

**COVID-19 AND MORAL DEGENERATION AMONG THE JUVENILES: A CASE
STUDY OF NYANGA CHURCH OF UGANDA IN KYAKABUNGA
ARCHDEACONRY, NORTH ANKOLE DIOCESE**

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DECLARATION

I, **NATWIJUKA PATRICK** declare that this research report is my own and has never been submitted by any person or submitted for any academic award in any University.

Signature Patrick


Date: 19th / 06 / 2025

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APPROVAL

I hereby approve that **NATWIJUKA PATRICK** with registration number **M22/BBUC/BD/012** has successfully completed his research report under my supervision.

Signature 

Date: 20th / 6 / 2025

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DEDICATION

I kindly dedicate this research to my beloved parents, my sisters and brothers and all my lecturers especially My supervisor who has helped me by supporting me spiritually, academically, socially and physically to the success of this work.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Firstly, I thank the Almighty God who has given me the gift and sustenance up to this very time. My participation in the research report which would not been successful without the guidance and the assistance of my supervisor **REV. COLLIN TUGATUNGIRE**.

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My victory is your victory and God remains great.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS/ABBREVIATIONS

C.O. U Church of Uganda

Rev. Reverend

Ven Venerable

NIV. New international version

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to investigate the impact of COVID-19 on moral degeneration among juveniles in Nyanga Church of Uganda, Kyakabunga Archdeaconry, North Ankole Diocese. The study was guided by three objectives; to examine the impact of COVID-19 on moral values among juveniles in Nyanga Church of Uganda, to identify the factors contributing to moral degeneration among juveniles during the COVID-19 pandemic and to explore the coping mechanisms employed by juveniles to maintain moral values during the pandemic. This study employed a qualitative method research design. The study included descriptive research where both primary and secondary data were collected. The sample size of the study was 120 respondents. The study concluded that the COVID-19 pandemic significantly disrupted the traditional moral support systems for juveniles, particularly schools and churches, leading to increased vulnerability to immoral behavior. The style of parenting, degree of community engagement, and availability of spiritual and social guidance during this period played a critical role in either aggravating or mitigating moral degeneration. Based on the findings, the following recommendations were made; Parents should be encouraged through church programs and community forums to adopt authoritative parenting, which balances discipline with warmth, communication, and guidance and Churches should encourage families to maintain regular home-based devotions and spiritual instruction. Even in times of public restrictions, churches should distribute devotional materials, create family prayer guides, and offer support to parents as moral educators.

CHAPTER ONE:

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

This chapter covered the background of the study, problem statement, purpose of the study, objectives of the study, research questions, scope of the study, and definition of operational terms. The COVID-19 pandemic had a profound impact on societies worldwide, leading to unprecedented measures to mitigate its spread. In Uganda, the government implemented various restrictions, including lockdowns and curfews, to contain the virus. However, these measures also had unintended consequences, particularly among juveniles. This study aimed to investigate the impact of COVID-19 on moral degeneration among juveniles in Nyanga Church of Uganda, Kyakabunga Archdeaconry, North Ankole Diocese.

1.2 Background of the Study.

Globally

The global COVID-19 pandemic, which began in 2019, has greatly affected global communities and has significantly affected adolescents' psychological well-being and behavior. Reports by the United Nations (2021) substantiate that the pandemic increased and exasperated both social and economic issues, leading to a significant increase in juvenile delinquency and mental health conditions. Lockdown policies, closure of schools, and enforcement of social distancing policies have disrupted traditional development pathways for many young people, causing increased feelings of isolation and disconnection from schools, family support structures, and social relationships. Studies by Reicher & Stott (2020) show that the lack of

structured day activities, accompanied by increased exposure to digital media, has led to an increase in risk taking behaviors, such as substance use, violence, and early sexual behaviors. The overall disruption caused by the pandemic has also heightened moral decay, as young people have difficulty coping with uncertainty, fear, and an inadequate moral compass at this critical stage of their development.

Research by the World Health Organization (2021) highlighted that the pandemic had a significant negative impact on the mental well-being and conduct of children living in low- and middle-income countries where mental health facilities were already limited. The increase in economic pressure, breakdown of family structures, and exposure to home violence added to moral disengagement and unhealthy coping measures among youths. A significant percentage of teenagers, especially those living in poor conditions, faced circumstances that worsened their delinquent behavior due to limited access to schooling and recreational activities. This global background provides a basis for understanding how COVID-19 could have affected juveniles in more geographically defined regions, including Nyanga Church of Uganda.

In Africa

The COVID-19 pandemic has drastically interfered with societal norms in Africa, with significant implications for the moral upbringing of youth. Findings in a study by Adeyemi & Eze (2021) show that many African nations have experienced heightened juvenile delinquency, largely due to the pandemic's negative effects on education systems, family structures, and social welfare services. In South Africa and Kenya, disruption of educational continuity, the shutdown of schools, and reduced peer interaction have intensified anti-social behavior while weakening the

traditional institutions that used to provide moral guidance for the youth. Community engagement, religious congregations, and schools are common in most African societies, and they act as avenues where young people normally obtain moral and educational support. The drastic disruption of these underlying institutions has left a vacuum for the youth, which has resulted in a decline in moral values and a rise in juvenile delinquency.

In Uganda, the government-imposed prolonged closure of schools meant that many children were left without supervision at home. Nsubuga (2020) argues that this situation created an environment where teenagers were increasingly exposed to negative influences such as peer pressure and negative content on the internet. The lack of opportunities to engage in community activities or religious organizations made many youths in rural counties like Nyanga vulnerable to moral decay, which led them to participate in dangerous behaviors such as early sexual relations, drug abuse, and petty criminal activities. Additionally, these actions were further fueled by economic uncertainties in households since many parents experienced retrenchment, thereby leading to a tense home environment.

In East Africa

The East Africa region was severely affected by COVID-19, especially in the context of the ethical behavior of young people. For instance, a research study by Ouma (2021) in Kenya showed that the school closures and social distancing measures increased the likelihood of moral decay among the youth. The lack of organized school environments and the suspension of religious and communal activities caused adolescents to have more unproductive time. In response, a large number of youths were involved in harmful activities, such as unsafe sex and drug and alcohol

experimentation. Likewise, the imposition of lockdowns and bans on public gatherings in Tanzania deprived youths of essential chances to engage in mentorship activities offered by religious groups and youth organizations (Mwita & Mwikali, 2022). Such actions were largely the cause of a decline in youthful morality, as the consequences of inadequate supervision and the lack of supportive structures made many youths susceptible to developing behavioral patterns that conflicted with their upbringing.

In Uganda, specifically at the Nyanga Church of Uganda, the outbreak of the pandemic caused significant disruptions in youth ministry programs. According to a study by Tumwebaze (2022), suspension of physical youth activities and church participation deprived young people of valuable moral guidance and spiritual advice. Withholding this support, coupled with reduced social interaction with peers and elders, created an environment for moral decay. The church, as traditionally placed to impact the conduct of youth in rural areas, could not perform its typical role of instilling positive values and spiritual guidance. Many adolescents, without adequate supervision, therefore engaged in activities detrimental to their moral well-being, such as drug abuse, robbery, and premarital pregnancies.

In Uganda

In Uganda, the COVID-19 pandemic posed unique challenges, especially in rural areas like Nyanga Church of Uganda. Lockdowns saw the closure of schools and worship places, leading to prolonged periods of time for the youth without framework and supervision, thus leaving them susceptible to negative influences. Studies by the Uganda Bureau of Statistics (2021) revealed an increase in juvenile delinquency during the pandemic, with various cases of theft, drug use, and

teenage pregnancies reported across different locations. Lack of access to positive role models, such as church leaders and teachers, largely played a role in the escalation of a moral crisis among the youth.

In addition, as expounded by Nanteza (2020), many adolescents in rural Uganda, especially in the Kyakabunga Archdeaconry, engaged in risky coping mechanisms in light of the pandemic induced stress. The effects of economic hardships, unemployment, and the breakdown of family structures worsened the impact of the pandemic. Many of the young people engaged in maladaptive behaviors like truancy from school and destruction of property, mainly because of poor guidance and care from their families and communities. Throughout the lockdown period, the church, traditionally seen as a custodian of moral guidance, was largely unengaged, and this inaction profoundly influenced the youth in the community.

