programmes have the overall objectives of guiding, healing, reconciling and sustaining persons with social, spiritual, moral and emotional needs. It is within this understanding, that Patton (2005) argues that pastoral care should be the care of the whole person in a relationship, not the treatment of specific dysfunction. This grows out of a vision of what human beings are and need as well as their social contexts. Therefore, religious sponsors in the schools should be at the forefront in ensuring the key objectives of Christian pastoral care and counseling are achieved.

According to Mutua (2015), for the Catholic Church, education is an integral part of its evangelization mission. He notes that the principles of education in the Catholic Church are value-based, and the Church acquires its inspiration from the values taught by Christ, the greatest teacher of all time. However, he argues that schools must have a common outlook on life-based on a scale of values in

which those who teach in the school believe in and uphold. As such, schools need to invest in facilitating acquisition of Christian values as reflected on holistic education which includes; self-control, integrity, trustworthiness, personal responsibility, honesty, care, fairness, compassion, social justice, respect for others and respect for life among others.

To achieve the above indicators of holistically developed students, Mushaandja et al. (2013) posits that each school should have at least a religious counselor/pastoral care provider (trained by practical theologians) and a social worker. He advises for a collaborative approach between the government and schools where both agree with churches to provide pastoral counseling to students at least once a week and to provide pastoral training to teachers and other providers of moral and spiritual care in the schools. Here, the church will highly both directly and indirectly help to address the existing moral, ethical and spiritual gaps in the education sector by investing in chaplaincy and well-structured pastoral care programs. The church, therefore, have a vital responsibility to ensure that the overall pastoral objectives of healing, guiding, sustaining, and reconciling is effectively accomplished in respective learning institutions. Within the pastoral context, it is the responsibility of the religious sponsors in secondary schools especially in Nyeri County to ensure that the four key objectives of pastoral care are adequately met to students.

Religious sponsors' role in the social, moral, emotional, and spiritual healing process of students have been considered vital in holistic development of students. However, any form of spiritual healing may not be fully achieved by general guidance and counseling as practiced by most psychologists in Kenyan secondary schools as the student's soul is not attended to.

In most cases, majority of secondary schools in Nyeri County experiences spiritual,

moral, social, and emotional brokenness. This may happen especially where the students are religiously indoctrinated by pseudo-religious groups who brainwashes their Christian values or feel that they do not fit in their social environments. As such, this demand of spiritual nourishment as spiritual life affects their personality in totality. In this context, spiritual healing from pastoral care and counseling provider(s) in school, may resemble other healing processes by rehabilitators or physicians hence the need for a specialist or competent personality undertaking spiritual healing to the students. This is because, any spiritual healing brought about to the affected student by whatever means, should have a religious dimension or should also move towards religious depth. This because the healing process is also aimed towards restoration of the lost spiritual relationship and fellowship with God.

In sustaining context, religious sponsors should be at the forefront to ensure that pastoral care services are properly promoted and offered in schools as the majority of students frequently experience love and relationship queries among opposite sex or family conflict or may also in bereavement. If the school through pastoral care and counseling provider may not identify the loss gap in students, the latter may experience academic, social, moral and spiritual disconnect. Positive sustenance in their self-esteem and self-awareness in such a context will keep the student moving on and alive. Unlike the healing role of pastoral care and counseling, sustenance role in schools, therefore, is not necessarily confined to a spiritually deprived students hence, it is offered to any student who need and want the service. In such a context, hope becomes central in sustenance role of Christian pastoral care and counseling services.

In today contemporary society, most of

young people have found themselves in spiritual dilemma as the secular world provides divergent choices of spirituality of which some detrimental. In this context, spiritual guidance to the students, hence, is vital so that they can be familiar with the dangers around their spiritual territory. In this pastoral care guiding context, it is imperative that the pastoral practitioner take into consideration of the Christian moral theology in action. The application of Christian ethical in a deontological approach will help the pastoral care providers in secondary schools address some of the major moral issues arising from the students.

As such, pastoral care and counseling as guided by Christian morality theory will guide the students to intrinsically understand what is good for the Christian and also what is good for the whole community or the society hence, this guiding must be educative in nature. This calls for a need for rigorous pastoral guiding of students in their decision-making processes where pastoral caregivers instill in them values that help them to be resilient in life. Proper pastoral guiding will help students to develop skills, attitudes, and character qualities to assist them to move through life and provide them with a sense of social, spiritual, and ethical maturity growth.

