

**AN ANALYSIS OF THE CHURCH'S RESPONSIBILITY ON THE SPIRITUAL
NURTURE OF CHILDREN: A CASE STUDY OF ALERE PARISH, AMURIA
ARCHDEACONRY, CHURCH OF UGANDA**

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**UGANDA CHRISTIAN
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DECLARATION

I, Eyoku Vicent, declare that this is my original Dissertation and has not been presented in any Institution of higher learning for any academic award.

Signature

Date.....*06/09/2025*

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APPROVAL

This is to certify that this Dissertation titled; “An Analysis of the Church’s Responsibility in the Spiritual Nurture of Children: A Case Study of Alere Parish, Amuria Archdeaconry, Church of Uganda”, done by Eyoku Vicent has been under my supervision



Signature ...

Date: 06.09.2025

Rev Alex Kamoga, PhD (Cand.)

DEDICATION

I dedicate this research project to my lovely wife; Tabisha Dorcus Eyoku who took care of our four children: Nathanael Okunya, Asher Odolon, Joram Peter Epechu and Charles Ebenezer Oloko and provided them with basic needs while I was away for studies. I also dedicate it to my dear mother; Lucy Alaso, my uncle; John King Odolon, my five siblings, my friends; Rev. Samuel Kabigumira, Rev. M. Ognwen, Pual Ochola and Joshua Elimu, all my course mates who prayed tirelessly, and supported me and my family at the time I was at school.

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ABSTRACT

This study analyzed the Church's Responsibility in the Spiritual Nurture of Children: A Case Study of Alere Parish, Amuria Archdeaconry, Church of Uganda. The study was guided by the following objectives; to establish the role of the church in spiritual nurture of children in Alere Parish, to assess the challenges related to knowledge and skills among clergy and church leaders in the spiritual nurture of children in Alere Parish and to explore how collaborative efforts between parents and church leaders can enhance the effectiveness of children's spiritual nurture in Alere Parish. The study adopted a case study research design and a qualitative approach. According to Creswell, J.W. (2013), Qualitative research is a type of research that focuses on exploring and understanding the meaning, experiences, and perspectives of individuals or groups¹. The study revealed that in Alere Parish, the church utilized diverse strategies, such as Sunday School with age-appropriate lessons, storytelling, music, drama, and visual aids, to engage children and foster moral and spiritual growth. Programs like Children's Day, monthly fellowships, bi-weekly meetings, and baptism/confirmation classes provide structured platforms for learning and community building. Parents were encouraged through seminars to be primary spiritual nurturers, aligning with Ephesians 6:4. Initiatives like Bible distribution and children's choirs enhance Scripture access and faith expression. However, challenges include inadequate age-appropriate teaching materials, leading to reduced engagement when adult content is used.

¹ Creswell, J. W. (2013). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches* (3rd ed., pp. 47, 157). Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

According to Barna, (2003), children are the present and the future church and for that reason, there is a need to spiritually nurture them with life skills so as to help them prevail over holistic life challenges (p. 103-132)². This research therefore was crucial because it addressed the role of parents and the knowledge gap among church leaders in effectively guiding children's spiritual growth. Barna (2003), presents that parents play a foundational role in shaping children's faith, yet many lack the necessary skills to do so effectively (p. 42). Bunge, M.J. (2008), emphasizes that church leaders must be adequately trained to bridge this gap, ensuring a holistic approach to children's spiritual development (p. 110). Therefore, this study highlights the urgent need for both parental involvement and enhanced church leadership training in nurturing children's faith.

This chapter explores the background, problem statement, objectives, and other key areas related to the spiritual nurture of children.

1.1 Background of the study

Churches worldwide are committed to the spiritual nurture of children, as they play a central role in their spiritual development and moral upbringing. According to Barna, G. (2003), in his book; *Transforming your Children into Spiritual Champions*, believes that the existence of the church specifically in spiritual nurture is to spontaneously change them from infancy up to young adulthood which will help to guide them

² Barna, G. (2003). *Transforming your Children into Spiritual Champions*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker books.

throughout their spiritual well-being because nurturing children to follow Christ is a service to the children, church, family and God (p. 29). Richards, J. (2013), argues that the church should prioritize children's spiritual growth because early faith formation has a lasting impact and so churches can invest in (p.89)³. It is therefore important for the church to put more strength on spiritual nurture of children.

According to the 1995 Constitution of the Republic of Uganda, as amended, Article 33 outlines the rights of a child (Republic of Uganda, 1995)⁴. While the Constitution serves as the primary legal framework, it provides for the creation of other statutes to address specific issues. However, despite these legal provisions, children still face challenges in terms of social morality, highlighting the need for the Church's involvement. The Church can contribute through the spiritual nurture of children, a process that helps individuals grow into accepted members of the community in a spiritual sense. Spiritual nurturing is crucial, as it ensures children are raised with spiritual values, aligning with the belief that they are created in God's image.

Spiritual nurture of children is a vital ministry that provides great opportunities and carries significant responsibilities for their well-being. The church must prioritize this ministry and ensure that all necessary resources are available to evangelize children effectively. According to Smith, C. (2015), it is crucial to evangelize, especially for children aged 12 to 17, who are increasingly involved in theft, drug abuse, rape, and neglect of church activities, such as Sunday services and fellowships so that they change their mindset from secular to spiritual life (p. 45)⁵.

To address these challenges, both the church and the community must take responsibility for the spiritual growth of children. Jesus emphasized the importance of children in the kingdom of God, saying, "*Let the little children come to me, and do not*

³ Richards, A. (2013). *Children in the Bible and the Church: Raising the next generation*. London, UK: SPCK.

⁴ The 1995 Constitution of the Republic of Uganda, as amended, *Article 33*

⁵ Smith, C. (2015). *Soul Searching: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of American Teenagers*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these” (Mark 10:14, NIV). He also taught that *“whoever takes the lowly position of this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. And whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me”* (Matthew 18:4-5, NIV). Guzik, D. (2013), explains that this passage (Mark 10:14, NIV) highlights the value of childlike humility and trust in entering God's kingdom (p. 10)⁶ and similarly in Matthew 18:4-5, NIV, Jesus teaches that adopting a humble, childlike disposition is essential for greatness in the kingdom of heaven, and welcoming such individuals is akin to welcoming Christ Himself. Barclay, W. (1975), underscores that true greatness in the Christian life is marked by humility and the willingness to serve others, mirroring the unassuming nature of a child (p. 180)⁷. Thus, both passages collectively underscore the significance of humility and the embracing of childlike qualities as prerequisites for entering and being esteemed in the kingdom of God.

1.2 Problem Statement

The spiritual nurture of children is one of the roles the church plays in order to shape the morals and religious foundations of children at an early age. Taking a look at the area of study, children's spiritual formation has become a growing concern because it does not receive ample attention. Though the church conducts Sunday services and other programs like catechism classes, it is done in irregular basis, with limited resources, and always relying on untrained volunteers who are unable to provide spiritual education to children. This means that children may not receive consistent and sustained instruction. Barna, G. (2023), points out that effective spiritual nurture requires a collaborative effort between the church and parents, facilitated by trained church leaders (p.29). Thompson, R. (2006), confirms that many church leaders lack specialized training in child theology and pedagogical skills which limit their ability to

⁶ Guzik, D. (2013). *Mark 10 – Jesus Teaches on Marriage, Riches, and Service*. Retrieved on 14/03/2025 from <https://enduringword.com/bible-commentary/mark-10/>

⁷ Barclay, W. (1975). *The Gospel of Matthew (Vol. 2)*. Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press.

engage children effectively in spiritual matters (p. 32-34)⁸. According to Westerhoff, J.H. (1976), effective nurturing requires intentional faith formation through meaningful relationships, as well as the active involvement of the faith community alongside the family structure (p. 15)⁹. This research will then aim at establishing the role of the church in spiritual nurture, assessing the current challenges in the spiritual nurture of children within the church, focusing on the gaps in training, resources, and consistent programming. It also seeks to explore how collaborative efforts between parents and trained church leaders can enhance the effectiveness of children's spiritual formation.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to assess the church's role in the spiritual formation and moral development of children and consequently impact their lives for the future, and equip them to be able to differentiate between evil and good at a later stage.

1.4 Research Objectives

1. To establish the role of the church in spiritual nurture of children in Alere Parish.
2. To assess the challenges related to knowledge and skills among clergy and church leaders in the spiritual nurture of children in Alere Parish.
3. To explore how collaborative efforts between parents and church leaders can enhance the effectiveness of children's spiritual nurture in Alere Parish.

1.5 Research questions

1. What is the role of the church in spiritual nurture of children in Alere Parish?
2. What challenges do church leaders face regarding knowledge and skills in the spiritual nurture of children?
3. How can collaborative efforts between parents and church leaders enhance the effectiveness of children's spiritual nurture in Alere Parish?

⁸ Thompson, R. (2006). *Spiritual formation in children: Helping children develop a lifelong faith*. Nashville: Abingdon Press

⁹ Westerhoff, J. H. (1976). *Will our children have faith?*. New York: Seabury Press.

1.6.0 Scope of Study

The scope of the study was threefold; geographical, content and time.

1.6.1 Geographical Scope.

The research was centered on the Parish of Alere, located in the north of Amuria Archdeaconry Diocese of Soroti. It is one of the nine parishes in Amuria Archdeaconry in the Diocese of Soroti, currently comprising of eleven sub-parishes.

1.6.2 Content Scope

The study explored the role of the church in the spiritual nurture of children in Alere Parish, examining the efforts of clergy and church leaders in fostering spiritual nurture within the community. It also assessed the challenges faced by church leaders, particularly on gaps in knowledge and skills that affect their ability to effectively nurture children's spirituality. And investigation on collaborative efforts between parents and church leaders was also done; according to Smith, C. (2020), it is vital to investigate how collaborative efforts between parents and church leaders can enhance children's spiritual nurture, ensuring a holistic approach to their growth in faith (p. 45).