In Nyanga Church of Uganda, Kyakabunga Archdeaconry, North Ankole Diocese

The effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on the moral decline of adolescents in the Nyanga Church of Uganda, under the Kyakabunga Archdeaconry of the North Ankole Diocese, were particularly profound, considering the rural nature of the area and its dependence on group religious practices. A report by the Kyakabunga Archdeaconry in 2022 revealed that the suspension of church activities and youth programs saw a drastic decrease in religious participation and moral guidance among young people. For many teens, the church was the key place where moral values and principles were developed and social interaction meant for developing shared values was encouraged. The suspension of the in-person activities of the church left many teens facing the challenges inherent in their developmental phase without the moral teachings that had previously shaped them.

Based on a study by the Kyakabunga Youth Group (2023), a lack of interaction with church leaders and peers during the pandemic led to an increase in moral offenses among the youth. The major repercussions of the disruptions caused by the pandemic involved a rise in cases of substance use, sexual experimentation, and an increased number of minor criminal acts. The lack of organized mentorship programs limited church leaders from providing guidance, making many young people susceptible to peer pressure and negative influences from the community. Additionally, with the rising economic challenges faced by many families during the pandemic, juvenile delinquency became a mean of coping with the current uncertainty, hence fueling the decline in moral values within society.

1.3 Problem Statement

The COVID-19 pandemic has greatly interfered with the traditional social norms and structures, leading to increased levels of idleness and boredom among the youths. Lack of social interactions, along with restricted access to education and recreational activities, has created a conducive environment for moral deterioration. Furthermore, the economic hardships caused by the pandemic have increased poverty and desperation, hence worsening the problem of moral decay. The issue of moral degradation among youths in the Nyanga Church of Uganda, located in the Kyakabunga Archdeaconry of the North Ankole Diocese, has become a cause for concern. The situation created by the COVID-19 pandemic has produced an environment that promotes idleness, boredom, and desperation, leading to further moral degeneration. If the situation continues, it might have long-lasting consequences for the juveniles, their families, and the community at large. It is,

therefore, in this context that the researchers are inspired to examine the effects of COVID-19 on moral degeneration among youths in the Nyanga Church of Uganda.

1.4 Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study was to investigate the impact of COVID-19 on moral degeneration among juveniles in Nyanga Church of Uganda, Kyakabunga Archdeaconry, North Ankole Diocese.

1.5 Objectives of the study

- i. To examine the impact of COVID-19 on moral values among juveniles in Nyanga Church of Uganda.
- ii. To identify the factors contributing to moral degeneration among juveniles during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- iii. To explore the coping mechanisms employed by juveniles to maintain moral values during the pandemic.

1.6 Research Questions

The research study was guided by the following set questions;

- i. What is the impact of COVID-19 on moral values among juveniles in Nyanga Church of Uganda?
- ii. What are the factors contributing to moral degeneration among juveniles during the COVID-19 pandemic?
- iii. What can be the coping mechanisms employed by juveniles to maintain moral values during the pandemic?

1.6 Scope of the study

The scope included the following;

1.6.1 Geographical Scope

The study was carried out in Nyanga Church of Uganda in Kyakabunga Archdeaconry, North Ankole Diocese. Time Scope

The study was carried out with a focus on the information from 2019 to 2024. This is a period under which covid-19 virus was rampant in many countries including Uganda.

1.6.2 Content Scope

The study focused on to assess the prevalence of early marriages as a result of covid-19 lockdown in Nyanga Church of Uganda, causes of early marriages rather than covid-19 lockdown in Nyanga Church of Uganda and to find out the possible ways to reduce early marriages among the juveniles in Nyanga Church of Uganda in Kyakabunga Archdeaconry, North Ankole Diocese

1.7 Significance of the Study

The study will help different stakeholders such as church women and men, government, local leaders, community leaders, and future researchers in the following ways.

To church women and men: The study will improve the well-being of both men and women, increase household income activities, and less dependency syndrome in both sexes.

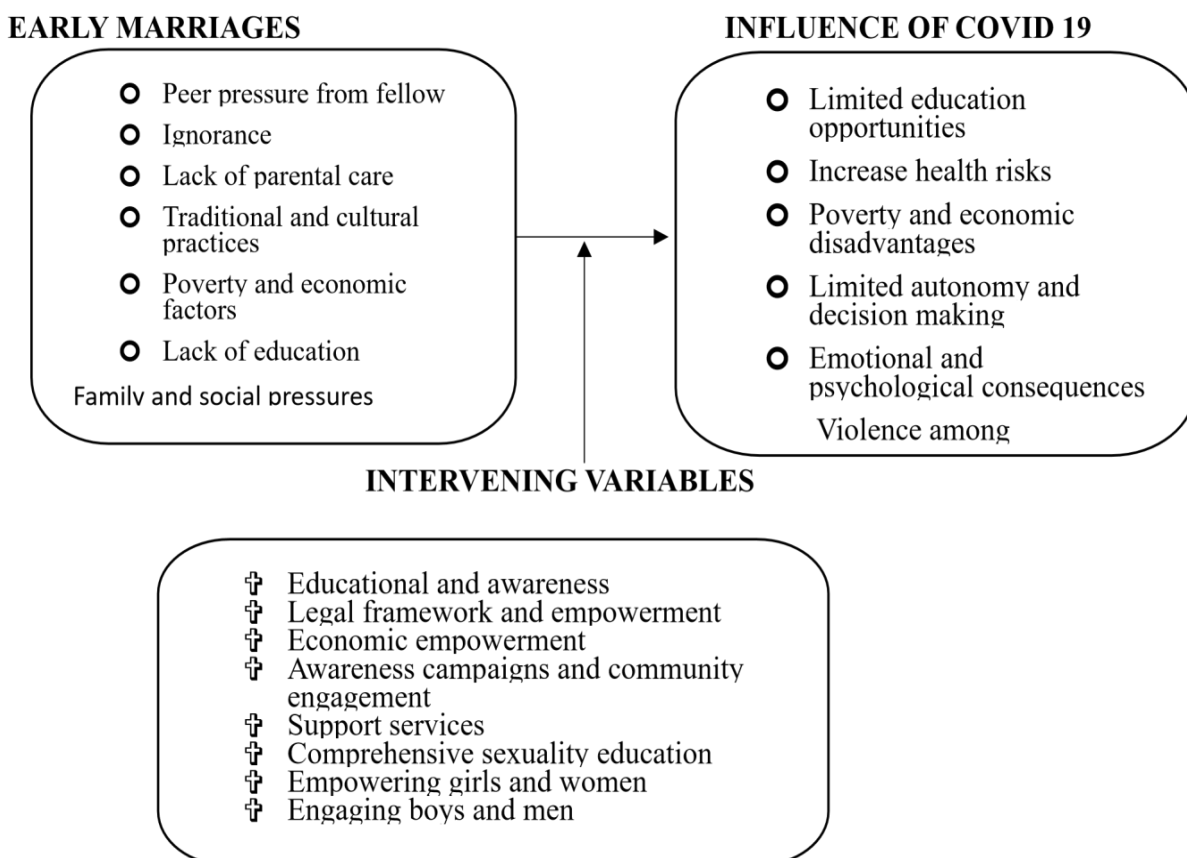
To the government: The study finding will to help the Government, especially the Ministry of Gender and Social Development, Parliament, and Executive members to

devise mechanisms necessary for development among married couples growing up in the church.

Future researchers: The study findings will help future researchers to get a deeper understanding of family setup through interviews and interaction with the beneficiaries. This is to help to make realistic recommendations basing on the study findings for future developmental understandings.

1.8 Conceptual framework.

This study was confined to assessing the influence of the Covid-19 lockdown as the dependent variable on early marriages as the independent variable as illustrated in the conceptual framework below;



1.9 Definition of key

terms COVID-19

COVID-19 refers to the novel coronavirus disease that emerged in December 2019 and led to a global pandemic, causing severe health, social, and economic disruptions worldwide (World Health Organization [WHO], 2020).

Moral Degeneration

Moral degeneration refers to the gradual decline or erosion of accepted moral standards or ethical behavior within a society or individual (Mwita & Mwikali, 2022).

Juveniles

In this context, juveniles refer to young individuals, typically under the age of 18, who are in the developmental stages of adolescence. Juveniles are particularly vulnerable to changes in their environment, and periods of social disruption, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, can have significant effects on their behavioral and psychological development. (Reicher & Stott, 2020; Nsubuga, 2020).

