

**HOLISTIC CHILD MINISTRY AND CHURCH: A CASE STUDY OF EMANUEL
RUBAYA CHURCH OF UGANDA PARISH, RUKORE ARCHDEACONRY,
DIOCESE OF KIGEZI**

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**A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO BISHOP TURCKER SCHOOL OF DIVINITY AND
THEOLOGY IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF
THE DEGREE OF BACHELOR OF DIVINITY OF UGANDA CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY**

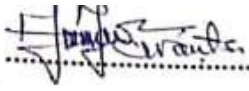
June, 2025



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DECLARATION

I TWIKIRIZE APOLLO hereby declare that this research report is my original work and has never been submitted to any university or institution of higher learning for the award of a bachelor's degree in Divinity

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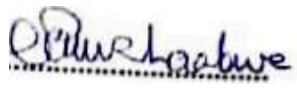
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APPROVAL

I hereby certify that this research was done under my supervision and will be submitted to the head of department Uganda Christian University, Bishop Barham College in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of Bachelor's degree in Divinity

Signature 

Date 23 / 06 / 2025

REV. GOOD TURYAHAABWE

DEDICATION

I dedicate my research report to my beloved wife; Annet Twikirize, my children; Ahereza Gift Asinguza David Grant, parent Mrs Alice Nyesigire', friends and all relatives

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Glory is to the Almighty God, for his constant love, protection, guidance and every day provision that has led me successfully to end of this research report.

I am greatly indebted to my mother Alice Nyesigire, my dear wife, children as well as my friends and relatives for the spiritual guidance, emotional, financial support as well as the nurturing and upbringing I have acquired from them.

Special thanks go to my Dear wife Mrs. Annet Twikirize for the assistance and guidance accorded to me as well as the emotional, social and financial support rendered to me in the course of this research report.

Greatly indebted to Rev. Good Turyahaabwe for his unwavering academic support through guidance constant supervision and appropriate compilation of this report May God's grace continue to be with you.

ABSTRACT

The purpose of the study was to examine the impact of holistic ministry on the church at Rubaya Church of Uganda Parish. It was guided by three objectives namely; to examine the contributions of holistic children ministry to the Church at Rubaya Church of Uganda Parish, to find out the challenges hindering the holistic development of children ministry at Rubaya Church of Uganda Parish and to explore the possible ways through which holistic children ministry can be improved at Rubaya Church of Uganda Parish. The research design applied both qualitative and quantitative methods to data collection and analysis. A cross-sectional design was applied. A sample size of 36 respondents was determined through purposive and random sampling methods. The study concludes that, children ministry programs have a significant effect on children's spiritual growth and this effect is mainly through bringing children close to Christ, spiritual nourishment, helping children relate to Bible teachings, improving moral as well as depending on the understanding of Christian faith. The study recommends that Emmanuel Rubaya church of Uganda Parish to improve the children ministry programs to, promote the overall church growth and there's a need for church to introduce and implement new Sunday school curriculum that is friendly and meets the needs of children.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Rev.	Reverend.
C.O.U	Church of Uganda.
St.	Saint.
Mr.	Mister

CHAPTER ONE: GENERAL INTRODUCTION

1.0 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 on the topic “Holistic Child Ministry and Church: A Case Study of Emanuel Rubaya Church of Uganda Parish, Rukore Archdeaconry - Diocese of Kigezi”

1.1 Background of the Study

Emmanuel Rubaya church of Uganda Parish is found in Rukore archdeaconry in the Diocese of Kigezi,

The Diocese was born in 1967, carved out of the then Ankole Kigezi Diocese, and has since then given birth to three other Dioceses of North Kigezi (1981), Muhabura Diocese (1990), and Kinkiizi Diocese (1995) as its grandchild since it was carved from North Kigezi diocese.

The first Bishop of Kigezi was Rt Rev. Richard Lyth (1967-1972), followed by Bishop Festo Kivengyere (1972-1988), Bishop William Rukirande (1988-1997), Bishop George Katwesigye (1998-2013), Bishop George Bagamuhunda (2014- May 2022), and the current Bishop (Bishop Gaddie Akanjuna (June 2022 to-date).

Diocese of Kigezi is well known for it has overtime been spiritually rejuvenated by the famous outpouring of The Holy Spirit in the 1935 Spiritual Revival, which stimulated its unique spiritual growth and direction that is now celebrated worldwide as the East African Revival movement. Since 1935, the Church in Kigezi has grown showing

characteristics of the East African revival which centre on evangelical theological direction its grip. It is a Church that upholds and exploits spiritual gifts to bear spiritual fruits of the Spirit. The work of mission continues to be emphasized and people continue to surrender their lives to Christ. The Diocese has upheld holistic Christian values that liberate God's people.

The Diocese has 17 Archdeaconries, 102 Parishes, and 417 Local Churches. It also has 25 Chaplaincies that are vibrantly raising children and students in schools and colleges. The recent (2023) internal Diocesan Census put the total population at 356,000 people.

The the archdeaconries include; Rwancerere, Kamuganguzi, Muyebe Kikungiri All saints kabale, Kamuronko, Kizinga, Nyabirerema, Buhangizi, Kihanga, Kantare, St. Peter's Cathedral, Bubare, Nyaruhanga, Muko, Kacerere and Rukore archdeaconry where Emmanuel Rubaya church of Uganda Parish is located.

The Diocese covers the 3 Districts of Kabale, Rukiga, and Rubanda, and the Diocesan Headquarters (Diocesan Offices and Cathedral) are located at Rugarama Hill in the Centre of Kabale Town.

Rubaya Church of Uganda started in 1944 at a place called Kyabagara which is found currently in kahungye sub county at the top of the hill where its sub parish Kyabagara is situated. It was led by late Elinest Bazira, followed by Mr Filipo Butozi and a wife to late Rwemera called Elinora Bwandagara.

In 1946, it was shifted from Kyabagara to kitojo and by then, it was led by Mr Samuel Ntonzi. In 1947, it was again shifted from kitojo to the current beautiful place which

was given in by late Bangamwabo in the exchange of the land in kitojo where it was built.

In 1950, Rubaya Church of Uganda was granted a sub parish status (muluka) and given authority to oversee eleven (11) local churches. These include; - Murandamo, Bigaaga, katojo, Kyabagara, Rwemihanga, Bwaya, Muguri, Rutare, Nyamabare I, Nyamabare II, and Rushaabo church of Uganda.

In 1978, Rubaya Church of Uganda was elevated from sub parish status to the Parish status and the parish priests who served there to date are here under mentioned and the time they spent there; -

Rev. James Kajorogo 1978 - 1979, Rev. Fred Mugyenga 1979- 1981, Rev. Esau Turyakira 1981- 1985,

Rev. David Rwigyemera 1986- 1986, Rev. Jack Katarishangwa 1986- 1989, Rev. Elly Chrissy Nyesigire

1989- 1994, Rev. Edward Mwesigwa 1994- 2003, Rev. Kenneth Byaruhanga 2003- 2005, Rev. Justus Twinomujuni 2005- 2008, Rev. Godfrey Twesiine 2008- 2011, Rev. Amos Tumushabe 2011- 2012, Rev. Gad Musimenta 2013- 2016, Rev. Bens Aharimpisya 2016- 2021, Rev. Dickens Tukamuhabwa 2021 todate.

1.2 Problem statement

It has been observed that children ministry is the most neglected ministry in the church. Many churches concentrate on mature Christians because they are the ones who contribute financially to the development of the church (Luzinda, 2015). This is not surprising because even Jesus' disciples wanted to hinder them from accessing him (Mark 10:13-14). Research shows that Some Churches that have embraced children ministry lack the element of holistic children ministry. Emphasis is put on memorization of bible verses but application is lacking. There is no standard curriculum, no official teaching materials, no professionally trained teachers, and facilities are also lacking. The physical element is lacking because children are not taught healthy issues for example taking care of their bodies and avoiding diseases. The social element is lacking because children are not given time to interact freely and have no mercy in what they do, ego centric in their ways. Also, the cognitive/educational element is neglected for example children have no chance to think about their careers and there is no development of livelihood skills. (Philip, 2016) According to World Vision the church needs to reach out to people and especially children in a holistic way - spiritually, physically, socially as well as economically. The church has a responsibility to invest in children and the time is now. (Mukhwana, 2015). Available records show that the church lacks a strong foundation of children ministry and because of that there are no well-groomed Christians who can stand the test of time and carry on the church to the desired growth. Christians today are swept by all kinds of teaching because they are not well groomed spiritually, physically, socially and cognitively. The world lacks adults with Christian principles to serve in various positions because they are not well groomed

from childhood. (Mukhwana, 2015). It was against this background that the researcher intended to find out the contribution of holistic children ministry towards Church growth and find out how holistic children ministry can be improved at Rubaya Church of Uganda Parish.