In today's modern social contexts, the church will define its true value from the role it plays in the enrichment of the quality of life through developing in them a sense of transcendence. It has the role to play by providing the society with the ethic codes, social; rules, and ideas, rituals, and devotion which are vital in helping to maintain ethical and social order in the community. If moral, social, and spiritual competence for holistic students must succeed in schools, there is a need for the closer collaboration between government and all other stakeholders where

the religious sponsors play the larger share.

This article uses the Social Functionalism idea of Emile Durkheim. The theory views society as a system of interconnected parts that work together in harmony to maintain a state of balance and social stability for the whole. The proponents of social functionalism are hence concerned with how order is maintained in any society, the main source of stability in any society, and that the basis of social order is to be found through the existing social institutions. As such, values, morals, and beliefs are diffused to individuals through various socializing agencies among others, the church, family, and the learning institutions. The ultimate aim of the instilled moral values is to promote a sense of holistic aspects in people's life developments at various stages.

The church as one of the vital social institutions and as a religious sponsor in secondary school, have played an important role in promoting the moral, social, psychological, and spiritual growth of students. This has been through emphasizing Christian based values in learning institutions. The latter, therefore, is supposed to exert positive, constructive influences in the lives of students through providing; moral directives, spiritual experiences, role models, community leadership skills, coping skills, cultural and social capital, and extra-community links. This helps to foster developmental maturity and enhances social, moral, spiritual, and academic competencies and knowledge. The guided students ultimately show aspects of moral uprightness, resilience, emotional competence, spiritually equipped, social competence, problem-solving skills and will be autonomous, hence holistically developed. As such, this ultimately leads to an over-all social balance both in and out of the secondary school community as students are properly nurtured to their adulthood.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

This study was carried out in 2019. To achieve the objectives of this study in maximum, a mixed survey method was adopted. Both questionnaire and interviews schedules were used to collect primary data from the target population. Nyeri County comprises of 217 public secondary schools each headed by a school principal. The approximate student's population is 70853 according to the office of Nyeri County Director of Education. To promote the spiritual development of students, each school have both the Christian Union (CU) and Catholic Action (CA) patrons who represents the respective religious sponsors. These formed target population for the study from which the sample size for the study were acquired.

Yamane (1967) formula,  $N/1+N(e)^2$ , with a 10% level of precision was used in this study to acquire the representative sample of research respondent. Simple random sampling technique was employed to get the study sample size. The study interviewed 68 school administrators who comprised of school principal/deputy principals. Interview schedules were preferred since they provide a platform to obtain detailed information on personal feelings, opinions, and views of school principals/deputy principals about the nature of pastoral care programmes in schools. Both open ended and structured questionnaires were issued to the sample of 99 students and 68 CU/CA patrons within sampled secondary schools Nyeri County.

Quantitative data was analyzed with descriptive statistics procedure such as percentages and frequencies while the qualitative data was analyzed through thematic data analysis method.

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

This section is divided into two parts. The first part presents the demographic information of both the students and the established religious sponsors

within Nyeri County secondary schools. The second one presents and discusses the findings from the study objectives as guided by the study objectives.

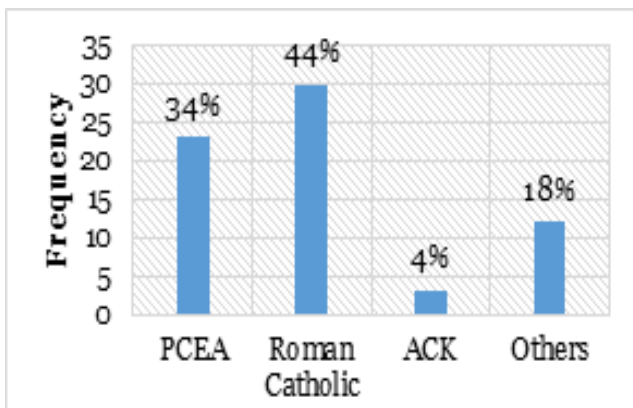
**Demographic Information**

*Distribution of Religious Sponsors*

The researcher enquired from the sample of 68 school administrators about the name of their respective religious sponsors. The study established that most of the secondary schools in Nyeri County have Roman Catholic-44% and Presbyterian-33% churches as the majority religious sponsors in the school as presented in the Figure 1 below.