CHAPTER TWO:

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter is the review of the literature related to the topic “be to investigate the impact of COVID-19 on moral degeneration among juveniles in Nyanga Church of Uganda, Kyakabunga Archdeaconry, North Ankole Diocese”.

2.2 The impact of COVID-19 on moral values among juveniles Disruption of Educational Systems and Moral Development

School closures related to COVID-19 had a general impact on the moral growth of juveniles. Schools have the mandate to instill moral character like respect, responsibility, honesty, and fairness. With the inception of online learning, the majority of juveniles lacked proper guidance and supervision, hence a reduction in discipline. A study by Mwita (2021) in East Africa revealed that juveniles were challenged in adapting to the system of online learning, which also meant less social contact with teachers and peers essential in laying moral foundations.

Mental health strain and moral decision-making

The psychological effect of the pandemic was at the forefront of moral decision-making for teenagers. Reicher & Stott (2020) writers that increased worry, depression, and isolation were causing poor decision-making for youth. There was no social interaction with peers, cancellation of formal activities, and increased screen time, which meant teenagers were making moral decisions with fewer family or community leader influences.

Increased exposure to online content

The pandemic hastened the reliance on the internet for learning, entertainment, and social interaction. The transition, however, subjected juveniles to unwanted online material in the form of cyberbullying, pornography, and hate speech. One scholar, Okello (2022), found that the absence of physical supervision by parents and teachers contributed to juveniles using digital media more, and in some cases, it led to moral decadence as they were exposed to bad behavior and values.

Decreased Social Interaction and Empathy

One of the greatest effects of the lockdowns during the COVID-19 pandemic was the reduction in social interaction. Social distancing and isolation reduced the exposure of juveniles to empathy, conflict management, and collaboration. Kabugo (2021) pointed out that moral qualities such as empathy and compassion were affected negatively due to the fact that juveniles received less exposure as they remained alone or in small or isolated family units, reducing their social skills and emotional intelligence.

Disruption of religious and spiritual activities

Churches and religious institutions play a significant role in the moral direction of juveniles. Since the majority of churches and religious institutions were closed temporarily during the pandemic, juveniles were denied access to religious education and youth activities held in communities. Nsubuga (2021) established that limited access to church attendance and youth activities led to lower religious attendance levels among juveniles, affecting their moral values and sense of belonging.

Family dynamics and juvenile behavior

The dynamics in the family also were a primary cause of the juvenile moral development being shaped. The bulk of the families were in lockdown, and the parents were trying to juggle working and parenting duties. This tension was normally followed by further conflict and tension at home, which influenced the morality development of the juveniles. Tumukunde (2022) reports that the lack of monitoring by parents, as necessitated by economic strain, led to problems of behavior such as increased aggression and disobedience among juveniles.

Economic hardships and juvenile delinquency

The economic impacts of COVID-19, including loss of jobs and closure of businesses, impacted juvenile behavior in a direct manner. The majority of juveniles were exposed to economic challenges, which in some cases led to moral decadence, as they engaged in delinquent behavior like stealing or drug use as a survival strategy. A report laid out by Kamuntu (2023) noted that in areas like Kampala and rural Uganda, juveniles were more likely to engage in crimes during the pandemic due to economic desperation and the absence of well-structured support systems in society.

Substance abuse and risky behavior

Use of substances among juveniles is increasing globally, and the pandemic worsened it. With social spaces shutting down and isolation increasing, juveniles turned to alcohol and drugs as their coping mechanism. In a study by Businge (2021), it was found that there was a sudden increase in the use of substances among Ugandan juveniles during the pandemic attributed to both mental health

issues and the lack of well-organized activities that would otherwise dissuade such vices.

Increased early sexual behavior

The COVID-19 lockdowns also increased early sexual activity among juveniles. With schools closed, and juveniles largely stuck at home, some of them began engaging in unsafe sexual activities. This is typically because they are bored, curious, or seeking validation. In Nakawunde's (2021) research, teen pregnancies and STIs rose during the pandemic, once more indicating a shift in moral values.

Loss of role models

Since schools and church gatherings were closed down, the majority of juveniles lost contact with their role models such as teachers, coaches, and church ministers. They are such vital people who teach juveniles moral values and mold them during developmental stages. Based on a study carried out by Okumu (2022), losing contact with such persons led to confusion and undermining ethical decision-making among the youths because they did not receive the necessary guidance on how to tackle problems.

The Impact of social media on juvenile morality

Use of social media by juveniles grew exponentially during the pandemic period since it was the primary means of communication and entertainment. However, most juveniles were exposed to content whose values conflicted with traditional moral values such as materialism, violence, and promiscuity. In the opinion of Batamuriza (2023), exposure resulted in juveniles' attitude and behavior shifts since they began adopting attitudes and values that were beyond the norms in the community.

Rejection of authority and increased juvenile independence

The pandemic led to an increase in independence among young people, who often had to take care of themselves by arranging their day-to-day lives and making decisions without the traditional adult supervision of parents, teachers, or religious leaders. Increased independence created a sense of alienation from traditional authority figures and helped fuel an increase in rebellious activities. Kato (2022) contends that the lack of advice and authoritative presence during lockdown periods created a culture of disobedience among the youths at the expense of the moral structure previously maintained by their communities.

Resilience and moral reinforcement

Despite the many challenges faced, some teenagers showed resilience and found ways to strengthen their moral principles during the pandemic. Religious organizations, community groups, and online platforms facilitated virtual interactions that helped teenagers maintain their bond to their moral and spiritual teachings. Studies undertaken by Adeyemi (2024) highlighted that a group of youth participating in online mentorship programs and online Bible study sessions reported an increase in virtuous behavior during the pandemic.

Peer influence and moral guidance

Peer influence has always been a significant factor in molding adolescent conduct, both positive and negative, during the pandemic. Some adolescents were in a position to maintain their moral values because of positive peer influence, while others succumbed to maladaptive conduct. Peer groups, in accordance with Businge (2022), served as a positive support group that reinforced moral values or a medium for engaging in negative activities, such as drug abuse or criminal activity.

Long-term effects and recovery of moral values

The long-term impact of COVID-19 on the moral values of adolescents continues to be inadequately analyzed, given that many youths remain under the effects of the pandemic. Nevertheless, recovery will be anticipated to require particular measures including mental health care, educational adjustments, and full engagement in civic life. In the opinion of Ochieng (2024), the research suggests that there is a need for collaboration between schools, families, and religious groups to enable the rebuilding of the moral structures that were undermined during the pandemic.

2.3 The factors contributing to moral degeneration among juveniles during the COVID19 pandemic

Disruption of Education

The shutdown of schools during the COVID-19 pandemic had a serious effect on the learning environment, an essential element of a child's moral growth. The absence of a structured schooling system led to a lack of discipline, set routines, and guidance. According to Nsubuga (2021), many teens found themselves left alone at home, often engaging in negative behaviors like skipping school, use of drugs, and lack of regulated socialization. Education, which normally instills values like responsibility, respect, and a high work ethic, was highly hindered during this period.

Social Isolation and lack of peer interaction

Among the key determinants of the perceived moral deterioration of youth is social isolation. The COVID-19 pandemic required the implementation of physical distancing, which placed curbs on social gatherings and events, hence preventing young people from accessing their peers. Reicher and Stott (2020) argue that the social relations adolescents develop with their peers serve as the building blocks for

their moral development, as they allow for the development of empathy, conflict management skills, and cooperative behaviors. The lack of these interactions has led to increased loneliness, anxiety, and a disconnection from moral reasoning.

Increased screen time and exposure to harmful content

With the shift of socialization, education, and leisure time to online platforms, many adolescents spent more of their time in virtual spaces. This increased screen exposure led to a greater risk of exposure to harmful material, including pornography, violent material, and cyberbullying. In a study by Businge (2022), it was established that a large number of adolescents, with insufficient parental guidance, were exposed to inappropriate content, which negatively affected their moral values and choice-making capabilities. Exposure to unrealistic or harmful ideals portrayed on social media sites led to moral ambivalence and behaviors typified by substance use and early sexual engagement.

Lack of supervision by parents and guardians

With many parents working from home or facing economic hardships due to the pandemic, their ability to supervise their children diminished. This lack of supervision meant that juveniles had more freedom to engage in activities that were morally questionable. Kabugo (2021) found that unsupervised juveniles were more likely to engage in risky behaviors, such as drug use, early.