1.3 Purpose of the study

The purpose of the study was to examine the impact of holistic ministry on the church at Rubaya Church of Uganda Parish.

1.3.1 Objectives of the study

- i. To examine the contributions of holistic children ministry to the Church at Rubaya Church of Uganda Parish
- ii. To find out the challenges hindering the holistic development of children ministry at Rubaya Church of Uganda Parish.
- iii. To explore the possible ways through which holistic children ministry can be improved at Rubaya Church of Uganda Parish.

1.4 Research questions

- i. What is the contributions of holistic children ministry to the Church at Rubaya Church of Uganda Parish?
- ii. What are the challenges hindering the holistic development of children ministry at Rubaya Church of Uganda Parish?
- iii. What are the possible ways through which holistic children ministry can be improved at Rubaya Church of Uganda Parish?

1.5 Scope of the study

1.5.1 Geographical scope

The geographical scope of the study will be Rubaya Church of Uganda Parish, Rukore Archdeaconry - diocese of Kigezi.

1.5.2 Content scope

The study was focused on the contributions of holistic children ministry to the Church, the challenges hindering the holistic development of children ministry and the possible solutions to improving holistic children ministry at Rubaya Church of Uganda Parish

1.5.3 Time scope

This study was done in a period of three months from April to June. The study was carried out with a focus on the information from 2014 to 2024. This is a period under which holistic children ministry was common in Diocese of Kigezi.

1.6 Significance of the study

Holistic children ministry is of great importance because it is the foundation of the church. Children who are empowered holistically grow in all spheres of life, that is, spiritually, physically, socially and economically.

This study will be of great importance to the church because it will help in discovering how child ministry is being done. The church will be able to identify the possible gaps existing within the implementation of holistic child ministry and how they can be

closed. For example, finding professional children's church teachers who can handle the different aspects of holistic children's ministry.

The study will help parents and caregivers to understand whether what is being taught to their children is holistic or not. They will discover ways through which child ministry can be improved holistically for the benefit of the children.

1.7 Definition of key terms I this topic

Holistic Child Ministry

Holistic Child Ministry refers to a child-centered approach practiced within Christian communities that seeks to address the spiritual, emotional, physical, and intellectual development of children. It goes beyond traditional Sunday school teaching to include mentorship, psychosocial support, life skills training, and community engagement. The goal is to nurture the whole child in a manner that reflects biblical values and practical care (Brewster, 2013; Myers, 2011).

Church

In this study, the term "Church" refers to the organized Christian community, specifically the Emanuel Rubaya Church of Uganda Parish, functioning within the Rukore Archdeaconry of the Diocese of Kigezi. The church serves as both a religious and social institution, playing a central role in moral teaching, spiritual growth, and community development, particularly for children and youth (Kisembo, 2014).

Child Development

Child development in the context of this study refers to the progressive improvement of a child's capabilities across various domains that is, spiritual, cognitive, emotional, physical, and social. It emphasizes nurturing children's potential through intentional, supportive, and faith-based interventions provided by families, churches, and communities (Nabwami, 2020).

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

This chapter is the review of the literature related to the topic under study. This chapter involves the facts that have already been written about children and church growth/ development.

2.1 Contributions of holistic children ministry to the church

Research indicates that a person's lifelong behaviors and beliefs are generally developed when they are young particularly before their teenage years.

Globally, the role of the church in child development has increasingly been recognized as a critical aspect of holistic ministry. Holistic child ministry seeks to address the spiritual, emotional, physical, and intellectual needs of children within the context of faith communities. According to Brewster (2013), holistic child ministry integrates biblical teaching with child-focused development strategies to ensure that children grow in a nurturing and morally grounded environment. The church, as a spiritual and social institution, is uniquely positioned to influence children's moral behavior, character development, and community engagement from a young age.

In many parts of the world, churches have taken a proactive approach by developing child-focused ministries that combine education, health awareness, mentorship, and spiritual growth. As per Myers (2011), such initiatives often collaborate with families, schools, and community leaders to build a strong support network around the child. In contexts where governmental child welfare systems are weak or under-resourced,

churches frequently fill the gap by offering both moral guidance and practical support services. This global framework establishes the foundation for understanding the importance of holistic child ministry within local church settings such as Emanuel Rubaya Church of Uganda Parish.

In the African context, the church has historically played a significant role in shaping the moral and social development of children. African communities, particularly in rural settings, regard the church not only as a religious institution but also as a pillar of communal life. According to Kasambala (2006), the African church has evolved into a center for education, social support, and moral instruction, especially for the young. Child-focused ministries have become increasingly necessary in addressing challenges such as poverty, family instability, and limited access to formal education.

In many parts of Africa, churches run Sunday schools, youth fellowships, and educational programs aimed at equipping children with life skills and ethical values. A study by Moyo & Sibanda (2019) emphasized that holistic child ministry is particularly effective when church programs intentionally include mentorship, recreational activities, and practical life guidance, thereby helping children avoid societal pitfalls like early substance abuse or delinquency. African churches that incorporate a holistic approach often report stronger youth engagement and better long-term moral outcomes for the children involved.

Uganda presents a unique context for holistic child ministry due to its strong Christian heritage and predominantly young population. The church in Uganda has historically played an integral role in education and social welfare, especially in rural communities.

According to Kitembo (2014), Ugandan churches have been central in promoting moral development through Sunday school programs, catechism classes, and youth ministry. However, rural parishes often lack the resources to implement fully holistic programs, leaving many children underserved in terms of comprehensive care and guidance.

Despite these challenges, churches in Uganda have continued to adapt by engaging in community outreach, offering parenting seminars, and launching child sponsorship initiatives. A study by Nabwami (2020) found that when churches integrate spiritual teachings with practical services like health education and academic support, children are more likely to exhibit positive behavioral and academic outcomes. The church is therefore a vital actor in ensuring that children not only learn about faith but also experience practical love and support from their religious communities.

Within the Diocese of Kigezi, and specifically the Rukore Archdeaconry, the Emanuel Rubaya Church of Uganda Parish stands as a model for grassroots holistic child ministry. Located in a rural and mountainous area of southwestern Uganda, the parish has made significant efforts to minister to children through integrated programs. According to a local report by Rukore Archdeaconry (2023), the church runs a vibrant Sunday school and youth fellowship that focus on character formation, biblical literacy, and life skills training. These programs are led by dedicated volunteers and lay readers who recognize the importance of early moral and spiritual guidance.

Holistic child ministry in Emanuel Rubaya Parish includes not only spiritual formation but also psychosocial support. The church partners with local schools to promote education and organizes community health days to raise awareness about nutrition and

hygiene for children. A recent study by Rukore Child Outreach Team (2024) revealed that children involved in church programs at Emanuel Rubaya Parish demonstrated higher levels of empathy, discipline, and community participation than their peers who were not engaged. The church has also initiated peer mentorship groups, where older youths guide younger ones in spiritual matters and personal growth, promoting intergenerational support within the congregation.

Moreover, the church actively collaborates with parents and guardians, recognizing that holistic child development requires a collective effort. According to Tumuhimbise (2023), parental involvement in church-led child programs has led to more stable family environments and reduced incidents of behavioral issues among participating children. By integrating faith, community service, education, and psychosocial care, Emanuel Rubaya Church exemplifies how rural parishes can implement holistic ministry models that are contextually relevant and spiritually transformative.

Research indicates that a person's lifelong behaviors and beliefs are generally developed when they are young particularly before their teenage years.

According to Barna 2003, a person's moral foundations are generally in place by age 9. After that age, most people simply refine their views. A person's response to Jesus (and the gospel concerning his life, death and resurrection) is usually determined before age 18. For most Americans, the response is set by age 12. A person's spiritual beliefs are set in place when they are preteens. Those beliefs include the nature of God, the existence of Satan, the reliability of the Bible, the afterlife, Jesus Christ, the means of gaining God's favor, and the influence of spiritual forces in a person's life. (Barna, 2003)

Barna noted that adult church leaders usually had significant involvement in the church when they were children. Thus, those who will become the church's leaders 20 years from now are probably active in children's church programs today. Children ministry plays a crucial role in grooming leaders for today and tomorrow. In his journal equipping children for ministry, Ted Johnstone says "I was visiting a congregation on the East coast and a couple of young girls about age 10 circulated through the congregation, receiving the offering in baskets. They then brought the baskets to the front and joined an adult to offer a prayer of thanksgiving. They did a marvelous job—clearly, they had been equipped for this work." When children are exposed to ministry opportunities at an early age, they will serve even in their adult years. (Johnston, 2022)

Children ministry teaches child discipline for example, it teaches children how to respect authority and to have good manners. Discipline is core for the success of any child in life and a child cannot get discipline anywhere else apart from the church. Psalms 1:7 states that "the fear of God is the beginning of wisdom" following God's laws at an early age allows a child to grow up with discipline and it is through discipline that they attain knowledge.