1.6.3 Time scope

The research covered the period from 2022 to 2024. This time frame was chosen to capture the results of recent church efforts on the spiritual growth of children. It included data from church records and interviews with clergy, lay leaders, and parents. The focus on recent developments ensured that the findings were relevant to current church strategies for children's spiritual growth. However, past years also provided valuable historical insights.

1.7 Justification

The church's responsibility in the spiritual nurture of children is critical in shaping their moral and religious foundations at an early age. However, in Alere Parish, Amuria Archdeaconry, the spiritual nurture of children has become a growing concern due to insufficient attention, limited resources, and irregular programming. As Barna, G.

(2003), notes, effective spiritual nurture requires collaboration between the church and parents, facilitated by church leaders (p. 29). Moreover, Thompson (2006), also emphasizes that many church leaders lack specialized training in child theology and pedagogical skills, thus limiting their ability to engage children effectively in spiritual matters (pp. 32-34). This research aimed to analyze the church's role in children's spiritual nurture, assessed challenges such as gaps in training, resources, and consistency, and explored how collaborative efforts enhances the effectiveness of spiritual nurture.

1.8 Significance

This analysis may in one way or the other help the church to realize that children are also of more value. As the church helps children grow spiritually, many of them will be able to get out of danger. Some of them have ended up giving their parents to pay for the damages they cause in some cases even losing their lives, especially when they are involved in violence.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

This chapter deals with the review of related literature to the study as per the objectives; to establish the role of the church in spiritual nurture of children, to assess knowledge and skill gap as a challenge faced by the clergy and other church leaders in the spiritual nature of children. To examine the current spiritual well-being of children. The sources of literature are obtained from referenced books, journals, magazines, newspapers, reports, theses, as well as additional publications on spiritual nurture of children.

2.1 The church's role in spiritual nurture of children

2.1.1 Spiritual nurture in terms of Biblical and Theological foundations

Considering the opinions of the experts, there is a focus on the biblical and theological requirement that the church actively participate in the spiritual development of children. Barna,G. (2003) claims that the most crucial time for spiritual development is in early childhood, particularly around the age of thirteen, and that the church should work with parents to offer biblical instruction and guidance (pp. 17-30). According to Fowler, J.W. (1981), discussion of faith development theory, children's spirituality develops in phases and necessitates intentional church attendance (pp. 133-136)¹⁰. Hay et al. (2006), contend that moral education, group worship, and religious teachings should all foster children's natural spirituality (pp. 55-70).

Indian Journal of Positive Psychology (2023), show that most of the research is conducted within the Christian population, making it difficult to generalize to other

¹⁰ Fowler, J. W. (1981). *Stages of faith: The psychology of human development and the meaning*. HarperOne.

religions (pp.53-57). For this case, I suggest that non-religious initiatives are needed to gain a more in-depth understanding of the spirituality of children so that children are spiritually nurtured all round.

2.1.2 Spiritual nurture through church programs and education strategies

In a study of kindergarteners, Mata, M.J. (2016), discovered that kids experience joy, compassion, creativity, and imagination as well as unrestrained spiritual expression in daily activities (p. 140)¹¹. In addition to this, it is necessary to apply children's attachment theory to help school-age children develop their spirituality and knowledge on a deeper level. According to Kilbourn, P. (2013), the church must constantly discuss its faith in Christ in order to be ready for the teachable situations that children will encounter in life (pp. 180-200)¹². This can be accomplished, in my opinion, by pulling rather than pushing, as pushing kids will force them to leave the point being driven to.

Most of the time, church-based programs have an intriguing and big impact on how children develop spiritually. Sunday school, Vacation Bible School, and children's ministries are the main means of evangelization, as demonstrated by Stonehouse et al. (2010) (pp. 77-102). According to Smith et al. (2005), churches that actively involve children in worship and faith-related activities have a greater success rate when it comes to spiritual formation. The significance of role models in spiritual instruction is also emphasized. According to Beckwith, I. (2004) research on intergenerational faith

¹¹ Mata-McMahon, J. (2016); *Reviewing the research in children's spirituality (2005-2015). Proposing a floricultural approach*. The International questionnaire on Children's Spirituality, 21(2), 140-152.

¹² Kilbourn, P. (2013); *Healing for Hurting Hearts*. Washington; CLC Publications

formation, children's ministries need to be integrated with the larger church community in order to promote holistic faith development (pp. 79-94)¹³.

The Children's Act on Cap 59, which is provided by the Government of the Republic of Uganda under the 1995 Constitution, explicitly outlines children's rights. This is fantastic for the upbringing of children because it fosters their holistic development. In my view, citizens should support the government's efforts to implement and execute the laws. The Churchman's Pocket Book and Diary (2024) offers daily lessons that are beneficial to everyone's spiritual development. It is imperative that pastors develop a specific lesson for children each Sunday. For instance, Sunday school lessons should be developed while the children continue to follow their Churchman's Pocket Book for other lessons.

2.2.0 Challenges related to knowledge and skills among clergy and church leaders in the spiritual nurture of children

2.2.1. Limited practical skills in engaging children

Practical abilities are frequently overlooked, despite the fact that theological knowledge is at play. Mercer, J.A. (2005), contends that most of the time, it is difficult for clergy and lay leaders to explain theological ideas to children in terms of their developmental stage¹⁴. Allen et al. (2012), also emphasize that in order to improve the effectiveness of spiritual lessons, interactive teaching methodologies and experimental learning are necessary¹⁵. Looking at this, it is good to say that mentorship programs

¹³Beckwith, I. (2004). *Formational children's ministry: Shaping children using story, ritual, and relationship*. Baker Books.

¹⁴ Mercer, J. A. (2005). *Welcoming children: A practical theology of childhood*. Chalice Press.

¹⁵ Allen, H. C., & Ross, C. L. (2012). *Intergenerational Christian formation: Bringing the whole church together in ministry, community, and worship*. IVP Academic.

that give church leaders kid-friendly teaching strategies are essential as they assist the kids learn useful life skills.

Berding, K. (April 23, 2013), stressed that parents should demonstrate their religion in front of their kids (see Colossians 3:1ff). Since many children may pursue other comprehensive aspects of life that are not spiritual, I believe that parents must be willing to live a life that reflects what their children would be spiritually. On his Reflection 3, Kamoga, A. (June 19, 2022), a student at Capital Seminary and Graduate School, emphasizes that there may be those who would want to use participation in a church-based child program for their own personal goals, which may be twisted rather than pure. In this instance, the Church of Christ must implement child safety policies¹⁶.

2.2.2. Lack of Theological Training in Spiritual Nurture of Children

All of God's people are urged by the Lausanne Occasional Paper 66, (2014); to reveal, oppose, and act against any form of child abuse (p. 3)¹⁷. To do this, the church should be urged to recruit and educate everyone so that they are prepared to not just care for children in distress but also take action to improve their circumstances. Brewster, D. (2011), presents the view that everyone, including children, has an innate spirituality, as evidenced by the fact that everyone is aware that they were made in the image of God¹⁸ (cf. Genesis 1:26 NIV). I think it will be easier for kids to maintain their innate spirituality if they are raised in a trustworthy atmosphere.

According to May et al. (2005), it has also been recognized that churches frequently do not provide adequate funding for theological education for children's spiritual

¹⁶ Kamoga, A. (June 19, 2022). A student of Capital Seminary and Graduate School; *Reflection 3*.

¹⁷ Lausanne Occasional Paper 66, (2014); *Lausanne Consultation on Children at Risk*. Quito; Ecuador.

¹⁸ Brewster, D. (2011); *Child, Church and Mission*. Compassion International.

development programs¹⁹. Children's ministries are often underfunded and occasionally overlooked in finances. Yust et al. (2006), proposes that the success of children's ministry can be improved by offering better resources, such as curriculum guides and teacher training²⁰. In one way or another, a lot of church leaders are not formally trained in the spiritual development of children. For instance, some churches have untrained Sunday school teachers which results in ministry programs that are unproductive.

According to Berryman (1991), theological seminaries are also criticized for failing to sufficiently prepare clergy to serve children. Similar to this, Ratcliff, D. (2004), finds a gap in theological education regarding pedagogy and child development, which has an impact on the standard of spiritual care that church leaders deliver²¹. According to Zimmerman, E. (June 14, 2022), when youngsters express interest, the church must support them²². Additionally, because it wasn't mentioned, I believe that resources should be made available to accomplish this. For instance, Bibles with illustrations should be made available to kids since they learn best when they see them.

¹⁹ May, S., Posterski, B., Stonehouse, C., & Cannell, L. (2005). *Children matter: Celebrating their place in the church, family, and community*. Eerdmans.

²⁰ Yust, K. M., Johnson, A. N., Sasso, S. E., & Roehlkepartain, E. C. (2006). *Nurturing Child and Adolescent Spirituality*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield.

²¹ Ratcliff, D. (2004). *Children's spirituality: Christian perspectives, research, and applications* Cascade Books.

²² Zimmerman, E. (June 14, 2022); *Nurture of children-video*. Capital Seminary

2.3.0 Collaborative efforts between parents and trained church leaders can enhance the effectiveness of children’s spiritual formation.

2.3.1. The role of parents on spiritual nurture of children

Ferguson, R. (2004) highlights how parents play a crucial role in forming a child's spiritual identity. Ferguson contends that parents serve as the primary spiritual instructors in the home, where spiritual development starts. The author emphasizes the value of teaching biblical values, modeling a Christ-like lifestyle, and holding regular family devotions. Ferguson asserts that children's long-term faith formation is significantly impacted by the regularity and intentionality of their parents' spiritual activities (pp. 58-75)²³. Smith, C. and Denton, M.L. (2005) investigate how parents' religious views and practices have a big impact on their kids' spiritual development. The authors come to the conclusion that parents who actively participate in religious activities, like going to church, praying, and having conversations about faith, help their kids develop a better spiritual foundation²⁴.

The disparities in results between parents who are active and passive in their spiritual participation with their children are also examined in the book (pp. 89-102). Christian, D. (2011), explains how parents can establish a faith-based atmosphere in the home and highlights the significance of purposeful spiritual parenting. The book offers a number of doable strategies for parents to foster their kids' spiritual development, such as teaching them the Bible, leading them in prayer, and motivating them to practice their faith in daily situations (pp. 112-130)²⁵. The author highlights that spiritual development is a collaboration between God and parents.