**Figure 1**

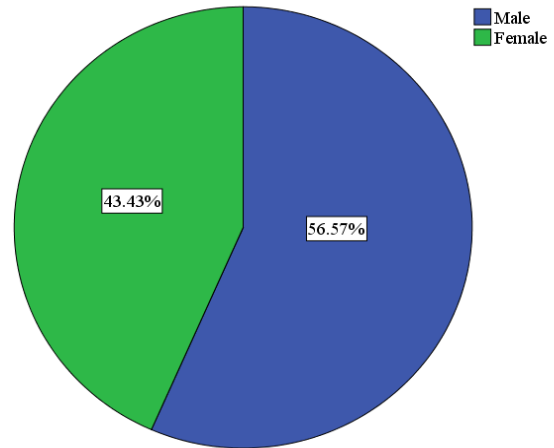
Religious sponsors in secondary schools in Nyeri County



In addition, the study noted that secondary schools especially those under the management of County Education Board (CEB), have no formal religious sponsors. In this case, most of the school administrators in the latter class of schools noted that they rely on the Christian ministries provided by religious groups (others 18%) such as Kenya Student Christian Fellowship (KSCF) and the volunteering neighboring churches. Majority of the school administrators in the latter categories of schools explained that lack of well-defined religious sponsor creates inconsistency of pastoral care provided to students.

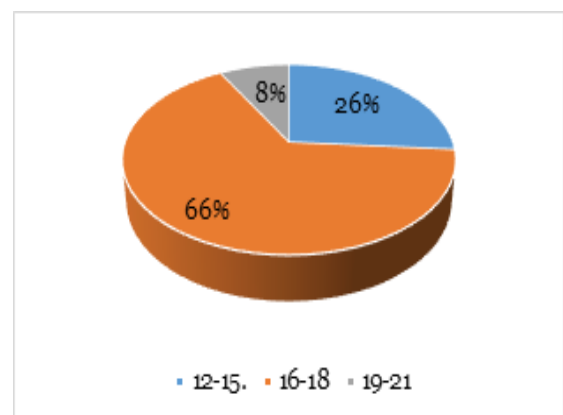
Below is the student’s response rate in the study.

**Figure 2**  
 Students’ response rate



From Figure 2, 43% of the student’s respondents were girls while boys ranged at 57%.

**Figure 3**  
 Students’ age bracket



From Figure 3 above, the majority of the students’ respondents 66% ranged between the ages of 16-18 years. Majority of these students are at their optimal age of self-exploration in their immediate worlds. Hence, great care and guidance is needed on them. Pastoral care and counseling are therefore important to help them acquire skills and competence that will

help them adjust and navigate positively in their academic and social life.

**Table 1.** Students Gender by Age

		12-15	16-18	19-21
Students' Gender	Male	16%	71%	13%
	Female	40%	58%	2%

Table 1 shows that among the boys, 71% are between the ages of 16-18 years, 16% are between 12-15 years, 13% are between 19-21 years. On the other hand, 58% of the girls are between the ages of 16-18 years, 40% are between the ages of 12-15 years, and only 2% of the girls are tween the ages of 19-21 years. This shows that girls transit to the next education levels at a lower age than boys.

### **Role of Religious Sponsors in Development of Holistic Secondary School Students in Nyeri County, Kenya**

Today, various church organizations responsible in providing religious sponsorship in Nyeri County secondary schools have developed various forms of Christian pastoral care programmes aimed at promoting the development of holistic secondary school students. In their core objectives, these programmes are aimed at developing secondary school students who displays various aspects of intellectual, moral, spiritual, and social competence to enable them to navigate their social, moral and spiritual life successfully.

To achieve the above aim, pastoral care programmes need a collaborative approach from various stakeholders among others, the school administrators, the church as religious sponsor, pastoral care providers and the ministry of education. Any form of disconnect to the above stakeholder's responsibilities in promoting pastoral care services,

will lead to an ineffective pastoral care programmes in secondary schools. This study narrows down to the roles of religious sponsors in Nyeri County in their responsibilities of promoting the development of holistic secondary school students.

The study is informed by the frequent manifestations of pathological behaviors in students within Kenyan secondary schools in form of riots in, arson cases, early pregnancies among the girls, drug and substances and bullying fellow students in schools. The study attributes this to the lack of social and moral values that helps them judge and critically analyze the consequences of their actions. For example, Odieki (2017) reported of 8 girls who perished in a dormitory fire that was suspected to have been lit by students overnight. As such, blame was given to various education stakeholders for failing to develop students with needed social and moral values in the society. This subsequently creates a contextual social crisis that necessitates the need to guide young people in various ways of approaching contemporary life. Just as in the national context, as noted earlier, secondary schools in Nyeri County have not been in exemption in facing various challenges manifested in various ways.