Children's ministry provides kids with opportunities to help the community, such as doing acts of good and feeding the poor. Children learn to offer service to the community through Sunday school and other children's programs. For example, through the compassion sponsorship program children are given opportunity to do acts of service in the community such as cleaning the well, fetching water for the elderly, cleaning

premises for old people's homes and distributing some household items to families of needy people. ElizabethScott. (2022).

Children ministry gives a chance to children to accept Jesus Christ. Research has proven that kids tend to be more receptive to the Gospel than any other age group. Belief in Jesus at a tender age, helps children to avoid some negative outcomes of sin. Only God's grace can change our hearts, but knowing the consequences of disobeying God is often a wakeup call. When children understand the great price that Jesus paid for their salvation, they are more likely to stay on the way of the righteous. ElizabethScott. (2022).

Children ministry helps children to make new friends. Children ministry helps children to meet together through different activities, as they participate in those activities, they get to know each other and make friendships. Friendships made at church at such an early age are usually lasting friendships. For example, children supported by agencies such as world vision and compassion international are exposed to different programs both spiritual, physical, social and educational which help them to interact with each other hence forming long lasting friendships that even help them in the future long after their education. (Sharma, 2023)

It helps children to discover and intervene in abusive home situations. This is something we rarely address. But the church is often one of the few safe places on Earth for abused children. The church is a place where children can easily interact with their teachers

and through this interaction teachers are able to discover what takes place within a child's life. These interactions help children to share their stories about their homes and community hence when there is abuse in a child's life, the teacher is able to discover it and take appropriate measures to rescue the child. (Sharma, 2023)

Children ministry supports Godly parenting. Godly parenting is very crucial for raising God fearing children with both knowledge and discipline. This is done through parent/ caregiver seminars which are intended to educate parents and caregivers about their role in parenting. The church was never meant to be the exclusive faith teacher of children. Instead, God's plan was for the two institutions (church and family) to form a partnership. Through these seminars parents and caregivers are helped to fulfil their calling by involving them in the ministry, providing them with resources and training them in family discipleship which helps parents and caregivers to carry on the ministry outside church premises which is very crucial in ministry sustainability. (Caplan, 1989)

Holistic child ministry helps caregivers to acquire some skills through sensitizations. Children ministry programs which emphasize parent/ caregiver involvement usually help in empowering them with different skills through sensitizations. For example, through compassion international children ministry, parents and caregivers are usually invited for sensitizations such as nutritional sensitizations, family planning sensitizations and disease prevention sensitizations. Such skills have a great impact on family and community. They help families to know the number of children they should have at a given time depending on the available resources. They learn how to feed their

children on the foods that are appropriate for their age so that they grow as healthy vessels for the work of God. (Ministry, 2023)

Holistic child ministry brings unchurched families in contact with the Gospel. In our culture, reaching children is one of the most effective ways to make contact with unchurched families. A children's program at church acts as a point of contact between the church and the children's families. Churches with such programs usually also have times when they do home visitations, through home visitations, they are able to minister to the entire family, that is, the siblings and the parents/ caregivers. In so doing the gospel is spread to the entire family. For example, the World outreach ministry has reached more than three billion people through its children's ministry since 1932 (Ministry, 2023)

Holistic child ministry helps the church to pass on the faith. In every period of church history, this has been a struggle. Children's ministry helps the church in raising a generation of Christians who deeply understand their faith. This is achieved when the church has a comprehensive plan for Christian education. The Sunday school curriculum is very essential in helping children acquire spiritual knowledge necessary to equip them with the basic biblical knowledge. This curriculum is designed according to the church calendar hence it helps the children to learn the church seasons from advent through easter, Pentecost and Trinity. (Barna, 2003)

Holistic child ministry helps train future church leaders. When children are given chance to lead their peers through bible reading, leading praise, leading small groups, leading

intercessions among others, they acquire leadership skills that will even help them when they are adults. Leadership skills allow children to have control of their lives and the ability to make things happen. Leadership instills confidence, and helps children solve problems creatively, work in a team, and work collaboratively with others. Leadership gives children many opportunities to develop responsibility. There is some debate whether some children are “born leaders” or they “learn to be” leaders. All children have the potential to develop leadership skills. Leadership development can be a lifelong process. As adults, we can teach the skills necessary for children to take on leadership roles now and in the future. (Care, 2019)

Holistic child ministry raises community awareness of the church through special events. Special events such as sports gala, music dance and drama attract people from all walks of life and as they come for such events, they become aware of the church and its programs. Events such as talent competitions - a day where kids get together to showcase their talents is a great church event idea to get parents and children involved. It even brings on board the elderly (grandma and grandpa) as cheerers of their precious little ones. (Sharma, 2023)

Holistic child ministry helps big church go smoothly. Quality childcare is essential to allow parents to participate fully in the church worship service. As children are being attended to by their teachers, parents and caregivers, get time to concentrate in the adult service. Some churches which are more advanced have child care centers for even toddlers. For example, churches in Chicago western suburbs give parents the

opportunity to embrace weekly religious services without the struggle of caring their children. Drop-off nurseries and children's Bible school for preschool-aged children give parents the ability to connect with their faith, all while knowing their children are being cared for. ElizabethScott. (2022).

Holistic child ministry helps build a strong youth ministry. Children who grow up in child ministry become leaders in the student ministry. Children ministry produces vibrant youth who carry on the youth ministry as youth leaders, choir leaders, church machine operators and even Sunday school teachers. There can never be a vibrant youth ministry in a church where there is no vibrant children ministry. An intentional focus on children's and youth ministry results in more young people growing in their maturity of faith, more young people inviting their friends to church, and more young people continuing in their faith post high school. The Anglican Church in Australia has declared that "We are seeing young people influencing their parents and whole households coming to investigate Christ and his church through the godly witness of their children. Additionally, we are seeing all age groups in the church flourish as disciples of Jesus as they witness and participate in the church's investment in ministry to children and youth." (Beilharz, 2021)

Holistic child ministry allows for age-graded instruction. A tried-and-true way to promote learning is to teach on different maturity levels. Grouping children of the same age in a class is believed to meet the learning needs of the majority, the assumption being that children of the same age have similar levels of socio-emotional and cognitive

development; that their early childhood developmental trajectories, as well as inputs from their home environment, prepare them equally to meet the demands of formal schooling. Curricular expectations and teaching-learning materials are designed based on this assumption. (Thomas, 2022)

2.3 The challenges hindering the holistic development of children ministry

A critical challenge is the scarcity of adequately trained personnel to manage and lead children's ministry programs. Many church leaders and volunteers lack formal training in child development and pedagogy, leading to suboptimal delivery of ministry activities. This gap in expertise affects the effectiveness of spiritual and moral guidance provided to children (Kisembo, 2014).

In some communities, children are not perceived as active participants in church life. This cultural mindset leads to their marginalization in decision-making processes and ministry activities. Such attitudes undermine efforts to engage children holistically, limiting their opportunities for spiritual and personal growth within the church setting (Kasambala, 2006).

The physical infrastructure of many rural churches, including Emanuel Rubaya Parish, is often inadequate to support children's ministry programs. Lack of proper classrooms, play areas, and sanitation facilities creates an environment that is not conducive to effective learning and development for children (Rukore Archdeaconry report, 2023).

Parental engagement is crucial for the holistic development of children. However, many parents in the community are either unaware of or indifferent to the importance of

their involvement in their children's spiritual education. This lack of participation hinders the reinforcement of church teachings at home, affecting the overall development of children (Nabwami, 2020).

The prevailing socio-economic hardships faced by families in the region contribute to children's neglect in ministry programs. Economic constraints force children to prioritize labor over education and spiritual activities, leading to absenteeism and disengagement from church programs (Nanteza, 2020).

Gender biases within the community can lead to unequal opportunities for boys and girls in participating in church activities. Girls, in particular, may face cultural restrictions that limit their involvement in certain programs, thereby hindering their holistic development (Kasambala, 2016).

The lack of a structured and consistent approach to children's ministry results in fragmented and ineffective programs. Without a clear curriculum and regular activities, children receive disjointed teachings, which diminishes the impact of the ministry on their development (Rukore Archdeaconry reports, 2023).

Many children in the community face emotional and psychological challenges, yet the church lacks formal counseling services to address these issues. The absence of trained counselors and structured programs leaves children without the necessary support to navigate personal difficulties (Kisembo, 2014).

Children are often exposed to negative peer influences that conflict with the values taught in church. The church's limited engagement with the broader community makes

it challenging to counteract these influences effectively, leading to moral and behavioral issues among children (Mwita & Mwikali, 2022).