Economic hardship and desperation

The pandemic-induced economic difficulties wrought additional financial pressures on families, the majority of whom were previously struggling. The financial pressures affected the moral development of the juveniles because some turned to criminal or immoral behaviors to respond to the frustrations of their environment. Kamuntu (2023) noted that youths who came from economically underprivileged

areas were more likely to engage in activities that were criminal in nature, for example, theft and drug use, as they sought ways of compensating for their economic disadvantages.

Loss of religious guidance

Religion is usually a significant factor in the moral behavior of youths, providing them with moral direction as well as a support group. By the closure of religious centers amidst the pandemic, juveniles lost a channel of religious teachings. A study conducted by Nsubuga (2021) found that the suspension of church services and youth activities decreased the channels through which juveniles received moral teachings. This led to a decline in moral behavior, as most juveniles lost the spiritual and social support they had previously experienced from religious centers.

Increased exposure to substance abuse

Since there was increased stress and boredom, juveniles turned to substance abuse as their way of coping. The pandemic created a scenario in which the majority of juveniles had increased unsupervised time and fewer recreational opportunities. A study report given by Businge (2021) indicated that juvenile substance abuse, particularly alcohol and drugs, increased during the lockdown, which further deteriorated their moral values. Substance abuse is highly linked to risky behaviors, including violence and unsafe sexual behaviors, which are immediate causes of moral degradation.

Peer pressure in a virtual environment

As physical interactions were reduced, socialization also moved to social media, where peer pressure persisted but took on a different form. Okello (2022) observes that teenagers were regularly influenced by their peers on social media, where undesirable behaviors such as cyberbullying, sexting, and even radical ideologies

were prevalent. Peer influence remained a leading agent of moral decadence, as teenagers were more likely to copy the behavior of others within their social media peer networks.

Disruption of routine and structure

The COVID-19 pandemic disrupted the daily routines of juveniles that play an essential role in the formulation of discipline and morality. School schedules, extracurricular activities, and domestic routines were either modified or removed. Tumukunde (2022) noted that the lack of routine generated a lack of structure essential in making young individuals feel accountable and morally responsible. Without established boundaries, the majority of the juveniles resorted to unstructured and negative activities.

Increased anxiety and depression

The pandemic also led to widespread anxiety and depression among juveniles, primarily due to fears about the virus, loneliness, and doubts about the future. They resulted in moral disengagement, based on Reicher & Stott (2020), since juveniles with emotional issues were less likely to show positive moral conduct. Anxiety and depression can also lead to increased substance use, poor judgment, and lack of empathy for others.

Breakdown of family units

Family unity is also vital in guiding juveniles' moral behavior. The pandemic resulted in extreme family stress as a majority of the parents lost their jobs and suffered economic adversity. This breakdown in family unity was accountable for the moral decadence among juveniles because broken family settings are normally linked to delinquent behavior. According to Kato (2022), juveniles from broken families had greater likelihoods of engaging in truancy, falsehood, and combat.

Reduced extracurricular activities

Extracurricular activities such as sports, music, and community service play a significant role in a juvenile's moral upbringing. From these activities, juveniles acquire teamwork, discipline, respect, and social responsibility. Since schools and public spaces were closed, the majority of juveniles lost these avenues for upbringing. Kabugo (2021) believes that in the absence of extracurricular activities, the most juveniles lacked an organized way of acquiring and practicing good values.

Digital addiction and moral confusion

The increased usage of digital media during the pandemic led to addiction to digital media, which bred moral confusion. According to Batamuriza (2023), digital addiction in juveniles resulted in a distorted view of reality whereby moral boundaries were blurred. Juveniles were exposed to content that glorified violence, materialism, and promiscuity, which influenced their understanding of acceptable behavior.

Violence in the Media

The violent media content culture also facilitated the moral decline of minors. Exposure to violent video games, movies, and media coverage of violent events had the potential to desensitize minors to real violence, leading to behavioral issues. Ochieng (2023) found that minors exposed to excessive violence in the media participated in more aggressive and morally disengaged behaviors, leading to the decline of their moral values during the pandemic.

Lack of community support

Lastly, the lack of ascription of community support during the pandemic facilitated juvenile moral degeneration. Mentorship programs, youth clubs, and community ascription normally provide a forum where juveniles receive moral guidance and

develop sound social relationships. Adeyemi (2024) submits that the closure of youth programs and community centers denied juveniles the support they needed, hence they fell into moral disorientation and risky behaviors. The coping mechanisms employed by juveniles to maintain moral values during the pandemic

Engaging in online education and self-learning

One of the dominant coping mechanisms that adolescents used was engagement in online learning. Even with the massive disruptions caused by school closures, many adolescents adapted by taking virtual classes or participating in self-study through affordable online materials. A study by Okello (2022) established that a significant percentage of youth used online learning as a way to achieve some sense of structure in their lives, thus boosting their discipline and sense of autonomy. This form of education allowed them to pursue their studies and created a channel for many to develop their moral development through a focus on individual development.

Participation in religious and spiritual activities

During the pandemic, religion acted as an important adaptive tool for most youths. Although the suspension of physical church gatherings did not completely deter youths from practicing religion, a significant percentage resorted to online church services, participated in prayer groups, or practiced individual meditation to maintain their spiritual link. Nsubuga (2021) observes that spiritual leaders played a key role in mobilizing online programs and projects that focused on moral values like patience, humility, and compassion. This religious engagement enabled youths to sustain moral frameworks despite the heavy challenges faced.

Strengthening family bonds

The pandemic required families to spend more quality time together, which, while sometimes challenging, was a chance to strengthen family ties. Many teenagers found solace in discussing important issues with their parents or guardians, giving them the liberty to discuss their anxieties and feelings. Kabugo (2021) observed that, for some teenagers, this increased family interaction allowed for deeper conversations regarding moral values, ethical choices, and sympathetic comprehension. These interactions helped foster positive attitudes and played a key role in maintaining a sense of responsibility and camaraderie in the family.

Engaging in physical exercise and outdoor activities

Participation in physical exercise became a possible coping mechanism, which helped adolescents deal with stress while maintaining their values in life. Many adolescents took up home exercise routines or engaged in outdoor activities when the situation allowed, for example, walking or cycling. Tumukunde (2022) suggests that participation in sports played a critical role in promoting a positive attitude, reducing anxiety levels, and developing traits like determination and self-discipline. Physical exercise also provided an avenue for the channeling of energy that could otherwise have been spent on school sports or extracurricular activities.

Adapting to new digital entertainment channels

As a result of social interaction limitations, a large percentage of teenagers started to use digital media as a source of entertainment, including films, music, video games, and social network sites. While this development had risks involving possible exposure to inappropriate material, some teenagers used online sources beneficially by pursuing educational opportunities on the web, visiting web-based museums, and interacting with content consistent with their own values. As a study

by Batamuriza (2023) found, teenagers had a thoughtful approach toward their online media consumption, often seeking out content that was not only fun but also ethically informative, including inspirational speeches, documentaries, and tutorial videos.

Volunteering and community service

Despite the limitations placed on face-to-face interactions by the pandemic, many teenagers made efforts to maintain their commitment to community service through volunteerism. Some participated in food drives, provided support to elderly people, or took part in online fundraising campaigns. According to Kamuntu (2023), this tendency towards altruism allowed young people to maintain and even strengthen their moral values of empathy, charity, and service to others. Volunteerism gave them a sense of direction and purpose while building solidarity within their communities, thus upholding ethical behavior in the face of the challenges brought by the pandemic.

Digital mentorship and support networks

During the pandemic, a large number of teenagers sought advice through electronic means, communicating with teachers, community leaders, or peers. Mentorship programs moved online, with the aim of continuing support for moral behavior and personal growth. A study by Adeyemi (2024) illustrated that virtual mentorship and online support groups were helpful for youth to deal with moral challenges and adversity. E-communication made it easier to access positive role models, thus boosting a feeling of responsibility and moral self-efficacy.

Engaging in creative and artistic expression

The pandemic had a profound impact on the coping strategies employed by adolescents, putting creativity and artistic expression at the center. Many

adolescents engaged in various forms of creativity, such as drawing, painting, writing, and music, as vehicles for expression. Kabugo (2021) noted that these forms of creativity enabled adolescents to manage their emotions and positively channel their thoughts, thus helping them maintain their identity and uphold good moral values. In addition, these forms of creativity helped foster resilience in adolescents, enabling them to cope with their changing circumstances.