However, despite this happening, most of religious sponsors have put into place complementary Christian pastoral care approach as a strategy to control the effects of the major contemporary social, moral and spiritual challenges faced by the students in secondary schools in Nyeri County. However, the effectiveness of the programme to develop holistic students has been questioned as countable number of schools have recorded among others, various arson cases, drug and substance abuse, and cases of early pregnancies.

In the context of the study, the research instruments required the school administrators to give their objective ratings on various responsibilities of the religious sponsors in their respective schools. Their rating was guided

statements based on a Likert scale of 1-4 where 1 means ‘Strongly Agree’, 2 means ‘Agree, 3 means ‘Moderately Agree’, and 4 means ‘Do Not Agree’. The ratings from the study helped the researcher to identify areas of responsibility where the church as religious sponsors need to improve in their functionality.

Table 2 below show school administrator’s response on various roles carries out by religious sponsors with the aim of promoting moral, social, psychological, and spiritual growth of students.

**Table 2.** Role of Religious Sponsors in Secondary Schools in Nyeri County

No.	Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Moderately Agree	Do Not Agree	n
1.	Guides the School during Planning of Student’s Development Programmes.	25%	44%	22%	9%	68
2.	Provides In-Services to Teachers of Religious Education.	16%	38%	31%	15%	68
3.	Provides Prayer Session to School Community Regularly.	34%	34%	25%	6%	67
4.	Provides Bible Study Lessons Regularly.	15%	40%	32%	13%	68
5.	Religious sponsor participates in the discipline Committee in School.	10%	29%	31%	29%	68
6.	Provides Guidance to the School Management as a Member of Board of Management (B.O.M)	34%	47%	13%	6%	68

As noted from Table 2 above, 44% of the school administrators noted that religious sponsor agreed with the statement that religious sponsors guide and advises the school administration during the planning of students’ social and spiritual programmes that aims at promoting students’ social, moral and spiritual competence.

Notably, 9% of the school administrators did not agree that religious sponsors guide the school in any way in planning students’ developmental programmes. This reveals a below average performance as well as the relaxed nature of the church on key educational policies. Wambugu (2019) asserts that there is a strong need for a strong chaplaincy structure that encourages students to open up about their struggles in life.

Importantly, only 21% and 31% of the school administrators agreed and moderately agreed respectively that their respective religious sponsors frequently are involved in student’s alarming indiscipline cases in the discipline committees. As part of discipline committee in school, the respondents explained that religious sponsors during students’ disciplinary sessions promoted moral development among the effected students in various ways. Among others included offering guidance and counseling based on the nature of indiscipline; provides moral awareness on the emerging contemporary issues such as drug and substance abuse and effects of the modern social media. In most cases, chaplains and other representatives of the religious sponsors emphasizes the need for healthy and good relationships among the students. This was observed to promote self-respect and harmony to other students in school, hence, a decline in relational and internal conflicts among the students.

Continuous in-service of human capital in any social institution is vital for upgrading of skills due to changing times. This is very necessary contemporary teaching environments especially in African contexts where effects of globalization and contemporary social-technological cultures have taken shape in young people.

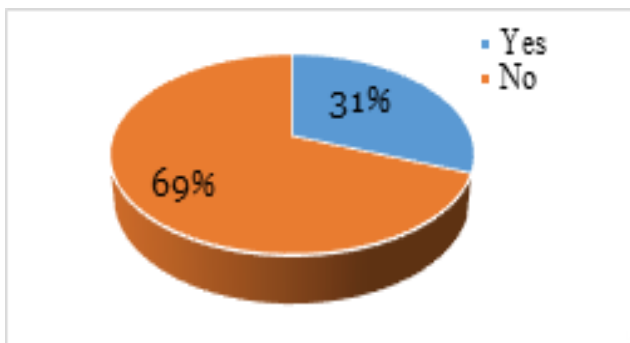
In such a context, teachers are required to be alert and updated on the changing social circumstances among the students. This article

investigated the extent at which the church as religious sponsors within in Nyeri County provides in-service training to teachers especially those in pastoral care and counseling ministry in the school.

In its finding, the study established that 31% and 31% of the respondents agreed and moderately agreed, respectively, that their respective religious sponsor in the school frequently provide in-service training to teachers of Christian Religious Studies. However, only 16% strongly agreed with the statement that religious sponsors frequently provide in-serve to teachers. Notably, 15% observed that their respective religious sponsors do not assist in any way in upgrading teacher’s skills on various spiritual and social programmes for students’ holistic development. This was confirmed by the response from Christian Union/Catholic Action patrons on whether they are trained or note on pastoral care ministry as presented in Figure 4 below.