The integration of technology in children's ministry is minimal, limiting the church's ability to engage children through modern educational tools. Incorporating technology could enhance learning experiences and make ministry programs more appealing to the younger generation (Brewster, 2013).

The church's outreach programs often fail to reach all children in the community, especially those from marginalized backgrounds. This exclusion prevents a significant portion of the child population from benefiting from the church's holistic development initiatives (Rukore Archdeaconry reports, 2023).

The absence of adequate spiritual role models within the church community affects children's moral and spiritual development. Without positive examples to emulate, children may struggle to internalize and practice the teachings imparted during ministry programs (Kasambala, 2016).

There is often an overemphasis on academic success at the expense of spiritual and moral education. This imbalance leads to the neglect of holistic development, where children's emotional and spiritual needs are overlooked in favor of academic performance (Nabwami, 2020).

Resistance to adopting new methodologies and approaches in children's ministry hinders progress. Traditional practices and reluctance to innovate can prevent the church from implementing effective programs that address the evolving needs of children in the community (Kisembo, 2014).

2.3 The possible ways through which holistic children ministry can be improved at churches

Children ministry can be improved through a holistic approach to ensure each child's individual needs are supported, holistic child ministry is tailored to a child's age, gender, health, culture and family situation. When a child is enrolled in child ministry, they should receive spiritual guidance through the church, but should also be helped through family support programs to have access to nutritious food, access to clean water, quality health care and emotional support, alongside education and skills-based training. For example, Compassion's holistic child development model is designed to help children grow up to become thriving followers of Jesus who are positively influencing their world. its programs focus not only on the spiritual but also the social emotional, physical and cognitive aspects. (Noakes, 2022)

In order to improve children ministry, there is need to develop and equip a team to carry on the ministry. This should be done prayerfully by identifying and extending a personal invitation to potential coworkers. When you ask someone to join the team, tell them what's expected, clarify what they will do, and describe how they'll be supported and trained. The church should identify children ministry workers who qualify, who have a good moral background and invest in training them and giving them

refresher courses so that they effectively do the ministry as required. Building and equipping a children's ministry team also involves motivation, supervision and supporting the team with resources. (Linda, 2016)

Improving children's Ministry requires a compelling vision. A clear and compelling vision statement tells people what you aspire to achieve - why you exist - what is the good you seek to create in the world. It also tells those you want to convince to join you for example, funders, partners, clients/audiences why what you are doing is important. To envision is to imagine, plan beforehand, or ponder the possibilities. What has God placed in your heart and mind? People need to know the why and where of children ministry is. A clear vision helps the congregation visualize a future that's appealing and captivating which enables them to support the ministry.

Children ministry should be Christ-centered and Scripture-rich. Major in the Gospels, especially with younger children. Bible studies should prioritize knowing and growing a relationship with Jesus. Avoid curriculum that emphasizes values, morals, heroes, or behavior modification. The bible has everything needed for the holistic development of a person. 2Timothy 3:16-17 states "all Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work. The bible is the source of all the wisdom needed to thrive in this world. When children have a strong spiritual foundation, they can thrive well in other aspects. (Land, 1975)

Children ministry can be improved though developing a strategy. You can't accomplish your vision without a strategy. Every children's ministry needs a plan to achieve the

overall aim. Work with stakeholders (children, Parents, grandparents, teachers, and senior leaders) to figure out how you will “reach, rescue, root and release children to grab hold of their inheritance in Christ and transform their world through His power.” A written strategy for “reaching, rescuing, rooting and releasing children to grab hold of their inheritance in Christ and transform their world through His power” is essential for the health and growth of children’s ministry in the local church. Research indicates that most local churches are running programs and activities; yet don’t have a deliberate short- and long-term plan for evangelizing and discipline children. A good child ministry strategy includes planning for new members, child safety, making child ministry interesting by including play, investing in a curriculum among others.

(Union, 2019)

Children should be taught how to read the bible using bible reading guides. This helps them to develop a bible reading culture at an early age. The guide also helps them to interpret the scripture in the right context. For example, scripture union guides have helped many people to read the bible over the years. Scripture union resources such as God and me, daily power and daily guide are useful resources that can help children as they study and read the word of God. (Linda, 2016)

In order to improve children ministry, families must be supported as partners in the ministry. Parents/ caregivers should be helped to embrace and excel as the primary disciples of their children. There is need to share the best resources for families. Children ministry workers/ church leaders should provide advice, assistance, spiritual counsel, and a deeper level of dialogue about family faith formation. For example, host seminars on parenting, have a Sunday morning class focused on family concerns, sponsor

a parent's night out or morning out, provide childcare for all church events, offer a support group for new parents, have an annual family retreat or camping trip. (Caplan, 1989)

Improving children ministry involves reaching children and families beyond your church in order to achieve this the church can organize general children's events that are focused at attracting other children from the community not necessarily those from the local congregation for example giving printed invitations to families so that they invite their friends, school visitations by the pastors and children workers. When you do outreaches to schools, children get to know you and they will follow you at the church. Use motivational gifts such as sending birthday cards to families with children. Rather than waiting for kids to come to church, take ministry to where kids already are. To attract unchurched kids, consider locating activities in a store front, park, or recreational center. (Barna, 2003)

In order for children ministry to thrive, it should be inclusive. Welcome children of all abilities, exceptionalities, ethnicities, and backgrounds. Make your activities accessible to children with different needs. Pay special attention to children in the margins. No action or interaction is insignificant. Create space and opportunities for participation. In accordance with their gifts and abilities, involve children as active contributors to the church's mission. (Elizabeth Scott, 2022)

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This chapter consisted of the methods which were employed while carrying out the study. It discussed different aspects such as research design, study area, study population, sample size and determination, sampling techniques and procedure, data collection methods, data quality control, data analysis and research procedure.

3.1 Research design

According to Denvir and Millett (2003), research design provides the glue that holds the research project together. It is a scheme, an outline or plan that is used to generate answers to a research problem or phenomena. An institution based cross-sectional study design was adopted. The design applied both qualitative and quantitative methods to data collection and analysis. A cross-sectional design is a kind of design that involves measuring different variables in the population of interest at a single point in time. The design is suitable for the study because it helped in determining the relationship between variables. Quantitative methods involved the use of questionnaire to capture quantifiable responses while the qualitative approach involved the use of interview to the Christians, children workers/ volunteers and church leaders in the parish to know the current state of holistic children ministry, its contributions church and how was to be improved.

3.2 Study area

The study area covered a particular area with focus on Emmanuel Rubaya Church of Uganda Parish, Rukore Archdeaconry-Kigezi Diocese

3.3 Study population

Study population is a group of individuals, objects or items from which samples will be taken for measurement (Kombo and Tromp 2011). The study population comprised of parents/care takers of children attending Sunday school at Emmanuel Rubaya church of Uganda Parish and other key informants like church leaders, child ministry workers and Sunday school teachers. These provided the necessary information required for the study.

3.4 Sample determination

The target sample was drawn using a sample determination table by Krejcie & Morgan at 95% level of confidence, with 5% as the tolerable error. A sample size of 36 respondents was determined through purposive and random sampling methods. This was so because the nature of data to be generated required different techniques for better understanding of the research problem under investigation. Besides this the approach was also commonly known for achieving higher degree of validity and reliability as well as elimination of biases as per Amin (2005). The sample size was determined using the formula derived by Krejcie and Morgan (1970), as shown in the table below;

Target Population	Population	Sample Size	Sampling Procedure
Parent/care takers	18	16	Simple random sampling
children	18	16	Simple random sampling
Church leaders	2	2	Purposive sampling
Sunday school teachers	2	2	Purposive sampling
Total	40	36	
Source: Primary Source 2025			

<i>N</i>	<i>S</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>S</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>S</i>
10	10	220	140	1200	291
15	14	230	144	1300	297
20	19	240	148	1400	302
25	24	250	152	1500	306
30	28	260	155	1600	310
35	32	270	159	1700	313
40	36	280	162	1800	317
45	40	290	165	1900	320
50	44	300	169	2000	322
55	48	320	175	2200	327
60	52	340	181	2400	331
65	56	360	186	2600	335
70	59	380	191	2800	338
75	63	400	196	3000	341
80	66	420	201	3500	346
85	70	440	205	4000	351
90	73	460	210	4500	354
95	76	480	214	5000	357
100	80	500	217	6000	361
110	86	550	226	7000	364
120	92	600	234	8000	367
130	97	650	242	9000	368
140	103	700	248	10000	370
150	108	750	254	15000	375
160	113	800	260	20000	377
170	118	850	265	30000	379
180	123	900	269	40000	380
190	127	950	274	50000	381
200	132	1000	278	75000	382
210	136	1100	285	100000	384

Note.—*N* is population size. *S* is sample size.