²³ Ferguson, R. (2004). *Faith begins at home: The family journey into spiritual formation*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan.

²⁴ Smith, C., Denton, M. L., & Faris, R. (2005). *The spirit of youth and the church*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic

²⁵ Christian, D. (2011). *Christian Child Development Workers*. Penang, Malaysia: Compassion International.

2.3.2. The role of Church Leaders on spiritual nurture of children

Robertson, L. (2006), emphasizes how important it is for the church to teach children fundamental spiritual lessons. Through age-appropriate biblical lessons, worship activities, and community-building projects. The book further describes how educated church leaders—especially pastors and Sunday school teachers—can effectively interact with children (pp. 56-70)²⁶. Robertson emphasizes how important it is for church leaders to have the necessary training to comprehend child development and the best ways to impart spiritual ideals. Wright, A. (2010), on the other hand, examines the church's larger goal, which includes fostering children's faith. He contends that by offering parents sound guidance, tools, and support, church leaders can help families grow spiritually (pp. 194-215). Wright highlights how qualified church leaders may work with parents to strengthen religion at home and provide a disciplined atmosphere where kids can develop spiritually.

Additionally, Black, W. (2009) looks at church leaders' roles in children's ministry in particular and promotes a comprehensive strategy that incorporates relational ministry and spiritual instruction. He emphasizes how crucial it is that church leaders possess both theological understanding and useful abilities for instructing and interacting with children (pp. 45-58). Black asserts that church leaders with training play a critical role in assisting kids in comprehending and implementing biblical values in their everyday lives²⁷.

2.3.3. The Impact of Parent-Church Leader Collaboration on Children's Spiritual Nurture

In order to improve children's spiritual development, Johnson, M. and Williams, L. (2012), make a strong argument for parents and church leaders working together. The authors present a number of effective case studies in which parents and churches collaborated to develop unified approaches to spiritual formation. The book describes

²⁶ Robertson, L. (2006). *Faith foundations for kids: Teaching children the Bible through experience*. Nashville: Abingdon Press.

²⁷ Black, W. (2009). *The spirit of ministry to children*. Nashville: Broadman & Holman.

how parents and church leaders can greatly enhance children's spiritual development via mutual support, clear communication, and shared responsibility (pp. 80-92)²⁸. In one way or another, Haggard, G. (2014) examines how church leaders might empower and strategically support parents in their endeavors to develop spiritually (pp. 121-138). The book recommends developing educational initiatives that give parents tools to support what their children learn in church and educate them about their role in their spiritual growth.

The study also emphasizes how crucial it is for parents and church leaders to work together to develop an integrated strategy for kids' faith development. Johnson, M. (2015) highlights the significance of creating family-based ministry initiatives that actively include church leaders and parents in this book. According to the author, cooperation between the two groups results in children's lives being more spiritually consistent (pp. 49-60)²⁹. According to Johnson, children's relationship with the church is strengthened and their overall spiritual development is improved when church leaders instruct parents and include them in decision-making.

In a nutshell, these insights pave way for further research especially by providing an overview of how the children are supposed to be nurtured by comparing how it was being done in different areas by different responsible agencies. This helped the researcher to compare how spiritual nurture of children was done in the Parish. This is so because the literature review has helped with different case studies and possibly by following what these different authors did, the researcher was able to realize all the gaps in the parish and suggest a way forward so that children are nurtured spiritually.

²⁸ Johnson, M., & Williams, L. (2012). *Growing faith together: A family-church partnership*. Chicago: Moody Publishers

²⁹Johnson, M. (2015). *Faith that sticks at home: Creating family-based ministry models*. Nashville: Lifeway Press

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

In this research, the methodology that the researcher used was Qualitative. According to Creswell, J.W. (2013), Qualitative research is a type of research that focuses on exploring and understanding the meaning, experiences, and perspectives of individuals or groups. It seeks to capture the richness and complexity of human behavior, interactions, and social phenomena (p. 47). This enabled the researcher to obtain insights which helped to understand the work of the church in regard to spiritual nurture of children.

3.1 Study Population

As stated by Mugenda et al (1999), purposive sampling is suitable in qualitative research especially when “the researcher wishes to extract deeper understanding from specific individuals who possess extensive knowledge about the topic” (p. 50). In this case, the priest was chosen for his key leadership position in the parish’s administration and in overseeing all Christian education initiatives, while lay readers, who are often entrusted with liturgical and teaching duties was selected because of their frequent engagement with the congregation, including children and their parents. The selection of Sunday school teachers is also crucial as they directly engage in the spiritual nurture of children, offering valuable insights into ongoing practices and obstacles. This diverse group of participants ensures that the study encompasses both the strategic and practical aspects of children’s spiritual nurture within the parish.

Sample size.

Sampling design/ techniques and Sampling size among the non-probability sampling techniques, the researcher used the purposive sampling techniques. This enabled the researcher to select only knowledgeable respondents to take part in the research. The sample size of the research study was based on the ten (10) churches of Alere Parish. The key respondents targeted in total were ten (10) people, these include: one (01)

parish priest; four (04) Lay Readers; two (02) Sunday school teachers; one (01) youth and finally two (02) parents.

In qualitative research, having a sample size of 10 interview participants is suitable when the goal is to obtain profound, detailed, and context-rich insights instead of broader universality. Creswell, J.W. (2013) states, “In qualitative inquiry, the intent is not to generalize to a population, but to develop an in-depth exploration of a central phenomenon” (p. 157). This principle aligns with purposive sampling, which aims to identify participants who can offer valuable information pertinent to the research questions. As a result, ten respondents were adequate to digest a variety of opinions and achieve data sufficiency within Alere Parish.

3.2 Research Design

The researcher basically dwelt on empirical data. This data was basically from respondents and critical analysis of the situation that the researcher took time to do. With critical practical study of how the church nurtures children spiritually, it helped the researcher to assess the role of the church in spiritual nurturing of children, investigated the skill and knowledge gaps among church leaders that hinder effective spiritual nurturing of children, and showed how collaborative efforts between parents and church leaders enhanced the effectiveness of children’s spiritual nurture in Alere parish.

This was done by the use of the following research instrument:

3.3.1. Interviews:

These was carried out with one person at a time (individual interviews) or groups of people. They were administered formally and informally. They were also carried out face-to-face and through remote media such as telephone.

Why the researcher used this tool was that it helped to assess the past, present and future responsibility of the church in spiritual nurture of children by asking core set of questions, and also allowed him to ask supplementary questions, and also helped to interact with respondents directly on the topic.

3.4 Data Analysis

The researcher analyzed the church's role in spiritual nurture of children. This was further analyzed in form of subthemes which included; Previous strategies for spiritual nurture of children and Previous Church programs for spiritual nurture of children. The second theme analyzed was; Challenges related to knowledge and skills among clergy and church leaders in the spiritual nurture of children. This also had its subtheme as; Skills and knowledge for effective spiritual nurture of children. Collaborative efforts between parents and Church leaders that can enhance the effectiveness of children's spiritual nurture was also another theme which had; Parental-Church leader collaboration in the spiritual nurture of children and Parental-Church leader programs to strengthen collaboration spiritual nurture of children as subthemes.

This was achieved by collecting data and thereafter was analyzed following the responses given by the interviewees. Using Creswell, J.W. (2014), Qualitative data was analyzed using content analysis, as data analysis in qualitative research is often an ongoing process, where data is continuously collected and analyzed almost simultaneously (p. 199).

3.5 Procedures for data collection.

The researcher obtained a letter of introduction from Uganda Christian University, Bishop Tucker School of Divinity and Theology. The researcher then issued to those with authority to permit him to conduct research in their areas of jurisdiction. After the researcher's interview guides were approved valid and reliable, the researcher collected data from the ten respondents of Alere Parish. While there, the researcher explained the purpose of the research to the respondents in order to build rapport with them and instantly had interview with some of them who were free, scheduled appointments with those who were busy. The researcher used both the formal and informal conversation whereby the researcher would interact with the believers in their homes, church, and some at their work places. This gave them an opportunity to reflect on the matter and would also make them to have interest in the topic.

3.6 Quality and error control

The researcher ensured the validity and reliability of instrument used in data collection through piloting and pre-testing. The researcher ensured that the research is confined to the research design, topic, objectives and research questions in order to get valid results. This was done by formulating interview questions and discussed them with the supervisor to make sure that they are consistent with the research topic. This provided a basis for critical analysis and meaningful conclusions of the study. Reliability on the other hand is like validity which is the way of assessing the quality of the measurement procedure used to collect data in a dissertation. The researcher made sure that the sample has pre-contact before the time of interview giving and the questionnaires. This enabled the researcher to ensure that the topic is well understood by the respondents before the interview guides are given.

3.6 Strategies for data processing and analysis

Data processing and analysis has been guided by the objectives of the study and the research questions. After collecting data, the researcher organized, edited and coded the data. The data has been analyzed by the researcher in a descriptive way in order to arrive at the conclusion of the research as shown by the research findings.

3.7 Limitations

There were hindrances or challenges that the researcher identified before taking a research study and was able to avoid but for those the researcher was unable to avoid, they were minimized. Below are some of them:

The researcher found a problem of extreme cultural traditional practices like some respondent could not understand the interview questions, thus, respondents' inability to give clear response to question. Nevertheless, some respondents were able to ask for elaboration on the question from the researcher and that gave them room to reveal the required information to the topic of study. There was also delay of the respondents in responding to the interviews on time and even some not being able to fill the interview guide at all and this affected the credibility of the research and late compilation, analysis, processing of data for timely submission of the research project.

The researcher solved this by visiting them on the appointed time and also patiently waiting for them.