**Figure 4**

Trained pastoral care providers



of pastoral care providers are trained on pastoral skills. However, 69% reported that they do not have any formal training to carry out their pastoral services to the students. For the pastoral care and counseling providers who received such in-service trainings, the respondents noted that it was important as it helped them to be updated on the current issues and up-to-date skills of handling emerging social, ethical, and spiritual challenges that

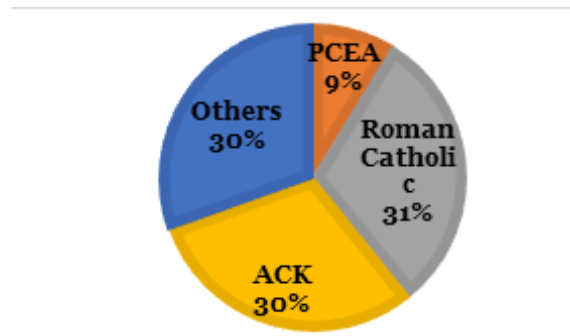
may affect students’ well-being.

Students’ spiritual maturity is vital in understanding the transcendental world. This is only achieved where the school system has well-structured policies of Biblical studies outside academic spheres. The church as the custodian of spirituality in the society should hence ensure the Bible studies are carried out where it oversees the spiritual matters in the school. According to the results in the study, 40% and 32% of the school administrators agreed and moderately agreed, respectively, with the statement that religious sponsors take part in providing Bible study lessons regularly to the students.

In relation to this, the study noted that various religious sponsors in Nyeri County secondary schools takes Bible study with different emphasis. Figure 5 below show various responses from the assessment of the school administrators on how various religious sponsors provides Bible studies on students.

**Figure 5**

Religious sponsors providing Bible studies in schools



As shown above, Roman Catholic schools puts more emphasis on Bible studies to their students at 31% compared to Presbyterian church at 9%, ACK-30, and others (Missionary groups and voluntary churches) at 30%. The respondents especially in the Catholic schools explained that the church sends their catechists weekly who interact with students

for religious classes. These catechists provide Biblical expositions, and their teachings bases on contemporary society. This helps the students to have a deeper understanding of the Bible hence, uplift their religious and spiritual status. This is also promoted through donations of the Bible and other Christian based materials for student’s spiritual growth and nourishment.

On provision of prayers in the school community, 34%, 34% and 25% of the school administrators strongly agreed, agreed, and moderately agreed, respectively that their respective religious sponsors in school provide prayer sessions regularly to the school community. This is done especially when the candidates are awaiting their national examinations which provides the students with courage and hope in their school life.

According to Koenig (2014), religiosity have been impacting positively to its adherent as highlighted in various studies. Analyses on various religious research noted that 75% of 141 studies on spirituality conveyed that religious involvement promotes greater meaning, purpose, and hope. Additionally, Koenig also notes that spirituality has been found to promote less alcohol or drug use/abuse in over 85% of nearly 300 studies. Hayward and Krause (2014) observe that the use of religious coping was also associated with a reduced subsequent impact of stressful life events on depression symptoms. Hence, suggesting that religious coping may increase as a response to stress, and then has a partial buffering effect.

Where the pastoral ministry of the church is inactive, the students may manifest some unruly behavioral characteristics which leads to indiscipline. Table 3 below shows the school administrator’s response on whether the presence of pastoral care ministry as undertaken by their respective religious sponsors have a positive impact on students’ discipline.

**Table 3.** Positive Impact of Pastoral Care Ministry in Student’s Discipline

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid	Yes	55	80.9	83.3
	No	11	16.2	16.7
	Total	66	97.1	100.0
Missing	System	2	2.9	
<b>Total</b>		<b>68</b>	<b>100.0</b>	

As presented in Table 3 above, 83% of the administrators who responded to the question, agreed that pastoral care ministry contributed positively to student’s discipline. The findings are in line with Wambugu’s (2019) study results that assessed the role of chaplaincy on students’ discipline development. She found that 80.6% of the school principals agreed that chaplaincy services positively contribute to students’ discipline. Only 2.8% strongly disagreed, 2.8% disagreed. This shows that when religious sponsors effectively carry out their responsibilities, various challenges originating from students in schools will be minimized if not eradicated fully. As such, chaplaincy ministry in the school will enable the students to deal with peer pressure and other distractions that may result into indiscipline issues. In view of this, disciplined students will ultimately re-direct their time and energy into academic matters which will result into improved academic achievement.