Source: Krejcie & Morgan, 1970

3.6 Sampling Procedure

Musoke et al., (2014) defines sampling as the plan on how units or elements within a population will be picked as to form part of the study. The study used both simple random and purposive sampling techniques to arrive at the required number of respondents.

The researcher used simple random sampling (where the researcher uses non-probability methods) in the selection of respondents. This was achieved by getting a list of parents/care takers of children with the help of Sunday school teachers on the

day of data collection. Each parent's name was assigned a random number and it's from the random numbers that the researcher selected the required number of respondents. Simple random sampling method was used because it was the best in dealing with large number of respondents as it saved time and costs.

Purposive sampling method (where the researcher chooses respondents basing on the characteristics) was used for key informants because it is a method that helps in gathering data from respondents with more knowledge about a specific phenomenon. Key informants in this case provided supplementary information that will not be provided by other respondent categories.

3.7 Source of Data

Data was gathered from both primary and secondary sources. Primary data was collected from the respondent's using questionnaire and interviews. Secondary information on the other hand was collected from sources like; child health registers, text books, internet, newspaper, magazines, and journals. This information was reviewed by visiting places like libraries and internet cafes and is used to supplement the collected data from different categories of the respondents.

3.8 Data Collection Methods

This study used questionnaires and interviews for data collection.

3.8.1 Questionnaire

The study utilized a semi-structured questionnaire to gather data from the respondents. The questionnaire consisted of both open and closed ended questions which were filled

by respondents through writing down their responses. The questions in this tool were originally designed in English and later translated into local languages to make the questions more simple, clear and understandable to the respondents. The questionnaire was given to the respondents in order to gather more reliable data as the respondents was allowed to answer in their own language and time without being frightened by the researcher's presence. Secondly, it was used because of being cheap as well as collects responses with minimum errors and high level of confidentiality. The instrument was divided into sections that included background information of the respondents, church Sunday school programs available at the church, effect of Sunday school programs on spiritual growth among children and factors limiting success of Sunday school programs and how it can be improved.

3.8.2 Interview Guide

An interview guide was drafted with questions that the researcher asked during interview sessions with key respondents. The researcher administered interviews to the key informants with a help of an interview guide reflecting the study objectives. With this instrument, the researcher engaged in key respondents in oral questions. The interviews were used widely to supplement and extend the researchers' knowledge about individual (s) thoughts, feelings and behaviors. While interviewing, probing was applied in cases where respondents do not give inadequate answers. This method was used to gather data about the current state of holistic child ministry, challenges faced and how it can improve.

3.9 Data Quality Control

The quality of data was controlled through two major principles that is validity and reliability

3.9.1 Validity of instruments

According to Latunji and Akinyemi, (2018) validity is a demonstration that a particular instrument measures what it intends to measure. To ensure validity of the instruments, the researcher consulted two experienced senior researchers and find out whether they gave the information that seek to answer questions of the study. Content Validity Index (CVI) was computed to establish validity of the instruments.

3.9.2 Reliability of Instruments

Reliability is the tendency to obtain the same results if the measure is to be repeated by using the same subjects under the same conditions (Hjelmand Atwine, 2011). For the case of the study, reliability is ensured by standardizing the questionnaire through pre-testing. Questionnaires were pre-tested from a sample outside the target sample but with similar or close demographic characteristics to those of the study area. Reliability of the questionnaire in relation to the consistency of the respondents' answers was computed using the Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient.

3.10 Data management and analysis

3.10.1 Data Management

The data collected was cleaned, edited and coded to avoid incompleteness during entry. Minor mistakes committed during data collection were corrected in the field.

Upon the completion of data collection and editing in the field, systematic organization of raw data was done to facilitate data analysis. Questionnaires with missing variables, information or mistakes were left out.

3.10.2 Data Analysis

Data was analyzed under two major principles that is quantitative and qualitative analysis

3.10.3 Quantitative Data Analysis

The data collected have been cleaned, coded and demographic characteristics of the respondents were described using largely descriptive statistics such as frequencies and percentages. Bivariate analysis was used to identify the significant factors limiting success of Sunday school programs. The outcome of the analysis was presented in statistical tables.

3.10.4 Qualitative Data Analysis

Qualitative data was analyzed by developing themes (headings) or sub themes, which was derived from the study objectives. The recorded information was transcribed verbatim and translated from local languages into English. Observational field notes were incorporated into the data for analysis. The transcripts have been read repeatedly and words with similar meanings grouped into categories. Similar categories were grouped into themes and subthemes which were presented as results

3.11 Research Procedure

The study was approved by Department of Theology, Uganda Christian University Bishop Barham University College - Kabale. Further approval was obtained from the leaders of Emanuel church Rubaya Church of Uganda and finally informed consent from the participants themselves. Participants were guaranteed confidentiality of the information collected. This was preceded by thorough explanation of the aim and objective of the study. Participation was based on informed and voluntary consent. Respondents for the study were informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any time they deemed necessary. They were fully assured of their confidentiality and anonymity. Confidentiality of data was maintained by use of identification numbers rather than names and limiting access to the data. The questionnaire administered to the in-patients were prefaced with a consent form requesting consent of the respondents before participation in the study.

3.12 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 analysis and interpretation of the results obtained from the field study of investigating the distribution of holistic children ministry to the church with particular focus on Emmanuel Rubaya church of Uganda Parish. Questionnaires were administered to 36 respondents. All the thirty-six respondents ably answered and returned the questionnaires giving a response rate of 100%.

4.1 Social- economic characteristics of respondents.

This sub-section presents the social - economic features of 36(thirty-six respondents sampled. The key demographic characteristics captured for the study included; gender, age bracket, marital status, education levels, occupation, employment status, house hold size and the type of house hold. These features were found to be of great help in clearly depicting the diverse background of the sample population.

Table 2: Socia-demographic characteristics of the respondents.

Table 2: Socio-demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

Social-demographic Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender of respondents		
Male	14	38.9%
Female	22	61.1%

Respondents' Age Bracket		
Under 23	15	41.7%
24-35	5	13.9%
35+	16	44.4%
Marital Status of Respondents		
Single	15	41.7%
Married	21	58.3%
Separated	0	0.0%
Widow	0	0.0%
Level of Education		
None	5	13.9%
Primary	15	41.7%
Secondary	10	27.8%
University	11	30.6%
Occupation/Livelihood Source		
Farming	10	27.8%
Salary	5	13.9%
Business	6	16.7%
None	15	41.7%
Type of Household		
Male-headed	36	100.0%
Female-headed	0	0.0%

Others	0	0.0%
Total Respondents	36	100.0%

Gender of Respondents

Out of the 36 respondents, 14 (38.9%) were male while 22 (61.1%) were female. The higher number of female respondents may be attributed to the fact that women are often more involved in children's ministry programs within church settings. In many rural Ugandan churches, mothers play a more active role in Sunday school, caregiving, and community-based child support initiatives, making them more accessible and engaged during such studies.

Respondents' Age Bracket

The age distribution shows that 15 respondents (41.7%) were under 23 years, 5 (13.9%) were between 24-35 years, and 16 (44.4%) were aged 35 and above. The significant number of respondents under 23 reflects the involvement of youth and young adults in church activities, particularly as volunteers in children's ministry. Meanwhile, the strong representation of those above 35 indicates the influence of older adults and parents, who often serve as mentors, leaders, or teachers in church programs.

Marital Status of Respondents

The majority of respondents were married, making up 21 (58.3%) of the total, while 15 (41.7%) were single. There were no respondents who identified as separated or widowed. The high proportion of married individuals is likely due to the demographic composition of the church community, where adult, family-oriented members are more

engaged in church leadership and children's ministry. Their marital status allows them to relate more directly with parenting and child development issues, which are central to the study.

Level of Education

Regarding education levels, 5 respondents (13.9%) had no formal education, 15 (41.7%) had primary education, 10 (27.8%) had secondary education, and 11 (30.6%) had university education. This distribution suggests a mixed educational background within the parish. The predominance of primary education aligns with the rural setting of the parish, where access to higher education may be limited. However, the presence of respondents with university education is notable and may indicate increasing educational attainment among younger or urban-connected members of the parish.

Occupation/Livelihood Source

In terms of occupation, 10 respondents (27.8%) were farmers, 5 (13.9%) earned salaries, 6 (16.7%) were involved in business, and 15 (41.7%) reported having no source of income. Farming is a common livelihood in rural Uganda and therefore features prominently. The high number of respondents without any occupation suggests a considerable level of economic dependency or unemployment, which could include students, stay-at-home caregivers, or youth. This socio-economic challenge may impact the effectiveness of children's ministry due to financial constraints in supporting church programs.