3.5 Ethical consideration.

Ethical considerations in this study involve obtaining informed consent from parents, guardians, and church leaders before collecting data. According to Bryman, A. (2012), ethical consideration helps the researcher in ensuring that participants understand the purpose and implications of the research (p. 135). Additionally, Creswell, J.W. (2014), confirms that the confidentiality and anonymity of respondents must be maintained to protect their identities and personal beliefs (p. 96). The researcher as Neuman, W.L (2011) suggests, must also uphold objectivity and avoid bias, ensuring that findings accurately reflect participants' perspectives rather than personal opinions (p. 217)³⁰. Lastly, Silverman (2020), points out that the research should aim to benefit the community by providing insights that can strengthen the Church's role in the spiritual nurture of children without causing harm or conflict (p. 78).

³⁰ Neuman, W. L. (2011). *Social research methods: Qualitative and quantitative approaches (7th ed., p. 217)*. Boston: Pearson Education.

CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

4.0 introduction

This chapter presents the findings of the study and the findings are presented thematically according to the objectives of the study.

This was guided by the following themes; The church's role in spiritual nurture of children. This was further put into subthemes which included; Previous strategies for spiritual nurture of children and Previous Church programs for spiritual nurture of children. The second theme was; Challenges related to knowledge and skills among clergy and church leaders in the spiritual nurture of children. This also had its subtheme as; Skills and knowledge for effective spiritual nurture of children. Collaborative efforts between parents and Church leaders that can enhance the effectiveness of children's spiritual nurture was also another theme which had; Parental-Church leader collaboration in the spiritual nurture of children and Parental-Church leader programs to strengthen collaboration in the spiritual nurture of children as subthemes.

4.1.0 THE CHURCH'S ROLE IN SPIRITUAL NURTURE OF CHILDREN.

In Alere Parish, the biblical foundation for nurturing children spiritually begins with the belief that children are a gift from God and must be trained in God's Word from an early age. Proverbs 22:6 (NIV) forms a foundational basis: *“Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old, he will not depart from it.”*

One of the respondents emphasized the teaching of biblical values like obedience, love, and reverence for God through Sunday school. The respondent said, “obedience and love draw us nearer to God” (Respondent 8, Female). For instance, she explained how she reads Bible stories to children using simplified English and Ateso translations. This helped children to grasp foundational truths such as God's love, the life of Jesus, and the Ten Commandments. The church uses illustrated storybooks and sometimes dramatizations to make biblical stories relatable. Also, one of the leaders narrated a case where a child remembered the story of David and Goliath and recited its moral

meaning months later (Respondent 7- Male). Plueddemann, J.E. (2008), notes that biblical teaching must start early to shape a child's worldview (p. 93)³¹.

Another respondent observed that theological grounding is often introduced through basic catechism (Respondent 2, Female). She explained that Catechism is taught during children's fellowship and before baptism and confirmation classes. These teachings are aligned with the Church of Uganda's Anglican theology emphasizing God's grace, sin, salvation, and Christian living. As a lay reader, she shared how children are taught to recite the Apostles' Creed and the Lord's Prayer. This regular repetition allows children to internalize core Christian beliefs. Following on this, one parent gave an example of her child reciting the Nicene Creed during family prayer time, showing how theological instruction in church can impact home life (Respondent 10- Female). This process reflects the view of Thiselton, A. (2007), that theology is not abstract but must become a lived experience, especially in young believers (p. 56). These foundational teachings contribute to the holistic spiritual development of the child.

4.1.1 Previous strategies for spiritual nurture of children

On the side of strategies, one of it mentioned by one respondent was the use of Sunday School as a structured weekly platform for spiritual nurture (Respondent 1, Male). He further said that Sunday School classes are divided by age groups and handled by volunteer teachers, mostly young adults and mothers. Lessons cover topics such as the life of Jesus, moral living, and respect for elders. Teachers employ songs, memory verses, role play, and drawing activities to keep the children engaged. One teacher recounted how she used the story of the Good Samaritan to teach kindness, and the next week, a child was seen helping an injured classmate. He said "children, the story of The Good Samaritan teaches us to be kind to others, especially the sick, the elderly, fellow children and others who need help" (Respondent 8, Male). This method aligns with Piaget, J. (1969), on his theory of cognitive development where he argues that

³¹ Plueddemann, J. E. (2008). *Teaching Across Cultures*. Downers Grove: IVP Academic.

children learn best through interactive and practical activities (p. 84)³². Sunday School in Alere Parish thus becomes both a pedagogical and spiritual avenue for building character.

A respondent also pointed to the theological model of covenant parenting, where parents are seen as the primary spiritual nurturers (Respondent 3-Male). According to Genesis 18:19-NIV, God chose Abraham to command his children in the way of the Lord, a principle echoed in the Church's teachings to parents. Building up on this, another respondent shared how the church organized a parenting seminar that emphasized home devotions and Scripture reading. This inspired her to start reading Psalms with her children each evening. The seminar was facilitated by clergy from Amuria Archdeaconry and stressed Ephesians 6:4 NIV, urging parents not to provoke their children but bring them up in the instruction of the Lord. This parental role according to Tripp, T. (1995), gives theological support to this in his works as he emphasizes that spiritual parenting is shepherding a child's heart, not just behavior (p. 29). The parish thus need to always encourage parents to be the first pastors of their children.

4.1.2 Previous Church programs for spiritual nurture of children.

In terms of programs, monthly youths and children fellowship was identified by many as a key event that spiritually impacts children (Respondent 7- Male). Held during school holidays, youths and children fellowship activities include; Bible teaching, games, crafts, and songs centered around a theme such as "Jesus is my Savior." One child recalled learning about the armor of God and creating a cardboard sword labeled "Word of God." This fellowship is also attended by children from neighboring parishes (Apeduru, Amuria and Amusus), enhancing fellowship. Parents appreciated this initiative as it offers structured and safe engagement during holidays. A clergy member stated that they saw significant improvement in children's confidence in Scripture memorization after the fellowship. This resonates with the idea presented by Nye, R. (2009), that spirituality is most developed in children when it combines knowledge,

³² Piaget, J. (1969). *The Psychology of the Child*. New York: Basic Books.

experience, and community (p. 77)³³. To my view, this fellowship remains a vibrant discipleship tool.

Respondent 9-Male, also indicated that over the past three years, Children's Day events have become an annual highlight where children lead worship services. During this event, children read Scriptures, lead prayers, perform skits, and present songs to the congregation. One elder recounted how a nine-year-old preached about trusting God using the story of Daniel in the lion's den. "Put your trust in God like the way Daniel did..." (Respondent 6-Female). These moments serve to affirm the spiritual agency of children and give them a platform to express their faith. As observed by Bunge, M. J. (2001), that honoring the voice and participation of children in worship cultivates their spiritual identity (p. 19). This is seen as parents often testify of pride and joy when they see their children involved in such services. These days also promote intergenerational unity within the congregation. Children's Day not only recognizes spiritual nurture but celebrates it publicly.

The church has also initiated regular children's fellowship meetings, held bi-weekly on Saturday afternoons. These meetings allow children to come together for Bible reading, prayer, and learning songs. A children's worker testified; "these fellowships have helped children grow in confidence, especially in prayer" (Respondent 8-Male). One memorable moment he gave was when a seven-year-old led an opening prayer for over thirty children without fear. The fellowship also incorporates storytelling and testimonies from older children about how God helped them in school or at home. These shared experiences build spiritual resilience among young members. This aligns with the model of communal discipleship highlighted by Westerhoff, J. (2000), in regards to this, argues that spiritual nurture is more effective when done in community rather than isolation, (p. 66)³⁴. These meetings provide regular spiritual refreshment and mutual encouragement to children especially when they are able to meet with the older ones.

³³ Nye, R. (2009). *Children's Spirituality: What It Is and Why It Matters*. London: Church House Publishing

³⁴ Westerhoff, J. H. (2000). *Will Our Children Have Faith?*. Harrisburg: Morehouse Publishing.

During the interviews, a respondent also noted that the parish conducts baptism and confirmation classes where children and youth are taught the basics of Christian faith (Respondent 2- Female). She said that these classes often take place during the school term holidays and are taught by clergy or lay leaders. In one such class, children learned about the sacraments, the meaning of salvation, and the Ten Commandments. A confirmed teenager explained how the lessons shaped her understanding of Holy Communion. The respondent reported that teenager said, “I now know that Holy Communion is for those who are confirmed” (Respondent 10-Female). To me, these foundational teachings serve as rites of passage into deeper faith engagement. According to Wilhoit, (2008), the systematic structure of these classes reflects the pedagogical model of structured discipleship, which emphasizes intentional teaching before full participation in church life (p. 45). The parish needs to ensure that spiritual nurture is not sporadic but carefully planned.

Another respondent also shared that during Sunday services, a special segment is set aside where children are invited to sing a song or recite a memory verse (Respondent 4-male). This liturgical inclusion affirms their spiritual value and lets them participate meaningfully in the worship space. A grandmother reported how her grandchild eagerly memorized verses to present in church. These brief moments serve to reinforce that children are not just passive attendees but active worshippers. By involving children in the main service, the church embodies Jesus’ teaching in Matthew 19:14 – “Let the little children come to me...” This is always seen when older members are often moved by children’s expressions of faith. This practice, according to Yust et al. (2006), mirrors the theological position that all members, regardless of age, are full participants in the body of Christ (p. 88)³⁵. These acts of inclusion spiritually validate the children.

According to one of the respondents, storytelling is a key method used by teachers and parents in the spiritual nurture of children. She said “Stories from the Bible are used to communicate moral and spiritual lessons” (Respondent 2-Female). For example, the

³⁵ Yust, K. M., Johnson, A. N., Sasso, S. E., & Roehlkepartain, E. C. (2006). *Nurturing Child and Adolescent Spirituality*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield.

story of Joseph is used to teach forgiveness and the importance of dreams. One Sunday school teacher narrated how she shared her own story of answered prayer to inspire trust in God among children. This method is particularly effective in the Iteso culture, where oral tradition holds significant influence. It also reflects a biblical precedent, as Jesus often taught using parables. As Berryman, J. W. (1995), argues that storytelling is essential in spiritual formation because it allows children to see themselves within God's narrative (p. 23)³⁶. In Alere Parish, storytelling bridges theology and everyday life for children.