Nduku (2015) argues that spiritual formation is a holistic process by which God forms Christ’s character in believers by the ministry of the Spirit, in the context of the school community, and under biblical standards. This process involves the transformation of the whole person in thoughts, behaviors, and styles of relating to God and others. Besides, Nyabwari (2016) posits that spiritual competence develops students’ sense of purpose, the value of belief in

God and solutions to their day-to-day dilemmas as well as teaching them the role of Christianity in their lives. He further notes that it makes them more caring, tolerant, and actively engaged in the spiritual quests.

Before and after independence in Kenya, the church played vital to in education management. Mabeya et. al (2010) notes that the church built new schools, financed them, recruited and trained teachers, oversaw the implementation of the curriculum, taught catechism and approved new teaching approaches. These roles of the church in Nyeri County are vital for the advancement of education. As the study noted, 34%, 47%, and 13% of the school administrators strongly agreed, agreed, and moderately agreed that their respective religious sponsors participate in providing of guidance as a member of the Board of Management (BOM) in the school. Where all the stakeholders take their roles properly in the school management, research shows that such schools experiences good academic advancement.

As Mabeya et. al (2010) continue to observe, religious sponsors play a key role in the provision of a conducive learning environment. In addition, Mabeya argues that the respective religious sponsors in schools have the overall responsibility to promote pastoral programmes as they work to the preservation of the church doctrine. They highlight among other functions of religious sponsors in secondary schools such as provision of spiritual counseling, teaching and in-servicing teachers of Christian Religious Education and provision of school chaplaincy which have an overall long-term effect of promoting holistic aspects in learners. However, effective roles of religious sponsors who are mandated by the ministry of education to ensure proper moral and spiritual

development of students, have been on the decline in providing their chaplaincy services. This has been hampered by various factors that range from conflict of interest between the school managements, social-cultural factors that leaches out Christian values instilled to students, inconsistency in chaplaincy services among others.

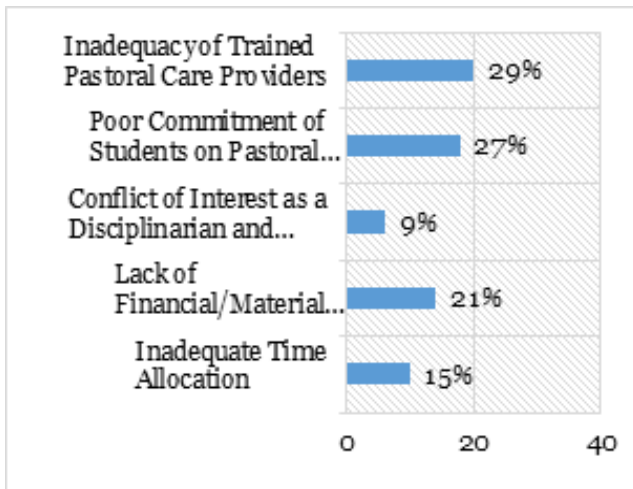
As Akpanessien (2015) argues, the Church on whom the adolescents and other young people depend, need to become more aware of the unique conditions of these young people in postmodern society; and be capable of implementing an effective model of pastoral care and guidance that nurtures their spiritual growth. As Chiroma (2012) views, excellence in education is not so much related to how much is learned or even how well a subject is understood. Rather, excellence is dependent on how learning changes the learner. In this context, the study, contends that there is a great need for religious sponsors to take up their full responsibilities of ensuring that chaplaincy services are offered in schools in a collaboration with the school management for maximum behavioral change.

### **Challenges to Effective Roles of Religious Sponsors in Secondary Schools in Nyeri County**

Challenges that commonly humper the effectiveness of religious sponsors in Nyeri County, Kenya were also investigated. These challenges were seen to affect the nature of religious sponsors' willingness to facilitate development of holistic secondary school students. As noted, some of the identified challenges are contributed by the sponsors themselves through their laxity in their Diakonian ministerial responsibilities as defined by pastoral theology.

**Figure 6**

Various Challenges to Church’s Pastoral Ministry

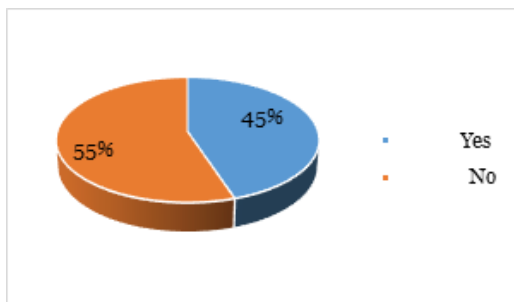


As noted from Figure 6 above, majority of the secondary schools in Nyeri County are faced with low personnel to provide pastoral care services to the students as reported by 29% of the respondents. This means that the church as religious sponsor is not able to effectively render its pastoral ministry in schools.