Self-reflection and journaling

Self-reflection was another strategy utilized by teenagers to maintain their moral integrity during the pandemic. The use of reflective writing and journaling helped these people process their feelings and experiences in order to achieve a better understanding of their values and conduct. Businge's (2022) research found that most teenagers used journaling as a way of reflecting on their behavior and the effect it had on other people, making it a crucial tool in maintaining moral clarity during uncertain times.

Peer support and virtual socialization

Under conditions of limited in-person interactions, adolescents maintained their social relationships through online media, such as social media, video calls, and group messaging tools. According to Reicher and Stott (2020), virtual social networks helped provide emotional support and also allowed adolescents to share experiences and moral dilemmas with peers. Social networks of peer support played a critical role in reaffirming shared values like empathy, trust, and respect, thus helping adolescents maintain a sense of moral guidance.

Development of new hobbies and skills

The pandemic offered a special opportunity for teens to develop new interests or skills. Many young people took up activities like cooking, gardening, or learning new languages, which helped maintain their interest and provide a sense of accomplishment. According to Tumukunde (2022), this learning experience also entrenched the values of hard work, perseverance, and self-improvement. These activities provided a positive distraction and facilitated moral development by giving learners a sense of personal responsibility.

Building emotional resilience

Emotional resilience is the ability to adapt to stressors and negative situations, a quality many adolescents acquired during the pandemic. Mental health professionals offered assistance and coping mechanisms via online platforms to help young people cope with feelings of fear, uncertainty, and anxiety. According to Kamuntu (2023), emotional resilience was key to helping adolescents maintain their moral principles, as it allowed them to face challenges with resilience, thus reducing the risk of moral disengagement.

Seeking professional psychological support

A significant percentage of teenagers consulted psychological counselors to deal with the mental and emotional issues arising from the pandemic. Online counseling services were provided by professional psychologists and counselors, enabling minors under stress, anxiety, and depression to receive support. Businge (2021) illustrated in a research study that teens that participated in therapy or counseling had a higher probability of maintaining their moral standards amidst the pandemic since these interventions helped adolescents deal with complicated emotions and

develop healthy habits.

Reconnection with Nature

For many teenagers, activities involving nature provided an outlet for distraction and allowed for a reconnection with nature. Outdoor activities, such as hiking, camping, and gardening, promoted feelings of calmness and improved cognitive acuity. Reicher and Stott (2020) noted that these activities promoted moral values of stewardship, patience, and respect for nature, as the teenagers interacted with their natural environment with a thoughtful and reflective approach.

Use of humor and positive distraction

Lastly, a large percentage of teens used humor as a coping mechanism. Humor, expressed in the form of memes, jokes, or teasing banter with friends, helped to mitigate the psychological distress of the pandemic. Kabugo (2022) also observed that humor and pleasant diversions were important in helping children maintain a positive outlook, hence also indirectly supporting their moral values by preventing hopelessness and moral disengagement.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the methodology was described and explained. The chapter was divided as follows; research design, research population, sampling procedure, Sample sizes, research tools, data collection methods, data gathering and analysis, ethical consideration and limitation of the study.

3.2 Research Design

This study employed a qualitative method. The study included descriptive research where both primary and secondary data were collected. A survey was conducted among juveniles aged 12-18 years in Nyanga Church of Uganda. Additionally, focus group discussions were held with 20 juveniles and 10 parents/guardians. Data was analyzed using descriptive statistics and thematic analysis.

3.3 Area of the Study

The area of study was carried in Nyanga Church of Uganda in Kyakabunga Archdeaconry, North Ankole Diocese.

3.4 Population of the study

Population is a complete set of individuals, objectives, objects and measurements having some observable characteristics. Population briefly did not necessarily only refer to people but in great deal it did any sample with similar characteristics from surrounding. These characteristics are age, level of education, occupation, sex status, geographical location. The study population was comprised of about 120 people.

3.5 Sample Size and Sampling Techniques

For the study, members were drawn from church leaders, local leaders, Elders, children from the age of 15 and above, workers representatives from other regions. To determine the sample size, the researcher will use solvent formula. The population of the study was 120 people, it used purposive sampling because the researcher knew the respondents and where they stay. With the community members, religious leader, community organization, the researcher used simple random technique because there was no specific population, then it was to pick them at random.

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

$$= \frac{150}{1 + 150(0.05)^2}$$

$$n = \frac{150}{1 + 150(0.0025)}$$

$$n = \frac{150}{1 + 0.25}$$

$$n = 120 \text{ respondents}$$

Table 1: Showing the category, sample size and the population of the people

| Category | Sample size | Sampling technique |
|-------------------|-------------|-------------------------|
| Parents | 10 | Purposive sampling |
| Juveniles | 100 | Simple random technique |
| Religious leaders | 10 | Simple random technique |
| Total | 120 | |

3.6 Data Collection Methods and instruments

The research tools that were used to collect data included Questionnaires, interviews group discussions to obtain both qualitative and quantitative data. This section described instruments that were used for data collection in line with specific questions that were asked in the study.

3.6.1 Questionnaire

Questions were designed to help research assistants to obtain meaningful results to ease administration almost all questions in the instrument were close ended, and options were given per research instrument.

3.6.2 Interviews (Using key Informant Interviews KI)

The key informant interviews were purposely collected and qualitative data that enabled proper and valid interpretation of data. Various key informants were collected purposively to obtain valid interpretation of data.

Focused Group Discussions

These discussions provided a chance to collect additional information and played a vital part in cross checking and clarifying research impressions and preliminary conclusions. Focus group discussions were held with 20 juveniles and 10 parents/guardians.

3.6.3 Surveys

A survey was conducted among 100 juveniles aged 12-18 years in Nyanga Church of Uganda.

3.7 Quality Control Methods

Introductory letter was sought from the head of Department of Theology and

Divinity and was filled by the researcher who introduced it to the required authorities where research study was carried out. This guided the researcher and study participants through systematic random sampling from the list.

3.8 Data Analysis Techniques

It is the process of bringing order and more meaning to the mass information gathered from respondents after the research study (Mugenda, O.M and Mugenda, A.G. 2003).

Descriptive statistics: Descriptive statistics were used to summarize the survey data. Thematic analysis was used to analyze the focus group discussion data.

3.9 Ethical Consideration

Confidentiality of the information was provided to the respondents. To ascertain the practice of ethics in this study, the following activities were implemented by the researcher.

All the questionnaires to the respondents were coded instead of reflecting the names that provided anonymity of the respondents.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS

4.0 Introduction

This chapter presented the qualitative analysis of the findings of the study on the effects of COVID-19 on moral degeneration among juveniles. The data was obtained through field interviews, observations, and open-ended questionnaires administered in Nyanga Church of Uganda, Kyakabunga Archdeaconry. The chapter begins with the background information of the respondents, which provided a foundation for understanding their perceptions and experiences in the context of the study.

4.1 Background information

Kasekende (2014) emphasizes that analyzing respondents' demographic characteristics allows researchers to contextualize their perspectives and behaviors. In this study, the focus was placed on gender, age, education, marital status, religious affiliation, and occupation, as these factors influence how respondents interpret the effects of COVID-19 on the moral behavior of juveniles.

4.1.1 Gender of respondents

The gender distribution was nearly balanced but leaned slightly toward males. Through qualitative interviews, it was noted that male respondents tended to emphasize external behaviors of juveniles such as disrespect and substance abuse. Female respondents, on the other hand, highlighted emotional aspects such as loss of empathy, increased rudeness, and the erosion of Christian values in homes. This showed that gender influences how moral degeneration is perceived and reported.

"As a mother, I see my children speaking back at me, something they

never used to do before the lockdown," noted one female respondent in her late 30s.

Age of respondents

The majority of respondents were between 18 and 49 years, a group that includes young parents, Sunday school teachers, and youth leaders. These individuals had direct interaction with juveniles during the lockdown and provided rich narratives of behavioral changes. Respondents in this age group cited increased stubbornness, truancy, and disrespect among youth, which they associated with the prolonged stay at home and lack of school or church structure during the pandemic.

"Before COVID-19, we had church programs that kept children busy.

Now, they are on the streets, idle and exposed," said a 42-year-old male church elder.

Older respondents (50 years and above) largely described these behaviors as moral decay and reminisced about pre-pandemic times when community discipline and church teachings were more structured and respected.