Type of Household

All 36 respondents (100%) reported coming from male-headed households, with none from female-headed or other types of households. This complete dominance of male-headed households reflects the traditional patriarchal structure that is prevalent in rural Ugandan societies, where men are culturally recognized as the heads of families. This has implications for how decisions regarding children's spiritual development and participation in church activities are made, as male household heads may influence family-level engagement with church programs.

4.2 The contribution of holistic children ministry programme to Emmanuel Rubaya Church of Uganda Parish.

This section of the study addresses research objective two which sought to determine the the contribution of children ministry programs on church growth.

David Tiwangye the senior warden of Emmanuel Rubaya church of Uganda Parish a 67-year man said that children ministry programs are breeding ground for potential leaders for the church and community. He emphasized this by setting himself that he was once part of the Sunday school during his young age. He added that, the knowledge he gained was still helping him even in his old age.

Moureen Tugume a church warden of Kagoogo church of Uganda in Rubaya church of Uganda Parish said that, child ministry offers children an opportunity to meet and socialize. She added that it's important because it improves the mind capacity, social skills in a way that, it reduces the ego- centric nature in them.

Meble Tubenawe the Sunday School teacher said that, children ministry curriculum deepens children's understanding of Christianity and morality thus, children would not be taken by churches with cults and false teachings in future.

Dorcus Baine the Youth leader in Emmanuel Rubaya church of Uganda Parish said that, child ministry brings children close to Jesus Christ. She said that, these children knew sin and its penalty at their young ages, they were able to appreciate the love that God has upon us on this Earth. More so, Learners were able to know that without God one cannot achieve anything.

Quantifiable responses gathered for this objective were analyzed using descriptive statistics as presented in table 3;

Table 4: Contribution of Children Ministry to Emmanuel Rubaya church of Uganda Parish

Impact of children ministry at Emmanuel Rubaya church of Uganda	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Spiritual nourishment of children	11	30.6
They prepare children to grow up in church	9	25
It brings children close to Jesus Christ	8	22.2
It helps children relate the Bible teachings to their daily life.	4	11.1
It offers children an opportunity to meet and socialize	3	8.3

Children Ministry curriculum deepens children's understanding of Christianity and morality	3	8.3
Children ministry programs are breeding ground for potential leaders for the church and community	6	16.7
Total	36	100

Results of the contribution of children ministry on church growth were presented in table 3, above. 22.2 % reported that the children ministry programs bring children close to Jesus Christ, 30.6% revealed that, they support the spiritual nourishment process of children, 11.1% mentioned that, children ministry helps children relate the Bible teachings to their daily life, 25% showed that, they prepare children to grow up in church, 8.3% said that, children ministry lessons deepens children's understanding of Christianity and morality, 8.3% stated that, they offer children opportunity to meet ,share and Socialize whereas 16.7% indicated that children ministry programs are breeding ground for the church and the community.

4.3 The challenges hindering the holistic development of children ministry at Rubaya Church of Uganda Parish.

Table 5: Challenges Hindering the Holistic Development of Children Ministry at Rubaya Church of Uganda Parish

Challenges	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Inadequate basic facilities to support children's programs	10	27.8%
Poor supervision of children's ministry programs	5	13.9%
Lack of structured and implemented children's ministry curriculum	6	16.7%
Limited budget allocation for children's ministry activities	4	11.1%
Low parental involvement in children's church activities	7	19.4%
Inadequate training and teaching skills among children's ministry staff	4	11.1%
Total	36	100.0%

The most frequently mentioned challenge was inadequate basic facilities to support children's programs, cited by 10 respondents (27.8%). This includes the lack of

appropriate learning spaces, chairs, visual aids, and safe outdoor play areas. Such limitations affect the ability to conduct meaningful and engaging sessions, ultimately hindering children's participation and holistic development in church-based ministries.

Another significant issue is low parental involvement, which was mentioned by 7 respondents (19.4%). Many parents either do not prioritize or are unaware of the importance of engaging in their children's spiritual development. This disconnects between home and church creates a gap in moral and faith reinforcement, making it harder for the church's efforts to have a lasting impact.

Lack of a structured and implemented children's ministry curriculum was reported by 6 respondents (16.7%). Without a standard guide or teaching framework, Sunday school teachers may deliver inconsistent lessons. This inconsistency compromises both the educational and spiritual quality of the children's ministry and can lead to disengagement or poor knowledge retention among children.

Less frequently mentioned challenges include poor supervision of programs (13.9%), limited budget allocation (11.1%), and inadequate staff training (11.1%). These are still critical issues, as they reflect the overall neglect and underfunding of children's ministry activities in Rubaya Parish. Without proper oversight, financial investment, and skilled workers, the church's vision of holistic child development remains difficult to realize.

4.4 Ways of improving children ministry at Emmanuel Rubaya Church of Uganda Parish.

This section of the study addresses research question three which requires to identify the possible ways of improving children ministry.

Mr. James Kwariija the church warden said that, parental involvement should be the possible ways of improving children. Parents should be taught about the benefits of children ministry.

Alice Ahumuza assistant senior warden with children's church teachers said that, the church should support the staff through training and workshops concerning children ministry.

Bwengye Isaac the church Elder together with other elder participants said that, the church should introduce and implement a modern and current child ministry curriculum because it was alleged that, teachers complain they don't have curriculum to follow while teaching children.

The quantifiable responses gathered on this objective were analyzed using frequencies and Percentages as presented in table 4.

Table 6: Ways of improving Children Ministry

Ways of promoting children ministry	Frequency	Percentages (%)
Provision of more basic facilities to support the programs	7	19.4
Boost supervision of children programs.	6	16.7
Introduction and implementation of children ministry curriculum	7	19.4
Increase the budget for children ministry activities	5	13.9
Promoting parental involvement	7	19.4
Improvement of teaching skills and knowledge of children ministry staff training	3	8.3
Total	36	100

Results of the possible ways of improving children ministry programs were presented in table 4 above. Among the ways , 13.9% recommended budgetary increment for the children ministry activities, 19.4% called for strengthening parental involvement in Children Ministry programs, 29.4% talked of introducing and implementing a children's ministry curriculum, 19.4% recommended the provision of more basic facilities to support the programs, 16.7% talked of boosting supervision of children ministry programs

and 8.3% suggested improving skills and knowledge of Sunday school/ children's church teachers staff through training.

CHAPTER FIVE: THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION

5.0 Introduction.

The study of children in the Bible has become a significant area of research, particularly since the 1990s with the emergence of childhood studies and child theology. Both the Old and New Testaments offer valuable insights into the importance of children in God's plan. In the Old Testament, children are viewed as a blessing and heritage from God, while in the New Testament, Jesus welcomes children and emphasizes their value in God's kingdom.

The Old Testament emphasizes the importance of teaching children God's commandments and ways, while the New Testament highlights the role of parents and caregivers in nurturing children's faith and spiritual development. Both testaments emphasize God's special care and concern for vulnerable children, including the fatherless and widows.

The New Testament portrays children as models of faith, with Jesus teaching that adults must become like children to enter the kingdom of heaven. Parents and caregivers are encouraged to prioritize the spiritual well-being and safety of children, recognizing their value and importance in God's kingdom.

The unity and diversity of the Old and New Testaments provide a rich foundation for understanding God's perspective on children. By examining the biblical reflections on children, we can gain a deeper understanding of their significance in God's plan .

The Old Testament provides a rich foundation for understanding God's perspective on children. Children are viewed as a blessing and heritage from God, as seen in Psalm 127:3-5, which likens them to arrows in the hands of a warrior. The Old Testament emphasizes the importance of teaching children God's ways and commandments, as instructed in Deuteronomy 6:6-9. It also highlights God's special care and concern for vulnerable children, including the fatherless and widows, as demonstrated in Deuteronomy 10:18-19. Furthermore, children are portrayed as part of God's covenant community, included in God's promises and expectations.

The New Testament builds on the Old Testament foundation, emphasizing the importance of children in Jesus' teachings and ministry. Jesus welcomes children and emphasizes their value in God's kingdom, as seen in Matthew 19:13-15 and Mark 10:13-16. The New Testament also highlights the role of parents and caregivers in nurturing children's faith and spiritual development, as instructed in Ephesians 6:4 and Colossians 3:21. Additionally, children are portrayed as models of faith, with Jesus teaching that adults must become like children to enter the kingdom of heaven, as seen in Matthew 18:1-4. The New Testament encourages believers to prioritize the spiritual well-being and safety of children, recognizing their value and importance in God's kingdom.

5.1 Old Testament theological reflections on the state of children:

In the Old Testament, children are seen as a blessing and heritage from God. Psalm 127:3-5 describes children as a reward from God, likening them to arrows in the hands of a warrior. This passage emphasizes the importance of children in God's plan and highlights the role of parents in nurturing and guiding them. Children are seen as a

source of joy and strength for their families, and their well-being is closely tied to the well-being of their parents. This reflection encourages parents to view children as a precious gift from God, worthy of love, care, and attention.