Another respondent also highlighted the role of music and song in nurturing children's spirituality. She said songs such as ““Jesus Loves Me” and “Read Your Bible, Pray Every Day” are commonly sung during Sunday School and fellowships” (Respondent 8-female). She said that one parent shared how her child would sing these songs during chores at home, creating a devotional environment. Music becomes both a pedagogical tool and a means of worship. She further mentioned that songs with memory verses help children internalize Scripture effortlessly. This approach echoes the thinking of Saliers, D. (1994) who describes music as a formative agent in spiritual life (p. 72). Musical engagement promotes joy, emotional expression, and community bonding. In Alere Parish, spiritual nurturing often begins with a song.

Some respondents also observed that over the last three years, spiritual nurturing has also been facilitated through Bible distribution efforts. With the help of NGOs and diocesan support, the church distributed children's Bibles and Scripture booklets in Ateso and English. One lay reader shared how a ten-year-old boy used his Bible to teach his young siblings of the stories like Jonah and the Whale. “Jonah was eaten by the whale and lived inside for three days and three nights...” (Respondent 5-male). Access to Scripture at home has enabled children to continue learning beyond church hours. Parents were encouraged to read with their children, especially during family devotions. According to Wright, C.J.H. (2010), this practice reinforces the theological

³⁶ Berryman, J. W. (1995). *Godly Play*. Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress

idea that Scripture is central to Christian growth (p. 112)³⁷. Bible access enhances both knowledge and faith. It provides children a foundation for lifelong discipleship.

Another key response involved the involvement of peer learning groups during children's church sessions. Children are often grouped in small units where older or more spiritually mature children assist the younger ones in reading and understanding Scripture. A Sunday school teacher explained, "peer teaching allows leadership development among children" (Respondent 9-male). He emphasized that one girl was seen encouraging her peers during Bible quizzes and helping them memorize verses. This method promotes relational learning and mentorship. As Fowler, J. (1981) suggests, faith development is enhanced when children interact with both peers and role models in faith communities (p. 101)³⁸. Peer interaction within church settings fosters both knowledge-sharing and emotional bonding. Alere Parish has adopted this structure to promote holistic development.

A respondent also appreciated the introduction of drama and skits as tools for spiritual education. "Children dramatize Bible stories during church holidays and special services, which reinforces the lessons they have learned" (Respondent 10-female). One memorable performance was of the parable of the Prodigal Son, where a child's tearful "return" moved the congregation. Skits allow children to emotionally engage with biblical content. He noted that children understand spiritual truths better when they enact them. This method also develops public speaking skills and confidence. It aligns with Gardner, H. (1993) theory of multiple intelligences, especially bodily-kinesthetic and interpersonal learning (p. 149)³⁹. Drama has therefore become an effective spiritual tool.

Several interviewees emphasized the importance of mentorship and role modeling by Sunday school teachers and church elders. Children watch how adults behave and draw lessons from them. One child was reported to have imitated the way a Sunday school teacher prays by kneeling and closing her eyes deeply. The teacher acknowledged that

³⁷ Wright, C. J. H. (2010). *The Mission of God's People*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan.

³⁸ Fowler, J. W. (1981). *Stages of Faith*. San Francisco: Harper & Row.

³⁹ Gardner, H. (1993). *Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences*. New York: Basic Books.

children often learn through observation more than instruction. This reveals the importance of spiritual integrity among church leaders. It echoes Paul's exhortation in 1 Corinthians 11:1, NIV; "Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ." As Palmer, P. (2000) notes, authentic spiritual formation occurs when children see faith embodied in others (p. 53)⁴⁰. In this regard, Alere Parish look to be keen on cultivating such mentorship relationships.

One parent who was interviewed revealed that children's spiritual nurture is also promoted through home-cell fellowships. "These fellowships, often held in family homes, encourage Bible sharing and prayer" (Respondent 3-male). When families host these gatherings, children often participate by reading verses or singing. A father from Alere East shared how his daughter asked to read the devotion verse after watching older youth do it. This exposure to faith practices in informal settings complements what is taught in church. It demonstrates the principle of Deuteronomy 6:7 NIV— "Teach them diligently to your children... when you sit in your house." As Smith, C. (2009), asserts, the transmission of faith is strongest when both home and church work in unity (p. 119)⁴¹. Home-cell settings enrich the faith environment.

Another recent initiative was the integration of child-focused prayer sessions during midweek services. These sessions involve a short devotion followed by prayers led by or for children. Chairperson lay readers shared that children were encouraged to pray aloud for their families, teachers, and needs. One touching testimony given by him was of a child praying for peace in her home after hearing a sermon about Jesus calming the storm. "Jesus, we pray that you give us peace..." (Respondent 4-male). These moments provide emotional and spiritual release for children. The sessions also teach children that prayer is a normal and powerful part of daily life. According to Foster, R. (1998)⁴², spiritual disciplines like prayer must be modeled early if they are to become lifelong habits (p. 44). These prayer times give children a voice before God.

⁴⁰ Palmer, P. J. (2000). *Let Your Life Speak*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

⁴¹ Smith, C. (2009). *Souls in Transition*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

⁴² Foster, R. J. (1998). *Celebration of Discipline*. San Francisco: HarperOne.

An Interviewee noted the use of visual teaching aids such as posters, charts, and flashcards in Sunday School help children to understand what is taught quickly. “These tools help children to relate images with biblical content” (Respondent 7-male). For instance, a poster showing Noah’s Ark helped younger children visualize the story and remember its key lessons. Teachers also use memory verse charts that are updated weekly, and children receive stickers for verses learned. These visual reinforcements increase memory retention. A child proudly displayed her reward chart to her parents, explaining each verse she had memorized. This strategy reflects Bruner, J. (1966), reflects this strategy in his theory that learning is improved through visual scaffolding (p. 93). Visual tools have made learning more engaging in Alere Parish.

A key respondent also shared that spiritual nurture is supported through structured children’s choirs (Respondent 8-female). These choirs meet weekly to learn spiritual songs and perform them during services. Through this, children not only learn music but also the meaning behind lyrics that talk about faith, love, and obedience. One choir leader is said to have recalled how a child asked about the meaning of the line “Jesus is my rock” during rehearsal, prompting a discussion about trust in God. Choir membership builds commitment and discipline. It also fosters a sense of belonging and shared purpose. Long, T. (2001), points out that music in worship is not just artistic but deeply formational (p. 88).

4.2.0 CHALLENGES RELATED TO KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS AMONG CLERGY AND CHURCH LEADERS IN THE SPIRITUAL NURTURE OF CHILDREN

Church leaders in Alere Parish often face the challenge of inadequate teaching materials tailored to children’s spiritual development. “Many Sunday School teachers rely on adult content, making lessons difficult for children to understand” (Respondent 1, Male). For instance, one leader used the Book of Common Prayer with Primary 2 children, leading to confusion because the content is not simplified to the children’s cognitive level, which reduces engagement. Also church elder shared that children often look distracted because they do not comprehend the scriptures as delivered. This

scenario reflects the need for age-appropriate Christian education resources. As Westerhoff, J. (1976), emphasizes that faith formation in children requires materials that speak to their stage of development (p. 43)⁴³. Illustratively, when using flannel graph stories, children are more attentive and respond with questions, showing deeper interest and learning.

Another challenge cited by leaders was the limited time allocated to children's ministry during Sunday services. Most churches dedicate only 15-20 minutes for children before resuming the main service. This time is insufficient for meaningful teaching or spiritual discussion. One Sunday School teacher noted, "By the time we settle down the children, it's already time to return them to their parents." (Respondent 7-male). This brief moment does not allow children to internalize Christian teachings. According to Berryman, J.W. (2009), children need uninterrupted space and time to reflect on biblical narratives (p. 97)⁴⁴. A case in point is one of the churches in the parish extended children's service to 45 minutes, resulting in improved comprehension. Children began recalling and narrating Bible stories with clarity during home visits.

Church leaders often lack formal training in child psychology and pedagogy, which affects how they communicate spiritual truths to children. One lay leader shared, "I have never received training on how children process information..." (Respondent 3-male). Consequently, his teaching method mimicked adult Bible study. This mismatch makes spiritual teaching ineffective. Children get easily distracted when the mode of teaching doesn't engage them actively. Foster, C. (1981), underscores that knowing how children learn is essential in spiritual formation (p. 25)⁴⁵. For example, when a trained volunteer introduced storytelling and dramatization, children participated more and remembered the lessons longer. This highlights the impact of skills in child-centered pedagogy.

⁴⁴ Berryman, J. W. (2009). *Children and the theologians: Clearing the way for grace*. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press

⁴⁵ Foster, C. R. (1981). *Teaching children faith: A guide for teachers and parents*. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press

Church leaders in Alere also experience language barriers when teaching children. While English is used in the main church service, especially in two churches which have two services; English and Ateso, many children understand only Ateso. This language gap hinders the effective transmission of biblical messages. A children's leader lamented, "We teach in English but most of the children respond better when you switch to Ateso." (Respondent 8-female) This reveals a lack of bilingual teaching approaches. As Nutbrown et al. (2010), suggest, children learn best when teaching aligns with their linguistic and cultural context (p. 84)⁴⁶. An illustration is a church where memory verses are recited first in Ateso and then in English, leads to better memorization and understanding. This bilingual method encourages inclusivity and retention.

Limited parental involvement is another challenge facing church leaders. Many parents in Alere Parish do not prioritize their children's spiritual growth. One leader shared, "even when children's events are organized, few parents support or attend" (Respondent 1-male). This disconnect affects consistency in the child's spiritual journey. When parents fail to model Christian behavior, it creates confusion for children. According to Fowler, J. (1981), faith development is greatly influenced by parental modeling and home reinforcement (p. 125). For example, a child who actively recites prayers in Sunday School may not continue at home without parental reinforcement⁴⁷. Leaders therefore feel they are working against the tide without parental collaboration.