The study established that majority of the students are not corporative in church services as 27% of the respondents reported of poor commitment of students on pastoral issues. This is confirmed from the low turn-out of students who voluntarily seek pastoral care and counseling services as presented in Figure 7 below.

**Figure 7**

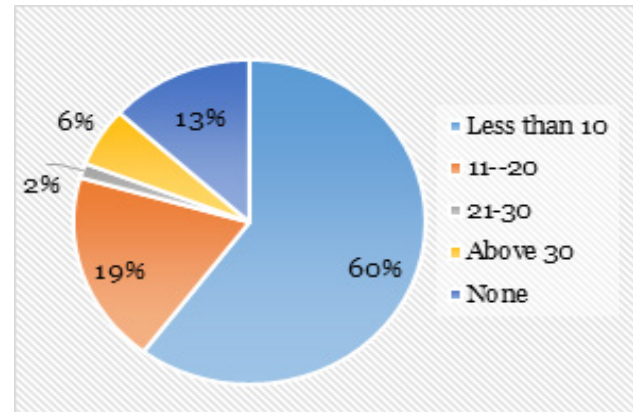
Student’s Turnout in Voluntarily Seek Pastoral Care and Counseling Services



From results above, 55% of the students reported that they have never sought any form of pastoral care and counseling services to the programme providers. While 45% of students seek pastoral care services though with inconsistency.

**Figure 8**

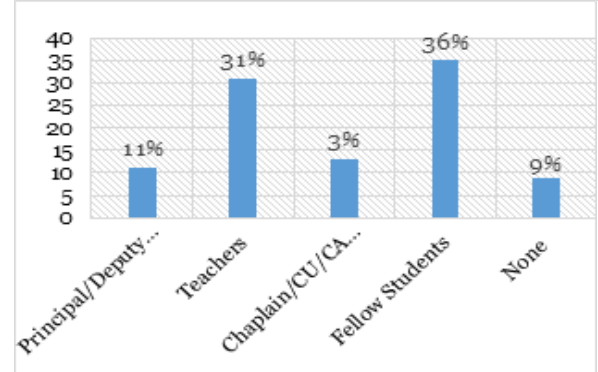
Number of Students Who Seek Pastoral Care Services



The study established that majority of secondary school in Nyeri County gets less than ten students who seek pastoral care assistance as reported by 60% of the pastoral care and counseling providers. 13% reported that none of the students in their respective schools ever sought pastoral care and counseling services. Additionally, 36% of the students preferred consulting and sharing their problems with fellow students as shown in Figure 9 below.

**Figure 9**

Most Trusted Person a Students may Consult on



The above results reveal a form of disconnect on the nature of trust of students to pastoral care service providers. Most of the students seemed to have more trust to fellow students while ignoring

chaplaincy roles from CU/CA patrons who are the representatives of the religious sponsors in the schools. Additionally, as presented above, 9% of the students trusts none of personalities within learning environments in their process of solving their social, moral or spiritual challenges. In this case, the church is tasked to come up with accommodative policies that will increase faith and trust to pastoral care personnel for their guidance.

Effectiveness of pastoral ministry as promoted by the religious sponsors in schools may be assessed in terms of the frequency at which students are exposed to various forms pastoral care and counseling services. Table 4 below shows the frequency at which pastoral activities are offered to students within the school term academic calendar.

**Table 4.** Frequency of Providing Pastoral Care Services in the Schools

		<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Valid	Once Per Week	35	51
	Twice Per Week	29	43
	Once Per Month	4	6
<b>Total</b>		<b>68</b>	<b>100</b>

From the above results of Table 4, the majority of secondary schools Nyeri County (51%) offers pastoral care services once per week while 4% of secondary schools offer pastoral care services once per month. Only 43% of the schools offer pastoral care services to students twice per week. This means that Christian pastoral care services are not adequately utilized in addressing students' social, moral, and spiritual needs which may lead to compromising the place of spirituality in ad-

dress students' spiritual, moral and social needs adequately. As such, the results reveals that religious sponsors are either not involved in drafting pastoral ministries or they take a spectator role in student's holistic developments.