4.1.2 Marital status of respondents

Most respondents were married, and they provided unique insights into parenting challenges during lockdown. Many stated that the pressure of economic hardship, combined with the absence of school routines, made it hard to maintain moral guidance for their children. Single parents expressed even greater difficulty, especially in controlling peer influence and limiting exposure to social media, which they blamed for promoting moral degeneration.

"I am alone, and I go to work. I cannot monitor what my son watches or where he goes during the day," confessed a single mother.

Married respondents mentioned that even within two-parent households,

disciplinary roles became blurred, with many children ignoring both parents' guidance.

4.1.3 Religion of respondents

As members of the Church of Uganda, the majority of respondents identified as Protestant or Born-Again Christians. They acknowledged that COVID-19 disrupted church gatherings, which they described as the primary moral compass for children. Many stated that the absence of Sunday school, youth fellowships, and Christian mentorship allowed secular influences to take root.

"Church used to mold our children every Sunday. Now that they stayed home, they were exposed to worldly behaviors," explained a lay reader.

Respondents from other faiths such as Catholics and Muslims, though fewer, echoed similar concerns, especially regarding the breakdown of spiritual routines and community oversight.

4.1.4 Education level of respondents

Respondents had varying educational backgrounds, with most falling within the primary and secondary education levels. Those with tertiary education offered more structured views, often relating juvenile moral decline to lack of structured educational and spiritual curricula during lockdowns. On the other hand, less-educated respondents used terms like "spoiled children" or "children have no fear nowadays," expressing general frustration with behavioral changes but less focused on systemic causes.

"When school stopped, even Sunday school stopped. These children became hard to manage," lamented a respondent with P7 education.

The common sentiment across all education levels was that schools and churches are twin institutions in moral formation—and their closure created a vacuum that

negatively affected juveniles.

4.1.5 Occupation of respondents

Respondents engaged in occupations such as farming, petty trade, and self-employment. Peasants, who formed the majority, reported that the economic toll of the pandemic limited their ability to supervise or guide their children, as they spent most of their time trying to meet household needs. Business people and self-employed respondents indicated that lack of parental supervision combined with access to mobile phones led to increased exposure to inappropriate content, peer pressure, and indiscipline.

"Even if I want to guide them, I return home tired from digging. I find them already in bad company," said a female peasant.

Others added that some juveniles took up small jobs or roamed markets, exposing them to adult behaviors that contributed to early drinking, disrespect, and sexual activity.

Impact of COVID-19 on moral values among juveniles in Nyanga Church of Uganda

This section presents and analyzes qualitative data gathered from respondents on how the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted the moral values of juveniles in Nyanga Church of Uganda, Kyakabunga Archdeaconry. The data was collected through open-ended questionnaires, interviews, and observations.

Findings revealed that COVID-19 had a profound effect on moral behavior among juveniles, largely due to disruptions in education, religious fellowship, parental control, and community engagement.

4.1.6 Loss of religious routine and christian guidance

The closure of churches during lockdowns was cited by the majority of respondents as one of the main drivers of moral decline. Juveniles, who once participated in

Sunday school, youth fellowships, and scripture-based mentorship, were left without spiritual guidance.

“Church was our main moral pillar. When it closed, the children were left in the hands of peer groups and bad media,” noted one elderly lay reader.

Respondents emphasized that church teachings instilled values like respect, honesty, and obedience. The absence of such teachings allowed space for moral confusion and behavioral deviance.

4.1.7 Rise in disobedience and defiance

Respondents repeatedly mentioned that during and after the lockdown, many juveniles became defiant and disrespectful to elders, including parents and religious leaders.

“Children no longer fear adults. Even telling them to attend prayers is met with sarcasm or refusal,” said a female respondent.

This disobedience was often linked to a lack of supervision and the breakdown of daily routines previously provided by school and church. Increased exposure to social media and immoral content

Due to school closures and restrictions on movement, juveniles had increased unsupervised access to phones and internet platforms.

“During lockdown, our children got addicted to phones. They watch things that corrupt their thinking,” observed one parent.

Respondents indicated that unsupervised media consumption led to imitation of vulgar language, dressing styles, and behaviors contrary to Christian values, contributing to a normalization of immorality.

4.1.8 Substance abuse and peer influence

Several respondents mentioned that juveniles in their community had increasingly engaged in drug and alcohol use during the pandemic period. With less parental control and community oversight, peer groups became a primary influence.

“We’ve found children as young as 13 drinking in trading centers. This was unheard of before COVID,” shared a youth leader.

The loss of structured time and absence of school or church activity was a significant factor enabling this behavior.

4.1.9 Sexual immorality and early relationships

Respondents also reported a rise in early sexual activity and pregnancy among juvenile girls in the parish. This was linked to idleness, lack of education continuity, and exposure to inappropriate media.

“We know of several girls who got pregnant during lockdown. Some have not returned to school,” one church elder recounted.

The moral standards that discouraged premarital relationships weakened as parental and spiritual accountability diminished.

Decline in respect for authority

Respondents described a general decline in respect for both church and societal authority. This included refusal to follow church norms, arguments with elders, and ignoring instructions.

“Children used to kneel to greet or at least show respect. Now they argue or walk away,” said a senior woman in the parish.

Many attributed this to overexposure to Western media and lack of active spiritual reinforcement during the lockdown.

4.1.10 Parental negligence and excessive freedom

Several respondents noted that during the lockdown, some parents became too permissive or negligent, especially while trying to cope with economic hardship.

“Some parents were too busy surviving to discipline their children. They left them to do as they pleased,” reported a local leader.

This freedom allowed juveniles to engage in behavior previously restricted—such as roaming villages unsupervised, forming inappropriate relationships, and missing prayers.

4.1.11 Erosion of community accountability systems

The traditional community and church-based correction systems—where neighbors could rebuke or guide juveniles—was also affected by the restrictions and distancing measures during COVID-19.

“In the past, we corrected each other’s children. Now, parents say ‘mind your business’,” noted a born-again respondent.

This loss of communal responsibility allowed some juveniles to escape correction and accountability.

4.1.12 Imitation of negative role models at home

In some homes, juveniles were exposed to inappropriate behavior from adults, especially in cases where parents consumed alcohol or used abusive language in their presence.

“We see some parents drinking with their children. What morals will the child learn?” asked one Christian.

This domestic exposure to immoral behaviors was said to significantly shape the juvenile’s own behavior and moral framework.

4.1.13 Loss of aspirations and motivation

Many respondents believed that the long school closures and uncertainty about the future caused juveniles to lose focus and motivation for moral living.

“When school stopped and no one could say when it would return, children gave up. They lost purpose,” said a parent.

This emotional and psychological discouragement led many to seek quick gratification through activities considered immoral in Christian teaching.

4.2 Factors Contributing to moral degeneration among juveniles during the COVID-19 pandemic

This section presents the findings from respondents on the various factors that contributed to moral degeneration among juveniles during the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly within Nyanga Church of Uganda, Kyakabunga Archdeaconry, North Ankole Diocese. The researcher employed a qualitative method of inquiry to gather and interpret data from open-ended questionnaires, observations, and key informant interviews.

The findings indicate that a combination of parental factors, socio-economic challenges, church closures, digital exposure, and peer pressure contributed significantly to juvenile moral decline during the pandemic.

4.2.1 Parental neglect and reduced supervision

Several respondents indicated that the pandemic led to increased parental stress and economic hardship, which in turn caused many parents to reduce their focus on children’s moral upbringing.

“Parents were too busy looking for food to monitor the children. They left them to do whatever they wanted,” stated a local mother in Kyakabunga.

This lack of parental supervision created a vacuum where juveniles made unguided choices, often leading to behavioral misconduct, disrespect, and loss of Christian values.

4.2.2 Poor parenting styles

Many respondents highlighted that both authoritarian and permissive parenting styles contributed to moral decay. While authoritarian parenting created rebellious tendencies, permissive parenting allowed too much freedom, which juveniles exploited during lockdown.

“Some parents are either too harsh or too soft. Both ways spoil the children,”

noted a youth counselor.

Children under authoritarian parenting felt suppressed and emotionally distant from parents, while those under permissive parents lacked boundaries and engaged in antisocial behaviors such as fighting, truancy, and disrespect.

4.2.3 Loss of church-based moral instruction

Respondents unanimously noted that the closure of churches and Sunday schools during COVID-19 cut off juveniles from structured spiritual teaching.