Church leaders also face the challenge of irregular attendance by children, which disrupts the continuity of spiritual learning. Many children attend Sunday School inconsistently due to domestic chores or parental neglect. A Sunday School teacher said "some children only attend church during Easter and Christmas seasons making consistency in teaching difficult" (Respondent 2-female). This sporadic attendance

⁴⁶ Nutbrown, C., Clough, P., & Selbie, P. (2010). *Early childhood education: History, philosophy and experience*. London, UK: SAGE Publications

⁴⁷ Fowler, J. W. (1981). *Stages of faith: The psychology of human development and the quest for meaning*. San Francisco: Harper & Row

limits the effectiveness of long-term spiritual formation. Narramore, B. (1980), emphasized that spiritual growth in children is cumulative and requires regular, sequential input (p. 112)⁴⁸. For example, a group of children in the parish who consistently attended for six weeks demonstrated clearer understanding of prayer and Bible verses than those attending irregularly. Without regular attendance, lessons often need to be repeated, which frustrates both teachers and attentive children. Thus, continuity in attendance is essential for growth.

Another obstacle is the absence of structured children's ministry programs. In many churches in Alere Parish, Sunday School lacks a curriculum or yearly teaching plan. A clergy member shared, "We just choose random Bible stories each Sunday without a clear plan." (Respondent 1-male) This lack of structure results in uncoordinated spiritual education, missing key themes such as salvation or forgiveness. Bunge, M. (2001), notes that children's theology must be shaped through a systematic and holistic approach (p. 293). For instance, a parish that adopted a one-year curriculum covering creation, Jesus' life, and Christian virtues saw improved comprehension. Teachers also became more confident knowing what to teach next. A structured plan leads to cumulative learning and better outcomes.

Church leaders also reported limited financial support for children's ministry. In most parishes, the church budget allocates more funds to adult programs, neglecting the needs of children. One children's leader lamented, "We don't have enough crayons or Bible storybooks, so we just tell the stories." (Respondent 7-male). The lack of visual aids and interactive materials makes it difficult to capture children's attention. Csinos, D. (2011), also emphasizes that resources like puppets, coloring books, and storyboards

⁴⁸ Narramore, B. (1980). *Parenting teens: Understanding and guiding the adolescent*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan.

enhance spiritual formation (p. 76)⁴⁹. An example is a church in the parish that invested in visual aids and saw a rise in attendance and retention. Children started bringing their friends because lessons became fun and engaging. Thus, investing in resources is crucial for effective teaching.

Church leaders also struggle with cultural perceptions that undermine children's value in the church. In some Iteso communities, children are not considered capable of engaging with spiritual matters. A lay reader explained, "Some elders think children should just sit and listen, not ask questions." (Respondent 3-male). This perspective stifles children's curiosity and faith expression. Berryman, J.W. (2009), argues that children must be seen as active participants in God's story, not passive recipients (p. 65). For instance, in a parish that allowed children to act out Bible stories, leaders observed deeper engagement and joy. Children even began leading short prayers during family services. Changing cultural attitudes is therefore essential to empowering children spiritually.

Church leaders in Alere often do not collaborate with local schools in nurturing children's spirituality. This leads to a disconnect between faith taught at church and what children experience in school. A youth worker noted that "teachers in nearby schools rarely incorporate Christian values unless it's a Scripture class, yet most children spend more hours in school than at home or church" (Respondent 5-male). Hull, J. (1984), asserts that holistic faith formation must include both church and school settings (p. 54)⁵⁰. In one successful model from Kampala, church leaders partnered with headteachers to include daily devotions and Bible quizzes. This created reinforcement

⁴⁹ Csinos, D. M. (2011). *Children's ministry that fits: Beyond one-size-fits-all approaches to nurture*. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock.

⁵⁰ Hull, J. M. (1984). *School worship: An obituary*. London, UK: SCM Press.

and consistency in values. Therefore, stronger school-church partnerships can enhance spiritual growth.

Another challenge is that some clergy and lay leaders feel spiritually under-equipped, impacting their ability to guide children effectively. One admitted, “Sometimes I feel like I am repeating what I heard from my own Sunday School days.” (Respondent 8-female). This lack of confidence stems from limited theological training focused on children’s ministry. Lawson, K.E. (2012), stresses that leaders must first deepen their own faith to effectively nurture others (p. 141). When leaders engage in regular Bible study and devotion, they model genuine faith that children can emulate. A youth leader who recently joined a discipleship course reported improved confidence in teaching children. He began preparing better and asking questions about how to apply scripture to a child’s life. This shows that spiritual renewal among leaders positively affects their ministry to children.

Church leaders in Alere Parish also identified the lack of child protection and safety training as a key limitation. Many leaders do not know how to identify or respond to abuse or neglect among children in their congregations. Someone recalled a child who stopped attending due to abuse at home, but the team didn’t know how to intervene (Respondent 3-male). This lack of knowledge makes the church an unsafe or ineffective refuge. According to Moore, M.E. (2004), the church must be a sanctuary of trust, which requires awareness and training in child protection (p. 204). In one urban parish, leaders underwent basic child safeguarding training and began monitoring child wellbeing more effectively. As a result, cases of absenteeism reduced due to timely pastoral care. This indicates the necessity of equipping leaders in both spiritual and protective care.

Inadequate mentorship of younger church leaders is also affecting the continuity and growth of children’s ministry. One elderly member said, “We are not grooming the next generation to take over children’s ministry.” (Respondent 9-male) Without mentorship, the few passionate leaders burn out or leave. As Martinson, R. (2006), explains that mentoring helps transfer wisdom and skill across generations (p. 173). In one model program, older lay readers paired with youth leaders to co-teach Sunday School,

fostering both learning and accountability. The youth leaders developed confidence and enthusiasm, eventually leading children's Bible clubs in their neighborhoods. This partnership exemplifies how mentorship can strengthen ministry. Leaders in Alere expressed interest in structured mentorship programs.

There is also a lack of regular evaluation and feedback systems for children's ministry in Alere. Church leaders often continue with outdated methods without assessing their effectiveness. A children's teacher stated, "We've never asked the children what they think or how they feel about Sunday School." (Respondent 1-male). This absence of feedback ignores the needs and experiences of the children. According to Stonehouse, C. (1998), listening to children helps the church adapt teaching methods that meet their spiritual needs (p. 92). For example, a church in Mbale conducted simple evaluations through drawings and verbal responses, discovering that children preferred stories and singing to lectures. They then revised the structure of their Sunday School sessions⁵¹. This shows that regular feedback enriches teaching and improves spiritual engagement.

Church leaders have also observed that many children come from families with religious pluralism or inconsistent spiritual guidance. In Alere, some parents practice traditional religion alongside Christianity, which confuses the children. One church elder said, "Children are taught to pray on Sunday, but also attend traditional ceremonies during the week." (Respondent 9-male). This dual influence creates conflicting beliefs and weakens Christian identity. Caldwell, E. (2006), affirms that children require consistent messages to form clear faith convictions (p. 57). A clear illustration comes from a child who expressed confusion during class about whether ancestral spirits and Jesus both needed offerings. Teachers had to clarify the uniqueness of the Christian faith repeatedly. This shows the need for leaders to understand and address such dual-belief environments with clarity.

⁵¹ Stonehouse, C. (1998). *Joining children on the spiritual journey: Nurturing a life of faith*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books

A lack of collaboration between clergy and lay leaders was also cited as a challenge in children's spiritual formation. In some parishes, Sunday School is seen solely as the role of lay volunteers, while clergy focus on adult congregants. A lay reader explained, "The priest never attends our children's sessions or checks on our progress." (Respondent 2-female). This detachment reduces morale and limits the integration of children into the broader worship life. According to Beckwith, I. (2004), says that when clergy and lay leaders collaborate, children feel more connected to the whole church (p. 109)⁵². In a church where clergy occasionally visited children's classes, children felt valued and respected. Some began joining the main service more confidently. This shows that shared leadership fosters inclusion and affirmation.

4.2.1 Skills and knowledge for effective spiritual nurture of children

Some respondents pointed to the need for improved storytelling skills among those teaching children. Most leaders rely heavily on reading Bible texts without engaging storytelling techniques. A Sunday School teacher noted, "When I try to tell stories from memory, the children enjoy more than when I read." This indicates the importance of storytelling as a spiritual teaching tool. Berryman, J. W. (1995), highlights that narrative-based teaching forms the core of children's spiritual development (p. 34). For example, when Bible stories were told using props and dramatization, children retained the content better and shared it with their peers. Leaders acknowledged the need for training in storytelling, voice modulation, and dramatization. Enhancing storytelling can make spiritual truths more relatable.

Clergy and lay leaders also expressed a need for theological grounding specific to children's issues. While many leaders have general Bible knowledge, they struggle with interpreting doctrines like sin, salvation, and grace in child-friendly language. One member said, "I find it hard to explain repentance to a five-year-old." (Respondent 1-male). This results in oversimplified or inaccurate teachings. Richards, A. (2013), in his

⁵² Beckwith, I. (2004). *Postmodern children's ministry: Ministry to children in the 21st century church*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

book, suggests that theology for children must be developed thoughtfully, respecting both their capacity and limitations (p. 74). In one church, leaders developed simplified doctrinal guides and used analogies from daily life, improving understanding. A child was once heard explaining salvation using a story about getting lost and being found by a parent. Such outcomes indicate the value of theological literacy for children's educators.

Respondents also mentioned the need for training in creative arts as tools for teaching. Many children are drawn to music, drama, and crafts, yet few leaders incorporate these into lessons. Someone said, "If I knew how to lead a song with actions, I think the children would love it more." (Respondent 3-Male). Creativity not only engages children but also reinforces learning through multisensory methods. Campbell, P.S. (2010), argues that music and the arts provide meaningful pathways to spiritual expression (p. 133)⁵³. In one church, introducing rhythm songs and handcraft activities doubled the children's attendance. Children were proud to display their crafts and remembered the associated lessons. Training in the arts can enhance spiritual engagement and enjoyment.