The study also noted that pastoral ministry of the religious sponsors is inadequately funded for successful activities as noted in Figure 6. As such, 21% of CU/CA patrons who are the main custodians of pastoral ministries in the school, complained of the lack of financial and other material support both in and out of the school. For chaplaincy and other pastoral services in schools to be effective in students' holistic development, adequate resources are needed. Inadequate resources will mean that the planed church pastoral care and counseling programmes to students will not be adequately archived.

Additionally, the study established that church's pastoral care and counseling ministry is not allocated enough time in the established school timetable as noted from 15% of the respondents. This means that religious sponsors' agents such as chaplains, Christian Union and Catholic Action patrons who should have adequate time with students are limited in their Christian ministerial work.

This study calls for a clear legal and policy definition of the specific roles and responsibilities that the respective religious sponsors should perform in Nyeri County as guided by the ministry of education and its legal policies. This will help to avoid frequent conflicts on the roles of religious sponsors with school administrators especially in Kenya secondary schools' context.

As such, for the Church to remain active and relevant in the society, it must assert its ministerial role with the aim of filling the gap where other stakeholders cannot undertake. Ultimately, as Mabeya et. al (2010) observes,

there will be significant positive influence of a school sponsor on the academic performance of a school. However, he observes that this depends on how much a sponsor contributes towards the enhancement of the school learning facilities and resources.

For the church as religious sponsors to have sizeable impact on young people's ministry, there is a need for the religious institutions to understand the place of young people in the society today. Having a contemporary understanding of a rapidly changing world, will give the church a greater understanding on young people's changing needs. This will inform and keep the Church on the need to be active and relevant to the society. Hence, religious sponsors in contemporary educational contexts will be able to assert their roles with the aim of filling the gap where other stakeholders cannot undertake. The overall aim being to address student's social, moral, ethical, and spiritual problems and challenges as they arise in and out of their enviros.

## **CONCLUSION**

Religious sponsors in Nyeri County secondary schools play an important role in promoting the moral, social, psychological, and spiritual growth of students. This study noted that among the schools where religious sponsors have been actively effective, some of the indiscipline cases have not been realized. The church as religious sponsors have been providing students with skills and strategies to face such issues if confronted with them through moral, social-emotional, and spiritual guidance. In this case, a positive impact on students has been felt leading to academic excellence. The resulting students show aspects of moral uprightness, resilience, emotional competence, spiritually equipped, social competence, problem-solving skills and will be autonomous, hence holistically developed.

However, it was found that most of religious sponsors have been on laxity on their chaplaincy ministry. In addition, their effective roles have been hampered by various factors among others: inadequate trained pastoral care and counseling providers, poor commitment of students on pastoral care and counseling services, lack of financial and other material support, inadequate time allocation to church's pastoral care and counseling ministry and inconsistency in chaplaincy services.

For the church as religious sponsors to have sizeable impact on young people's ministry, there is a need for the religious institutions to understand the place of young people in the society today as a means to developing a responsible and valuable future human capital. Having a contemporary understanding of a rapidly changing world will give the church a greater understanding on young people's changing needs. This will inform and keep the Church on the need to be active and relevant to the society. Hence, religious sponsors in contemporary educational contexts will be able to assert their roles with the aim of filling the gap where other stakeholders cannot undertake. The overall aim being to address student's social, moral, ethical, and spiritual problems and challenges as they arise in and out of their enviros.

This study, therefore, challenges the Church as religious sponsors to have into place proper educational policies that takes pastoral care approach. It is such approach that will help to give direction on the way forward to the perennial social, moral, and spiritual challenges facing learning institutions. In addition, since the church undertakes its pastoral roles as guided by the discipline of pastoral theology, the study provokes the contemporary scholars within pastoral theology on the need to reconstruct and

review the theological methodologies and theories that are relevant in the youth ministry, and young peoples' spheres and their contextual Christian life.

### **Recommendation and Policy Implications**

Religious sponsors should take up their full responsibilities of ensuring that chaplaincy services through pastoral care programmes are offered in schools. It, therefore, demands for a clear legal definition of the roles and responsibilities of religious sponsors guided by the ministry of education to avoid frequent conflicts on the roles of religious sponsors in secondary schools.

For pastoral care and counseling programmes to be effective in contemporary educational sector, we contend that there is a need to change the methodological approach in pastoral ministry in addressing the contemporary challenges faced by 21<sup>st</sup> century young generation. This is from the fact that the existing theoretical approach seem not effective to the maximum in addressing the challenges brought about by the emerging modern social culture that comes with new choices of life at disposal of students.

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