“Church used to teach our children how to behave. Without it, they were like sheep without a shepherd,” said a retired elder from Nyanga.

The absence of these spiritual foundations, especially for adolescents still forming their values, led to a noticeable increase in disrespect, vulgar language, and moral confusion among youth.

4.2.4 Increased exposure to technology and negative media

With schools and churches closed, juveniles had more unsupervised time at home and often turned to mobile phones, television, and internet platforms. Respondents

consistently mentioned that exposure to immoral content was a major factor in behavioral degeneration. *“Our children watch foreign films that promote sexual immorality and violence.*

They copy everything they see,” reported a female youth leader. Children adopted foreign values that conflicted with local Christian norms, leading to promiscuity, swearing, and mimicking of inappropriate dressing styles.

4.2.5 Peer pressure and idleness

Respondents pointed out that during lockdowns, children spent excessive time in peer groups without guidance, often indulging in risky behavior such as substance abuse, gambling, and theft.

“With no school, no church, and no work, they moved in groups and started stealing or taking alcohol,” reported a village leader.

These unsupervised social circles encouraged behaviors that deviated from Christian teachings, further deepening the moral crisis.

4.2.6 Substance abuse

A number of respondents highlighted a rise in drug and alcohol use among juveniles during the COVID-19 period, often linked to peer pressure and absence of adult supervision.

“We found young boys drinking local brew and sniffing fuel. It was shocking,” said one church youth chairperson.

The pandemic disrupted regular monitoring structures and created emotional stress in homes, making some juveniles turn to substance use as a form of escape.

4.2.7 Economic hardships and survival behaviors

Many families faced economic collapse during the pandemic, which pushed some juveniles into petty crime, child labor, or immoral acts to survive.

“Some girls were lured into sexual relationships in exchange for food or money,”

lamented a church mother’s union leader.

This survival mindset led to moral compromise, especially among vulnerable juveniles whose parents had lost income or livelihoods.

Lack of role models and parental indiscipline

Respondents indicated that many children copied negative behaviors directly from adults in their homes or communities.

“If a parent drinks alcohol with their child or uses abusive words, what can you expect from that child?” asked a primary school teacher.

Some parents were reported to openly engage in immoral acts in front of their children, thereby setting a poor example and encouraging moral degeneration.

4.2.8 Breakdown of community moral structures

The traditional communal systems where adults could discipline or advise other people's children were disrupted by the pandemic.

“Before COVID, elders could discipline any child in the village. Now parents say ‘don’t touch my child’,” observed a local elder.

This loss of communal correction gave juveniles more freedom to act without consequences or guidance.

4.2.9 Psychological stress and trauma

The psychological burden brought on by the fear of the virus, isolation, loss of loved ones, and uncertainty about the future was also cited as a factor.

“Children were scared, lonely, and confused. Some became aggressive or stopped caring about right and wrong,” said a church counselor.

These emotional and psychological effects disrupted juveniles' ability to process right from wrong and increased impulsive and reckless behavior.

Coping mechanisms that can be employed by juveniles to maintain moral values during the pandemic

The researcher sought to understand the mechanisms juveniles in Bubaare Sub County, particularly within Nyanga Church of Uganda, employed or could employ to maintain moral values during the COVID-19 pandemic. Through qualitative methods including open-ended questionnaires and key informant interviews, the study identified several strategies used by morally resilient juveniles and those recommended by parents, religious leaders, and community elders.

4.2.10 Engagement in church and family-based devotions

A significant number of respondents mentioned that participation in family prayers, Bible reading, and home-based devotions helped juveniles remain morally grounded during the pandemic.

“Every evening, we gathered as a family to read the Bible and pray together. This routine reminded us of God’s expectations and kept us from doing wrong,” shared one teenage respondent.

Even in the absence of formal church gatherings, some families maintained spiritual discipline, allowing children to develop personal conviction and spiritual resilience, reinforcing Christian moral values.

4.2.11 Positive use of media and religious programs

While many juveniles were exposed to inappropriate content, others leveraged Christian media such as online services, gospel music, and children's Bible stories aired on radio or television to reinforce their moral compass.

“We listened to church programs on Radio Ankole every Sunday. They helped us understand how to behave even when schools were closed,” said a parent from Nyamiga village.

4.3 These programs served as a substitute for traditional Sunday school and helped fill the moral instruction gap left by closed churches.

Involvement in household responsibilities and productive activities

Some juveniles stayed morally upright by becoming actively engaged in household duties such as farming, cooking, and helping younger siblings. Respondents emphasized that responsibility gave children purpose and reduced idleness, which is often linked to moral degeneration.

“My mother taught me how to plant vegetables. It kept me busy and made me feel useful. I didn’t have time to loiter,” reported a female adolescent.

Structured daily routines built around meaningful tasks contributed to positive behavior reinforcement.

4.4.4 Guidance from responsible and available adults

Several respondents noted that constant communication and moral guidance from parents, guardians, or other trusted adults played a key role in keeping juveniles morally upright during the pandemic.

“I thank my aunt who always reminded me to be honest, pray, and respect everyone even when we didn’t go to church,” one child stated.

Even in homes where formal religious activities were limited, the presence of morally grounded adults helped children reflect on their values and decision-making.

4.4.5 Peer support and influence from morally upright friends

Some respondents indicated that juveniles who surrounded themselves with like-minded peers—particularly those from church fellowships or Christian families—were better able to cope morally.

“I have two friends from Sunday school. We used to call each other and pray together during lockdown. We even shared Bible verses,” said a 14-year-old boy.

4.4.6 This form of peer accountability and support served as a moral anchor and discouraged involvement in bad behaviors such as drug abuse, gambling, or disobedience.

Personal reflection and self-control

A few juveniles interviewed shared that they engaged in personal reflection and made individual decisions to avoid immorality, often motivated by their desire to please God or stay out of trouble.

“Even when others were misbehaving, I kept reminding myself that I want to be a good person. I don’t want to disappoint God or my parents,” said a senior two student.

This demonstrated a developing internal moral compass where young people took personal responsibility for their conduct despite external pressures.

4.4.7 Role modelling by parents and elders

A number of respondents stated that juveniles learned morality by observing parents or adults who lived upright lives, especially those who practiced what they preached.

“My father does not drink, and he always teaches us to work hard and respect people. Watching him helped me know what is right,” one

youth shared.

This underscores the importance of parental example in moral upbringing, particularly in crises like a pandemic when institutional influence is limited.

4.4.8 Structured daily routines

Juveniles who had clearly defined routines, including time for chores, study, rest, and spiritual growth, were said to exhibit better moral discipline than those who had no structure during the lockdown period.

“My elder sister made us a timetable for the day. We read, prayed, worked in the garden, and had fun together,” said one respondent.

Routine not only helped manage time wisely but also minimized exposure to peer pressure and idle behavior.

4.4.9 Seeking mentorship and counseling from trusted adults

Respondents indicated that a few juveniles actively sought advice and mentorship from older siblings, church elders, and youth leaders when faced with difficult moral choices.

“When I was confused, I called my Sunday school teacher and talked to her. She helped me understand what to do,” a respondent reported.

This demonstrates that juveniles value relational support systems and can maintain morality when such structures are encouraged and made accessible.

4.4.10 Participation in community and church-initiated activities

Although limited by lockdown restrictions, some church leaders organized small Bible study groups, home visitations, and food distributions, which indirectly reinforced Christian values and ethical conduct.

“Our pastor used to send us memory verses and check on us through our parents. It made us feel connected to church,” one respondent shared.

Such initiatives, even when modest, sustained spiritual engagement and moral focus among the young.

CHAPTER FIVE:

THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION

5.1 Biblical Perspectives

5.1.1 Old Testament Perspective:

In the Old Testament, the emphasis on communal responsibility, moral instruction, and covenantal faithfulness provides essential theological insights into the issue of **moral degeneration among juveniles**, particularly during the disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Parental and Communal Responsibility in Moral Formation:

Deuteronomy 6:6-9 emphasizes the role of parents in teaching God's commandments diligently to their children. The passage instructs that moral values should be imparted continuously – “when you sit at home and when you walk along the road.” During the pandemic, the breakdown of school and church routines revealed the importance of consistent parental instruction in maintaining moral order.

Proverbs 22:6 teaches, “Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.” This biblical principle underscores the need for early moral training and the potential long-term consequences when this is neglected, especially in periods of crisis like COVID-19.