The Old Testament highlights the vulnerability and dependence of children, emphasizing the need for protection and care. Exodus 22:22 warns against mistreating widows and orphans, demonstrating God's concern for the well-being of vulnerable children. Deuteronomy 10:18-19 reminds the Israelites that God defends the cause of the fatherless and the widow, and that they should show similar compassion and care. This reflection encourages believers to prioritize the protection and care of children, particularly those who are vulnerable or in need. By doing so, we demonstrate our love for God and our commitment to His values.

The Old Testament emphasizes the importance of teaching children God's ways and commandments. Deuteronomy 6:6-9 instructs parents to teach their children God's commands diligently, binding them on their hands and foreheads, and writing them on the doorposts of their houses. Psalm 78:4-7 encourages parents to tell their children about God's mighty deeds and wonderful works, so that they may know and trust in Him. This reflection highlights the crucial role of parents and caregivers in shaping the spiritual lives of children, and encourages them to prioritize teaching children about God's character and ways.

The Old Testament reveals God's special care and concern for vulnerable children, including the fatherless and orphans. Psalm 68:5-6 describes God as a father to the fatherless and a defender of widows, demonstrating His heart for justice and

compassion. Deuteronomy 24:17-22 reminds the Israelites to show kindness and generosity to the fatherless, widows, and foreigners, highlighting God's concern for their well-being. This reflection encourages believers to follow God's example, showing special care and attention to vulnerable children and demonstrating our love for God through our actions.

The Old Testament portrays children as part of God's covenant community, included in God's promises and expectations. Genesis 17:7-14 describes God's covenant with Abraham, which includes his children and future generations. Joshua 8:35 highlights the importance of including children in the reading of God's law, demonstrating their role in the covenant community. This reflection emphasizes the significance of children in God's plan, and encourages believers to prioritize their inclusion and participation in the life of the community. By doing so, we demonstrate our understanding of God's covenant and our commitment to His vaction

5.2 New Testament theological reflection on the children.

Jesus' teachings on children emphasize their importance and value in God's kingdom. In Matthew 19:13-15 and Mark 10:13-16, Jesus welcomes children and emphasizes that the kingdom of heaven belongs to them. He also teaches that adults must become like children to enter the kingdom, highlighting the importance of childlike faith and humility. This reflection encourages believers to prioritize the spiritual well-being of children and to model childlike faith and humility in their own lives. By doing so, we demonstrate our commitment to Jesus' teachings and values.

In Matthew 18:1-4, Jesus teaches that children are models of faith, emphasizing the importance of humility and dependence on God. Jesus uses a child as an example, demonstrating that greatness in the kingdom of heaven is not about power or status, but about humility and a willingness to learn. This reflection encourages believers to learn from children and to cultivate childlike faith, trusting in God's goodness and provision. By embracing childlike faith, we can experience the kingdom of heaven in our lives and relationships.

The New Testament emphasizes the value of children in God's kingdom, warning against causing them to stumble or lose faith. In Matthew 18:5-6 and Mark 9:42, Jesus teaches that whoever welcomes a child in His name welcomes Him, and that causing one of His little ones to stumble is a serious offense. This reflection encourages believers to prioritize the spiritual well-being and safety of children, recognizing their value and importance in God's kingdom. By doing so, we demonstrate our love for Jesus and our commitment to His values.

The New Testament emphasizes the crucial role of parents in nurturing children's faith and spiritual development. In Ephesians 6:4, Paul instructs fathers to bring up their children in the training and instruction of the Lord, highlighting the importance of parental guidance and discipleship. Colossians 3:21 reminds parents to avoid provoking their children to anger, instead encouraging them with gentle discipline and guidance. This reflection encourages parents to prioritize their role in shaping the spiritual lives of their children, demonstrating love, patience, and wisdom in their parenting.

The New Testament highlights the inclusion of children in the early church, demonstrating God's heart for families and children. In Acts 16:15, Lydia's household is baptized after she becomes a believer, demonstrating the importance of family and children in the life of the church. 1 Corinthians 7:14 reminds believers that their children are holy, highlighting the special status and privilege of being part of a believing family. This reflection encourages believers to prioritize the inclusion and spiritual development of children in the life of the church, recognizing their value and importance in God's plan.

5.3 Conclusions.

The Old Testament provides a rich foundation for understanding God's perspective on children. Children are viewed as a blessing and heritage from God, as seen in Psalm 127:3-5, which likens them to arrows in the hands of a warrior. The Old Testament emphasizes the importance of teaching children God's ways and commandments, as instructed in Deuteronomy 6:6-9. It also highlights God's special care and concern for vulnerable children, including the fatherless and widows, as demonstrated in Deuteronomy 10:18-19. Furthermore, children are portrayed as part of God's covenant community, included in God's promises and expectations.

The New Testament builds on the Old Testament foundation, emphasizing the importance of children in Jesus' teachings and ministry. Jesus welcomes children and emphasizes their value in God's kingdom, as seen in Matthew 19:13-15 and Mark 10:13-16. The New Testament also highlights the role of parents and caregivers in nurturing

children's faith and spiritual development, as instructed in Ephesians 6:4 and Colossians 3:21.

Additionally, children are portrayed as models of faith, with Jesus teaching that adults must become like children to enter the kingdom of heaven, as seen in Matthew 18:1-4. The New Testament encourages believers to prioritize the spiritual well-being and safety of children, recognizing their value and importance in God's kingdom.

CHAPTER SIX: DISCUSSIONS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS.

6.0 Introduction

This study was undertaken to determine the possible contribution of children ministry to the church- a case study of Emmanuel Rubaya church of Uganda Parish. This chapter discusses the major findings, Conclusions and Recommendations in relation to the objectives of the study. It further suggests the areas for further research.

6.1 Discussion of results.

6.1.1 The contributions of holistic children ministry to Emmanuel Rubaya Church of Uganda Parish.

The study found out that, those holistic children ministry programs had a significant contribution on Emmanuel Rubaya church of Uganda Parish. Children Ministry programs were to bring Children close to Christ, support their spiritual nourishment process and morality, as well as offering them an opportunity to meet, share and socialize. All these aspects were very instrumental in children's moral and spiritual development as well as overall growth of the church. To support the findings, Moles, (2016) cited that, the development of children ministry hinges on the ministry of God the Father, The Son and indwelling of the Holy Spirit in the community of believers' ability to follow the direction of the Truine God through the study of scripture. The direction of God amounts to the elements of being an example of nurturing, equipping and becoming lifelong disciples. These four elements create the environment for the process that the community develops children's ministry to guide the equipping of those that are assembled.

The findings are also in agreement with the findings by Eri, (2016) who noted that, children ministry is done for children and young people of ages between three and twenty-one years. The Bible teachings given are intended to shape and train the current generation for Christ.

Knoetze, (2015) puts it that, children ministry helps in preparing children for church membership. They are intended to provide the environment in which individuals come to accept Christ as their personal savior. Children Ministry familiarizes children with Christian teachings.

6.1.2 The challenges hindering the holistic development of children ministry at Rubaya Church of Uganda Parish.

This issue is consistent with observations made by Brewster (2013), who emphasizes that a safe and child-friendly environment is critical for the spiritual, cognitive, and emotional development of children. In many African rural churches, children are often taught in under-resourced settings, which undermines their ability to engage meaningfully with biblical teachings. Providing appropriate infrastructure is therefore not just about comfort, but about laying the foundation for holistic child development.

Low parental involvement is another significant hindrance to holistic children's ministry. Many parents do not take an active role in their children's spiritual upbringing, often assuming that it is solely the church's responsibility. This lack of engagement leads to a weak link between home and church teachings, limiting the effectiveness of what children learn during Sunday school or other church-based programs.

According to Nabwami (2020), parental involvement is a key factor in reinforcing spiritual and moral teachings learned in church. Children whose parents are actively involved in their faith journey tend to show higher levels of discipline, empathy, and scriptural understanding. When parents are absent or disinterested, however, children lack consistent moral modeling and faith-based reinforcement outside church walls.

The absence of a structured and well-implemented children's ministry curriculum is another notable challenge. Without a clear framework or teaching guide, church teachers may offer inconsistent lessons that vary widely in quality and content. This undermines the educational and spiritual goals of children's ministry, making it difficult to track learning progress or foster deep biblical understanding.

Kasambala (2006) supports this by noting that a well-developed curriculum provides continuity, builds on previous knowledge, and helps children grow in their faith in a systematic way. In contrast, informal and unstructured teaching often results in children receiving scattered and repetitive lessons that may not effectively build their spiritual and moral foundation.