In a nutshell, leaders expressed a desire for contextual training that integrates Iteso culture with Christian faith. Some noted that Western teaching models are not always relevant to their community context. One leader stated, "The children don't understand examples about snow or skyscrapers." (Respondent 1-Male). This cultural disconnect weakens the impact of spiritual teaching. Magesa, L. (2004), stresses that inculturation is key to effective Christian communication in African contexts (p. 115)⁵⁴. For instance, using Ateso proverbs and local parables has helped children understand

⁵³ Campbell, P. S. (2010). *Songs in their heads: Music and its meaning in children's lives (2nd ed.)*. New York: Oxford University Press.

⁵⁴ Magesa, L. (2004). *Anatomy of inculturation: Transforming the church in Africa*. Maryknoll: Orbis Books.

biblical truths better. A teacher used a common story about herding goats to explain Jesus as the Good Shepherd, and the children grasped the meaning clearly. Contextualized training empowers leaders to teach with relevance and impact.

4.3.0 THE COLLABORATIVE EFFORTS BETWEEN PARENTS AND TRAINED CHURCH LEADERS THAT CAN ENHANCE THE EFFECTIVENESS OF CHILDREN'S SPIRITUAL NURTURE.

4.3.1 Parental-Church leader collaboration in the spiritual nurture of children.

In Alere Parish, many parents collaborate with church leaders through weekly family fellowship programs. These fellowships often provide structured Bible study plans for parents to implement at home. Parents report that clergy provide them with simplified materials during Sunday services to aid their children's spiritual growth. One mother explained "the parish priest visits families monthly to offer pastoral guidance and spiritual support" (Respondent 10-female). This collaboration has helped bridge the gap between Sunday teachings and weekday home applications. According to Fowler, J.W. (1981), spiritual formation requires continuity between home and church environments (p. 93). When parents and leaders share a vision for discipleship, children benefit from consistent nurturing. This alignment has proven essential in laying a strong Christian foundation in children.

Another form of collaboration observed in Alere Parish is the co-leading of children's church services by both parents and church workers. Parents are guided to tell Bible stories, lead songs, and guide discussions in age-appropriate ways. This model allows children to see their parents as spiritual mentors, not just caregivers. One example comes from a father who regularly leads the opening prayer at the children's service, reinforcing the value of male spiritual leadership. According to Westerhoff, J. (1976), spiritual formation is caught more than taught, meaning children absorb faith from observing adult practices (p. 56). The visible unity between parents and church leaders sends a powerful message of spiritual coherence. This co-leadership has enhanced the

children's trust and engagement during church activities. It reflects a holistic approach to child faith formation.

Regular parenting seminars held at the parish compound serve as key platforms for collaboration. Church leaders offer teaching on biblical parenting, discipline, and modeling Christian virtues. These seminars are often well attended, and parents are given practical handbooks to take home. A recent session emphasized Proverbs 22:6 NIV and its implication on consistent Christian parenting. A mother testified, "the seminar's teachings helped in reducing my child's aggressive behavior" (Respondent 10-female). In their work, Marva J. D. and Eugene P. (2000), stress that parental consistency is vital for moral and spiritual development (p. 78). The partnership created through such seminars empowers parents to play active spiritual roles at home. Consequently, children grow in environments that echo both parental and pastoral voices.

Parents and church leaders also collaborate during children's retreats and holiday Bible camps. These events involve parents as volunteers who help supervise, teach, or provide meals. A recent camp organized at the parish grounds included a "Parent-Child Prayer Hour" that drew deep emotional connections. A respondent reported that one child reportedly said, "I never knew my father could pray like that," (Respondent 1-male) reflecting a transformative moment. According to Csinos, D. and Beckwith, I. (2013), shared spiritual experiences like retreats promote intergenerational faith transmission (p. 103). The joint engagement during such events fosters relational and spiritual bonding. These camps also provide church leaders with a chance to mentor parents informally. This collaboration builds trust and models discipleship in community.

4.3.2. Parental-Church leader programs to strengthen collaboration spiritual nurture of children

A specific program introduced to strengthen this collaboration is the "Home Discipleship Initiative." Under this, church leaders visit households bi-weekly to mentor both parents and children. These visits involve joint Bible reading, hymn singing, and prayer. A family from Akisim zone shared, "this program revived our nightly devotions"

(Respondent 6-female). They described their home becoming a “mini-church” as children began volunteering to lead prayers. This reflects Foster, R. (1978) emphasis on intentional Christian practices within households (p. 79)⁵⁵. The consistency and shared effort by both parents and church mentors create a nurturing discipleship environment. This initiative has led to noticeable spiritual maturity in participating families.

Alere Parish has also launched a “Faith Builders Program” targeting both parents and children. This program includes weekly home assignments, scripture memorization challenges, and reward systems. Church leaders design the curriculum, but parents supervise its implementation. A recent assignment involved memorizing the Lord’s Prayer, and several children recited it during a Sunday service. One father remarked, “I also had to memorize it so I could help my son,” highlighting joint spiritual growth (respondent 9-male). According to Stonehouse, C. (1998), shared faith activities at home deepen children’s perception of God’s presence (. 115). This mutual learning experience reflects the spirit of Deuteronomy 6:6-9. It fosters an integrated faith life involving both family and church.

During school holidays, Alere Parish organizes “Family Faith Clinics” where both parents and children attend spiritual growth workshops. These clinics are structured around themes like prayer, obedience, and forgiveness. Parents share testimonies and participate in role-playing to illustrate biblical values. Children then mirror these practices through skits and songs. One child was reported to have said, “I now understand what forgiveness means because Daddy said sorry in front of everyone.” (Respondent 8-female) This example affirms the impact of vulnerable modeling by parents. As articulated by Gangel, K. (2003), spiritual modeling is more powerful than instruction (p. 122)⁵⁶. These clinics create an environment where learning is both experiential and communal.

⁵⁵ Foster, R. (1978). *Celebration of Discipline*. San Francisco: Harper & Row.

⁵⁶ Gangel, K. O. (2003). *Family Ministry*. Eugene: Wipf and Stock.

Sunday school teacher-parent meetings have become routine in Alere Parish. These meetings review children's spiritual progress, behavioral challenges, and learning styles. Parents are advised on how to reinforce the weekly lessons at home. A recent meeting included a session on "Praying with Your Child," where parents practiced guided prayers. One parent said, "this has helped my child sleep peacefully after nightly prayers began" (Respondent 9-male). Such practical strategies underscore the importance of intentional home spirituality. Hendricks, H. (1987), emphasizes that regular evaluation strengthens educational effectiveness (p. 65)⁵⁷. This feedback loop between teachers and parents enhances children's discipleship.

The use of WhatsApp groups by Sunday school ministries has modernized collaboration. These groups share weekly lessons, prayer points, and devotion suggestions for families. A mother shared that she prints out the devotional sent by the Sunday school teacher and reads it with her children before bedtime (Respondent 8-female). The real-time updates help keep parents engaged with the church's spiritual agenda. One catechist said, "The phone became my pulpit during the week." (Respondent 3-Male). This reflects the adaptable nature of digital discipleship. As Challies, T. (2011), points out, technology can enhance spiritual growth when used wisely (p. 144)⁵⁸. These platforms bridge the church-home divide and sustain spiritual conversations.

In efforts to train parents, Alere Parish initiated the "Parent-Teacher Spiritual Bootcamp." This is a 3-day residential program offering workshops, prayer sessions, and spiritual reflection. Parents are grouped into prayer cells that remain active even after the bootcamp. One parent reported, "I have a newfound confidence in leading Bible studies at home" (Respondent 3-male). This program emphasized Ephesians 6:4 NIV, urging fathers not to provoke but to instruct children in the Lord. According to Holmen, M. (2005) spiritual parenting requires equipping not just encouragement (p. 39). This

⁵⁷ Hendricks, H. (1987). *Teaching to Change Lives*. Colorado Springs: Multnomah Books.

⁵⁸ Challies, T. (2011). *The Next Story*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan.

bootcamp equips parents with both the theology and the methods. It's a key initiative in strengthening collaboration and confidence.

Another collaborative initiative in Alere Parish is the "Children's Worship Training Sessions." These sessions are conducted monthly and include parents and children practicing worship songs and learning liturgical roles. Parents help their children understand the meaning behind worship actions, such as kneeling, clapping, or lifting hands. A child was reported to have shared, "My mother told me that kneeling is how we show respect to God." This simple act of teaching promotes intergenerational understanding of worship (Respondent 1-male). According to Webber, R. (1994), worship is one of the primary avenues for spiritual formation (p. 49). When parents and leaders train children together, it strengthens spiritual identity. These sessions model worship as a shared family experience, not just a Sunday ritual.

Alere Parish also introduced the "Faith Talk Initiative," which encourages parents to engage children in spiritual conversations during ordinary moments. Church leaders offer prompts like "What do you think God is like?" or "Why do we pray?" Parents are trained to initiate these talks during meals, walks, or chores. One father recounted asking his daughter about Jesus while fetching water by asking, "Did Jesus really walk on water at the sea of Galilee?", sparking a 20-minute gospel talk (Respondent 9-male). According to Powell, K and Clark, C. (2011), faith becomes real when integrated into daily life (p. 77). This initiative demystifies spiritual conversations and equips parents with confidence⁵⁹. Children learn that faith is part of everyday life, not confined to church spaces. This creates a holistic spiritual atmosphere.

Church leaders and parents also collaborate in disciplinary roles rooted in Christian values. When behavioral concerns arise, Sunday school teachers consult with parents to discuss spiritual responses rather than mere punishment. A Lay Reader mentioned how he guided a mother to address her son's lying through a Bible story on honesty.

⁵⁹ Powell, K., & Clark, C. (2011). *Sticky Faith*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan.

The boy was said to have later apologized in class, saying, “I want to be like Samuel, who listened to God.” (Respondent 3-male). This approach, grounded in biblical ethics, brings restoration rather than condemnation. As Tripp, T. (1995) argues, discipline should aim for heart transformation, not just behavior control (p. 105). Collaborative discipline affirms both parental authority and spiritual care. It strengthens trust between church and home.