The Danger of Moral Laxity in Times of Crisis:

In **Judges 2:10-12**, we find a tragic decline in moral values after a generation forgot the works of the Lord. The passage illustrates how, when spiritual transmission is broken, particularly from one generation to the next, moral degeneration follows. This situation is parallel to the effects of COVID-19 on

juvenile behavior when communal and spiritual activities were halted.

5.1.2 New Testament Perspective:

The New Testament affirms the role of the family, community, and church in preserving moral order and nurturing young people in the faith. Jesus' Care for the Young and Moral Teaching:

In **Matthew 19:14**, Jesus says, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these." This shows Christ's concern for the moral and spiritual well-being of children. COVID-19 restrictions, which limited access to church, indirectly hindered many juveniles from growing in this relationship.

Moral Teaching and Christian Conduct:

Titus 2:6-8 urges young people to be self-controlled and to set an example by doing what is good. This passage highlights the necessity for mentorship and the modeling of good behavior by older Christians, which was found lacking for many juveniles during the lockdown.

1 Corinthians 15:33 warns, "Do not be misled: 'Bad company corrupts good character.'" This Scripture is particularly relevant as many juveniles during the pandemic associated with negative influences in the absence of school and church supervision, leading to immoral behavior.

5.2 Theological Scholars and Church Fathers

5.2.1 Insights from Early Church Fathers:

Augustine of Hippo (354-430 AD):

Augustine strongly believed in original sin and the need for ongoing moral training, especially among the youth. He taught that the church and parents must work together to instill virtue, emphasizing that moral decay is a spiritual issue that must

be addressed through prayer, discipline, and godly instruction.

John Chrysostom (349-407 AD):

Chrysostom, in his homilies, stressed the role of the family in nurturing children in the faith. He warned against parents who neglected their moral duty, asserting that such neglect would lead children into ruin. His teachings suggest that the COVID-19 lockdown, which left many children without structured moral guidance, required parents to step into stronger spiritual leadership roles.

Contributions from Reformation Theologians:

Martin Luther (1483-1546):

Luther emphasized the priesthood of all believers and the responsibility of every Christian, especially parents, in teaching the faith. He advocated for home-based catechism, which resonates with the need for home-centered moral instruction during pandemic-related church closures.

John Calvin (1509-1564):

Calvin believed that all human faculties, including moral reasoning, must be submitted to God's Word. He emphasized the importance of moral discipline and community accountability. In the context of juvenile degeneration during COVID-19, Calvin would have argued for stronger structures of moral accountability within the family and church, even if traditional systems were disrupted.

5.3 Anglican Orthodoxy and Ecumenical

Engagement Anglican Teachings on Moral

Formation:

The Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion, particularly Article XX and Article XXIX, highlight the Church's role in teaching, correcting, and preserving godly discipline. Anglican theology upholds the church as a moral guide, especially for the youth.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, when public worship was restricted, the Church was challenged to find new ways to fulfill this role, including through virtual worship, phone ministry, and distributing devotional materials to homes.

The Book of Common Prayer also includes prayers for children, youth, and families, which reflect the deep Anglican concern for moral upbringing within the covenant community. These liturgical resources can support households in their spiritual and moral responsibilities.

Ecumenical Engagement and Moral Solidarity:

The Anglican Communion has long encouraged **ecumenical collaboration** in education and social issues. In addressing moral degeneration among youth during crises like COVID-19, churches across denominational lines can work together in offering community programs, online Bible studies, youth counseling, and family support services.

In Nyanga Church of Uganda and Kyakabunga Archdeaconry, embracing this ecumenic spirit can help address this shared moral issue among juveniles by working with schools, NGOs, and other churches to attain a shared moral response.

CHAPTER SIX:

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Summary of Findings

The purpose of this study was to explore how the COVID-19 pandemic affected the erosion of ethics among the youth population, specifically focusing on the Nyanga Church of Uganda in the Kyakabunga Archdeaconry of the North Ankole Diocese.

The findings can be summarized as follows:

Both the permissive and authoritarian styles of parenting were found to have a significant impact on the morality of adolescents during the pandemic. Authoritarian parenting has been linked to increased rebelliousness, emotional detachment, and increased use of substances that were a result of over-rigidity and lack of emotional involvement. Permissive parenting, on the other hand, led to uncertainty in regard to moral boundaries and often resulted in behavioral issues for the lack of discipline and guidance.

The lockdown policies led to the suspension of school life, restrictions on church attendance, and reduced access to organized environments, thus subjecting teenagers to greater peer influence, idleness, and moral deficiencies. The absence of moral direction from schools and religious institutions further complicated the efforts of many young people to maintain selfdiscipline.

The adolescent group practiced coping strategies that were adaptive, including participation in family religious activities, taking domestic chores, watching Christian movies, adherence to structured routines, and seeking advice from

mentors, parents, or friends. These coping strategies allowed them to maintain moral balance despite the external challenges posed by the pandemic.

The findings suggested that the engagement of ethically upright parents or guardians, in addition to efforts from religious groups and community leaders, played a substantial role in helping particular adolescents maintain their morals. On the contrary, the lack of such a support system was linked with an increase in moral decay.

Conclusion

The study demonstrates that the COVID-19 pandemic significantly interfered with traditional moral support structures among teenagers, particularly in education and religious settings, and thus created increased vulnerability to immoral behavior. The quality of parenting, community engagement, and presence of spiritual and social guidance during the pandemic came out as the key determinants for the worsening or mitigation of moral erosion.

Authoritarian parenting, in its aim to control, often led to estrangement of children, while permissive parenting lacked the establishing of necessary structure. But when adolescents were given access to emotionally supportive adults, religious practice, and peer accountability, they were more likely to uphold their moral values. Enabling ethical growth among teenagers during times of crisis requires an all-encompassing, supportive, and value-based environment that involves collaborative participation from religious entities, community organizations, and families.

6.2 Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations were made;

Parents should be encouraged through church programs and community forums to adopt authoritative parenting, which balances discipline with warmth, communication, and guidance. Parenting workshops should be organized to equip families with child-rearing skills that promote moral growth.

Churches should encourage families to maintain regular home-based devotions and spiritual instruction. Even in times of public restrictions, churches should distribute devotional materials, create family prayer guides, and offer support to parents as moral educators.

Faith-based organizations should develop and promote accessible online and radio content such as sermons, Bible studies, and youth programs to reach juveniles who may not attend church physically. These platforms can serve as ongoing moral and spiritual resources.

Community leaders and churches should organize safe, structured, and developmentally appropriate activities for youth, even during pandemics. These may include agricultural projects, music, creative arts, or virtual Bible quizzes, which provide meaningful engagement and moral direction.

Churches should develop mentorship programs connecting youths with trusted Christian adults and peers for guidance. Encouraging peer fellowship and accountability among young people can reinforce moral behavior and spiritual resilience.

Parents should be encouraged to monitor and guide their children's media use and daily routines, especially during times when schools are closed. Open communication, rather than force, fosters trust and moral dialogue.

Parents and community members should be reminded that their behavior influences juvenile conduct. Programs should highlight the importance of modeling integrity, honesty, and faithfulness in everyday life.

Further research should explore long-term impacts of pandemic-related disruptions on juvenile morality, as well as effective post-pandemic interventions that can be implemented by churches, schools, and families to rebuild moral foundations among youth.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Questionnaire

I am undertaking academic research entitled “COVID-19 and moral degeneration among the juveniles: a case study of Nyanga church of Uganda in Kyakabunga Archdeaconry, North Ankole Diocese”.

SECTION A: DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTION

Tick the most suitable.

Qn 1. AGE.

18-29 30-39 40-49 50- 60 and above

59

Qn 2. GENDER.

Female Male

Qn 3. MARITAL STATUS.

Married Single Divorced Others

Qn 4. RELIGION.

Protestant Born again Catholic Muslim Others

Qn 5.

EDUCATIONAL LEVEL.

P1-P7 S1-S4 S5-S6 Tertiary education Never went to school

Qn 6. OCCUPATION LEVEL.

Businessman/wom

Selfemployed

What is the impact of COVID-19 on moral values among juveniles in Nyanga Church of Uganda?

.....

What are the factors contributing to moral degeneration among juveniles during the COVID- 19 pandemic?

What can be the coping mechanisms employed by juveniles to maintain moral values during the pandemic?

Thank. God bless you