In addition to these major concerns, challenges such as poor supervision, limited financial support, and lack of trained staff also persist. Poor supervision often leads to disorganization and lack of accountability in children's programs. Similarly, when the ministry lacks dedicated funds, activities become irregular and poorly resourced. Furthermore, without trained facilitators, the quality of teaching and engagement with children remains low, affecting both learning outcomes and child participation.

Kisembo (2014) argues that churches in Uganda must invest in developing the capacity of children's ministry leaders to ensure effective delivery. Inadequate funding and untrained staff not only lower the standard of children's ministry but also communicate to the community that this area is not a church priority. Sustainable ministry requires ongoing training, supervision, and dedicated financial planning.

6.1.3 Ways of improving holistic children ministry at Emmanuel Rubaya Church of Uganda Parish

The study found out the ways of promoting children ministry programs including budgetary increment for children ministry trainings, strengthening parental involvement in Children's spiritual paths, introducing and implementing new children ministry curriculum, provision of more basic facilities to support the programs, boosting supervision of children ministry programs , improving skills and knowledge of children ministry staff through training while boosting financial support for the programs.

To support the findings, Pennington (2017) stated that, there's need to provide more basic facilities like study rooms, seats, writing materials, like black boards, whiteboard, lesson books teaching aids, registers and others stationary to streamline children ministry operations. In his study, Workman, (2020) reported that, children ministry in Africa lacks basic facilities such as study rooms, seats, writing materials black board, lesson books, teaching aids, registers and stationery. There are still many parts of Africa where children ministry activities are conducted in the open spaces with the minimum of the basic and few trained teachers.

To further support the study, O'Neal, (2019) put it that, there is. a need to introduce and implement new children ministry curriculum that is friendly and meets the needs of the children.

In across Africa, many churches still rely on aspects of Sunday school curriculum that was initiated by the missionaries. A well-articulated children ministry curriculum has the potential of empowering young Africans with knowledge about Christianity, African culture and African situation. The curriculum and materials used in children ministry need to be redesigned so that they critically address the African perspective.

6.2 Conclusions

In conclusion, the results of this study confirmed that there were different children ministry programs available at Emmanuel Rubaya church of Uganda Parish such as Bible teachings and reading, training in religious values, singing and praising, spiritual education, teaching the ten commandments as well as practicing love and socialization though to some extents were inactive.

The study concludes that, children ministry programs have a significant effect on children's spiritual growth and this effect is mainly through bringing children close to Christ, spiritual nourishment, helping children relate to Bible teachings, improving moral as well as depending on the understanding of Christian faith. These aspects are all critical in children's moral and spiritual development.

The study further concludes that, there were ways of improving children ministry programs such as increasing children ministry training budgets, encouraging parents to be involved in their Children's spiritual paths, implementing new Sunday school

curriculum, provision of enough basic facilities to help support the programs, boosting supervision of the programs as well as improving knowledge and skills of Children's church teaching staff.

6.3 Recommendations and Suggestions.

6.3.1 Recommendations to the church and suggestions

In order for Emmanuel Rubaya church of Uganda Parish to improve the children ministry programs and promote the overall church growth, the following needs to be considered most;

There's a need for church to introduce and implement new Sunday school curriculum that is friendly and meets the needs of children. This will promote easy and quick learning.

There's need for church to consider making the budget and work plan for children ministry trainings and operations. This could help to address the challenges of financial shortage in Children ministry program implementation.

The church must provide more basic facilities like study rooms, writing materials and blackboards, lesson books, teaching aids, registers and stationery to streamline Sunday school operations.

Improvement of children ministry requires supporting families. Family is at the center of God's plan for the happiness and progress of His children. The Holiday Bible teaches that God established families from the very beginning, and this shows us many examples

of strong families. It also teaches us how to have a loving, happy family. Parents should never feel isolated.

The ministry helps parents to embrace and Excel as the primary disciples of their children. It regularly shares the best resources for families, provide advice, assistance, spiritual counsel and a deeper level of dialogue about family faith formation.

6.3.2 Recommendations to parents

It's a primary duty of parents to give their children quality time, that is, to love and affirm them when they do what is right to help them have a sense of belonging and the reason for existence.

Parents should know that, they have an obligation to counsel and guide their children as Proverbs.22:6 says “train a child the way he should go and when he is old, he will not depart from it”.

Parents should act as role models to their offsprings. that is, parents lifestyle speaks volumes to them than what they say. For example, in 2Kings 14:3 tells us that, Amaziah followed the example of Joash his father in everything.

More so, Parents should pay and bless their children. They are the ones to teach them about Gods commands as Deuteronomy 4:9 says and Psalm 133. This helps children to have hopes for the present and also their future.

6.3.3 Recommendations to the government.

The government should partner with the church in promoting and empowering children ministry teachers to equip them with knowledge related to child ministry. This will help

children to grow both spiritually, socially and physically stable hence good future citizens as change agents within the community.

The government should preserve and teach children rights to communities through different medias as the way of securing the future of children within communities.

The government should incorporate children life skills as emotional intelligence, problem solving and other children related skills into their curriculum. This will help children to develop essential skills for navigating real life situations.

The government should also encourage and support children's extracurricular activities. For example, sports, music, Bible drills, and art, to foster physical, social emotional and spiritual development.

The government should develop and implement character education programs that focus on values like empathy, kindness, and responsibility. This can help our children develop strong moral and positive relationships with others in present and future.

Therefore, implementing all the above initiatives, both the church, parents and the government can play a significant role in training children holistically, preparing them for success in all aspects of life.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX I: A QUESTIONNAIRE FOR RESPONDENTS

I am **TWIKIRIZE APOLLO** pursuing a bachelor degree of divinity of Uganda Christian University Bishop Barham University College - Kabale. I am carrying out research on the topic; *“HOLISTIC CHILD MINISTRY AND CHURCH: A CASE STUDY OF EMANUEL RUBAYA CHURCH OF UGANDA PARISH, RUKORE ARCHDEACONRY - DIOCESE OF KIGEZI”*. I therefore request you to answer the following questions and promise that your views shall only be used for the purposes of this study and shall always be confidential.

Tick in the boxes and fill in the blank spaces.

Section A: bio-data Information

Gender of respondents

Male ☐

Female ☐

Respondents age bracket

Under 23 ☐

24-35 ☐

35+ ☐

Marital status of respondents

Single ☐

☐

Married

Separated ☐

Widow ☐

Level of education

None ☐

Primary ☐

Secondary ☐

University ☐

Occupation/Livelihood source

Farming ☐

Salary ☐

Business ☐

None ☐

Type of household

Male headed ☐

Female headed ☐

Others.....

Section B: The Contributions of Holistic Children Ministry to the Church at Rubaya Church of Uganda Parish

1. In what ways has the children's ministry contributed to the spiritual growth of the church community?
2. How has the involvement of children in church activities influenced the participation of families in church life?.....
3. What impact has the children's ministry had on moral and character development among the children?.....

4. How do church leaders and members perceive the long-term benefits of investing in holistic children ministry?

-
5. Has the presence of a vibrant children's ministry increased church attendance or membership among families?.....

6. Section C: The Challenges Hindering the Holistic Development of Children Ministry at Rubaya Church of Uganda Parish

-
1. What are the major limitations faced by the children's ministry in terms of infrastructure and resources?

-
2. How does the level of parental involvement affect the progress of children's ministry activities?

3. Are there any gaps in training and preparedness among the children’s ministry staff or teachers?

4. How does the church’s budget allocation influence the planning and implementation of children’s programs?

5. What administrative or leadership challenges affect the supervision and monitoring of children’s ministry efforts?

Section D: The Possible Ways Through Which Holistic Children Ministry Can Be Improved at Rubaya Church of Uganda Parish

1. What strategies can be adopted to increase parental engagement in children's ministry programs?

2. How can the church develop or adopt a standardized curriculum to improve the quality of teaching?

3. In what ways can the church mobilize resources or funding to support children's ministry activities?

4. How can the church leadership strengthen supervision and evaluation of children's programs to ensure sustainability?

APPENDIX I

INTERVIEW GUIDE

1. In what ways has the children's ministry contributed to the spiritual growth of the church community?
2. How has the involvement of children in church activities influenced the participation of families in church life?
3. What are the major limitations faced by the children's ministry in terms of infrastructure and resources?
4. What administrative or leadership challenges affect the supervision and monitoring of children's ministry efforts?
5. How can the church develop or adopt a standardized curriculum to improve the quality of teaching?
6. What forms of training and capacity building are needed for teachers and ministry staff?
7. In what ways can the church mobilize resources or funding to support children's ministry activities?
8. How can the church leadership strengthen supervision and evaluation of children's programs to ensure sustainability?

End