Alere Parish emphasizes storytelling as a joint learning method between parents and children. Through the “Bible Story Evenings,” families meet in small groups once a month to share Bible narratives. Parents tell stories in their local language (Ateso), making scripture accessible and culturally relevant. One evening featured the story of David and Goliath, and children acted out the story afterward. A mother said, “My child now believes God can help with his school fears because of David’s story.” (Respondent 8-female). This aligns with Brueggemann, W. (1982) view that storytelling is vital in shaping faith identity (p. 29). These evenings make theology come alive in the home. They serve as communal learning and bonding opportunities.

Collaboration also occurs through the “Children’s Choir,” where both parents and leaders serve as trainers and mentors. Parents teach traditional hymns while leaders introduce modern gospel songs, blending cultural and theological richness. One choir event featured a child singing a solo taught by her mother. The audience clapped as the mother cried tears of joy. This blending of roles and music reflects the holistic nature of worship formation. Hustad, D. (1993), explains that music is a vehicle for deep theological education (p. 66)⁶⁰. When parents and leaders train children in worship, the faith experience becomes multi-sensory and intergenerational. The choir becomes a tool for discipling and bonding.

The Parish has a mentorship scheme called “Family Faith Pairs,” where a church leader is assigned to mentor a specific family for one year. This includes monthly check-ins,

⁶⁰ Hustad, D. (1993). *Jubilate II*. Carol Stream: Hope Publishing.

shared prayer times, and spiritual planning. A mother testified, “Our mentor helped organize a weekly devotion schedule for our home” (Respondent 6-female). Her son, previously disinterested in church, now volunteers as a Bible reader. This mentorship provides customized spiritual coaching. According to Bonhoeffer, D. (1954), Christian life grows best in small, accountable fellowship (p. 38). These pairings ensure sustained support and relationship. They exemplify discipleship as a relational journey.

Another significant practice is involving parents in children's baptism and confirmation preparation classes. Parents attend classes alongside their children, learning doctrines and spiritual disciplines together. One child was reported to have said, “Now I know why I was baptized because my father explained it to me at home.” (Respondent 10-Female). This strengthens theological understanding and family unity. According to Groome, T. (1980), participatory catechesis shapes both belief and behavior (p. 121)⁶¹. By learning together, parents’ model lifelong discipleship. The joint preparation also reaffirms parental responsibility in guiding spiritual milestones. It connects faith knowledge with family practice.

The church has established a “Prayer Sponsor Program” where parents volunteer to pray for children other than their own. This widens the spiritual net of care. One woman shared how she writes to her sponsored child a weekly note with a prayer. The child reportedly keeps the notes in her Bible. This program fosters a culture of intercession and spiritual adoption. According to Nouwen, H. (1975), praying for others forms deep spiritual bonds (p. 89)⁶². It builds a spiritual village where children feel surrounded by love. Collaboration now extends beyond nuclear families into the wider parish body.

Trained leaders have also introduced “Faith Reflection Journals” for parents and children to fill out together. These journals include weekly prompts like “What did we

⁶¹ Groome, T. (1980). *Christian Religious Education*. San Francisco: Harper & Row.

⁶² Nouwen, H. (1975). *Reaching Out*. New York, NY: Doubleday.

learn about God this week?” or “What are we praying for as a family?” Parents write their thoughts while children draw or write theirs. A father from Opolangor C.O.U shared, “this has helped me to improve my child’s expression of emotions” (Respondent 9-Male). This initiative fosters dialogue and reflection. According to Miller, L. (2015), spiritual journaling strengthens emotional and spiritual awareness (p. 138). The journal becomes a spiritual mirror for the family. It supports intentional growth and memory building.

Finally, the Parish introduced a “Family Commissioning Service” at the start of each school term. Parents and children are prayed for at the altar and commissioned to live faithfully at school and at home. Parents declare a pledge to support their child’s spiritual growth. A report received from the school teacher was that one child said, “When I see Daddy kneel with me, I feel brave to face school.” (Respondent 1-Male). This symbolic act links church worship with home living. As Smith, J.K.A. (2009), suggests, liturgical practices shape our desires and daily habits (p. 45). The service reinforces spiritual partnership and accountability. It renews vision for collaborative discipleship every term.

CHAPTER FIVE: RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION.

5.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the recommendations and conclusions of the study based on the study findings.

The study key findings include; inadequate formal training in child psychology and pedagogy, language barriers which exists during Sunday school classes, lack of effective evaluation on Sunday school and other programs, inconsistency on Home Discipleship Initiative and lack of distinctiveness on teaching Christian faith by leaders in a clear and consistent manner which has resulted to Christian pluralism.

This study's findings led to the following recommendations:

5.1 Recommendations

1. First and foremost, Sunday school teachers and church leaders should be sponsored to pursue formal training in child psychology and pedagogy through in-service programs.
2. In order to break language barriers, the churches in Alere Parish should use both Ateso and English to get around language barriers. As demonstrated by successful cases where children demonstrated improved retention, memory verses and stories ought to be told in both languages.
3. Home Discipleship Initiative should be promoted through interventions like home-cell fellowships, and frequent parenting seminars in order for the churches in Alere Parish to step up their efforts to engage parents.
4. The effectiveness of Sunday school and other programs should be evaluated by the church using feedback mechanisms like surveys or focus groups with parents and kids. To guarantee relevance and engagement, revisions can be guided by straightforward assessments.
5. The distinctiveness of the Christian faith should be taught by leaders in a clear and consistent manner to combat the confusion caused by religious pluralism. Christian identity for children can be clarified through workshops for parents and

teachers that address dual beliefs using culturally appropriate analogies, such as local stories.

5.2 Conclusions

In conclusion, Alere Parish shows a strong dedication to helping children grow spiritually but the parish could have more impact if it dealt with the problems that have been found and effectively implement the suggested recommendations like training, investing in resources, and making things more culturally relevant. Therefore, through parents and church leaders working together more closely, they will be able to meet the biblical requirement to teach children the right way. This will sure that kids grow up to be responsible and faithful members of the church.

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APPENDIXES

CONSENT LETTER FOR RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

Dear Participant,

I am a student conducting a study titled “An Analysis of the Church’s Responsibility in the Spiritual Nurture of Children: A Case Study of Alere Parish, Amuria Archdeaconry, Church of Uganda.” The purpose of this research is to explore the role of the Church and parents in the spiritual nurture of children within the parish context. Your experience, insights, and perspectives are vital to the success of this study.

You are kindly invited to participate in this research through an interview. Participation is entirely voluntary, and you have the right to decline or withdraw from the interview at any stage without any negative consequences. The interview will take approximately 30-45 minutes, and your responses will be kept strictly confidential. No identifying information will be published or shared in the final report. The information you provide will be used strictly for academic purposes.

There are no known physical or psychological risks associated with your participation. Your identity will be protected using pseudonyms, and all data collected will be securely stored.

By signing this form, you confirm that you have read and understood the information provided above, and you willingly agree to participate in this study.

Thank you for your time and valuable contribution.

Sincerely,

.....

Eyoku Vicent

Uganda Christian University

0789946139 or eyokuvicent@gmail.com

Participant's gender Signature.....
Date.....

Interview Guide

Dear respondent, my name is Vicent Eyoku, an undergraduate student from Uganda Christian University, conducting research for the award of a Bachelor’s Degree in Divinity of Uganda Christian University. I am researching on; “The church’s responsibility in the spiritual nurture of children: A case study of Alere parish”. With honesty as you can, I kindly request you to fill this interview guide; the information you provide is exclusively for academic purposes and will be treated with confidentiality.

SECTION A; DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION OF THE RESPONDENT

Gender

Title/Position.....

Years of service.....

Age.....

.....

SECTION B: The church’s role in spiritual nurture of children.

Give your view on how spiritual nurture of children is currently done in the parish in terms of Biblical and theological foundation.

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Which church programs and strategies has the parish been doing for the past three years in order to ensure spiritual nurture of children?

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SECTION C: Challenges related to knowledge and skills among clergy and church leaders in the spiritual nurture of children

What are some of the challenges church leaders face when teaching and guiding children spiritually?

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What are some of the skills and knowledge clergy and lay leaders need to improve the spiritual nurture of children in the parish?

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SECTION D: The collaborative efforts between parents and trained church leaders that can enhance the effectiveness of children’s spiritual nurture.

How do parents and trained church leaders currently collaborate in the spiritual nurture of children within Alere Parish?

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What specific programs have been introduced to strengthen collaboration between parents and trained church leaders in enhancing children’s spiritual nurture in Alere Parish?

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6.1.2 Introductory letter



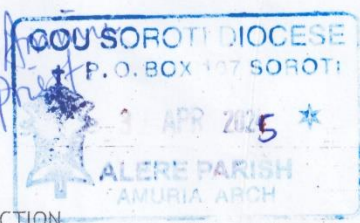
UGANDA CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY

A Centre of Excellence in the Heart of Africa

I have authorised him in Jesus name.
Please accord him any necessary
information he needs in his Research.
be blessed.

Feb. 2025
24th November 2023

Rev. James
Pantaleone Priest



TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

Dear Sir/Madam

INTRODUCTION LETTER FOR DATA COLLECTION

This letter serves to introduce to you EYOKU VICENT a student of Bishop Tucker School of Divinity pursuing a Master of Divinity/ Master of Arts in Theology/ Master of Arts in Theology and Development/Master of Arts in Theology and Health care Management/ Bachelors of Divinity.

His/her is carrying out a research as a partial requirement for him/her to be awarded the degree he/she is pursuing. So kindly avail him or the required information for building his/her research work.

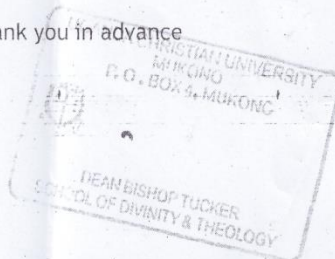
Counting on your cooperation and thank you in advance

Yours faithfully

Rev. Dr. Emmanuel Mukeshimana

Research coordinator, Bishop Tucker School of Divinity and Theology.

emukeshimana@ucu.ac.ug, 0772505474



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