# EFFECTIVENESS OF CHURCH PROGRAMMES IN INSTILLING MORALITY AMONG THE YOUTH IN PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF EAST AFRICA, CHUKA PRESBYTERY, KENYA

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**Abstract**
This study sought to assess the effectiveness of programmes initiated by PCEA to solve moral decadence among the youth. The study utilised a descriptive research design using a survey method. The study was carried out in Chuka Presbytery, located in the Eastern region in Tharaka Nithi County, comprising six parishes. A population of 3286 church members was targeted by the survey. A sample of 6 church ministers, 175 adult church members and 153 youth was obtained for the study. Data was collected using questionnaires, interviews and FGDs. With the exception of sports evangelism, mission and evangelism, all other Chuka Presbytery youth programmes for instilling morality were found to be ineffective. In order to enhance the effectiveness of church-based youth programmes, strategies such as preparation of high quality and experiential instructional content and delivering them using innovative pedagogies, establishing programmes that foster positive experiences and forging synergies with other churches in the implementation of church-based youth moral programmes were proposed. Other strategies include early moral socialisation and training, engagement of specialists in strategic communication as well as youth engagement in designing, implementing and evaluating programmes and follow-up are also vital trajectories.

**Key terms:** Chuka Presbytery, Presbyterian Church of East Africa, Youth Moral Programmes, Youth.

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

Moral decadence is made up of two words, namely moral and decadence. Moral, etymologically, is a word from the Latin word "Mores", which means custom. Custom, according to Héritier (2002), means usages, practices, standards of norms and codes which are common to certain groups or classes of people and which regulate the group action in both religious and social obligation. Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English defines morals as principles or standards of good behaviour, especially in matters of sex. Moral relates to the principle of considerations of right and wrong action or good character. A man of action is moral when his behaviour is adjudged as being wrong in a given society. Agha (2003) says an action is right if it leads to physical, intellectual and spiritual development or to a more harmonious personal and social life. To be moral is to be disciplined, intelligent and sociable in the process of social living. An individual's moral consists of his ideas of what is right or wrong and his conviction about his responsibilities. Moral consciousness consists of a system of ideas, attitudes and inner motives or controls that degree what is right or wrong.

## 2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

Njoku (2016) refers moral decadence as the failure to uphold sound morality in society. Muraino and Ugwumba (2014) refers moral decadence as the process of behaving in a way that shows low moral standards, a gross reduction in the moral values among individuals or a group in a certain society. It seems to be a fall in the moral standard, deterioration, a collapse in upholding societal values, beliefs, norms and ethical standards of group social living. It has adverse effects on society because it changes cultural, moral, and social norms and sets new but lower standards for appropriate behaviours. Moral decadence lowers moral behaviour's standards and creates new but lower criteria for justice and ethics (Dromi & Illouz, 2010; Onebunne, 2018). It promotes public acceptance of violence, justifies discrimination and injustice, and limits opportunities for social development that are so important to keep societies flourishing. The most serious is probably the growing acceptance of lower moral standards in society.

In the modern world, the decline of morality among youths is typified by, among others, violence, radicalisation, perverted sexual behaviour, abortion, drug and substance abuse, cultism, corruption, sexual harassment, and indecent dressing (Muthamba, 2017). It has also led many youths into cultism, prostitution, thuggery, examination malpractice in schools, indecent dressing, sex debut, broken relationships, drug and substance abuse and many other social vices that have remained problematic and threaten the peace and security of the large society (Nalugala, 2017). It is in view of these that the Presbyterian Church of East Africa (PCEA) initiated a number of programs in an effort to inculcate youth morals and enhance their spirituality. These programmes include; the Youth Sports Evangelism, the Youth AIDS and HIV Program, Youth Schools and Colleges Program, Youth Training and Capacity Building Program, Youth Empowerment and Investment Program, and Youth Mission and Evangelism Program are among them (PCEA, 1998).

Johnson (2013) has pointed out that church-based youth programmes have a protective factor against delinquent behaviour. Lokkesmoe (2019) noted that youths that participate in church-based programs such as Bible study, outreach evangelism and social action projects are less likely to be involved in the abuse of drugs and other related social evils. This implies that church youth work, coupled with effective

management and delivery, is invaluable in ensuring that young people are given the opportunity to acquire the skills, attitudes, and knowledge they require for upright moral engagement and social action. Interestingly, concerns have been voiced about the decline in moral standards among the youth in the eastern region of PCEA, notably in Chuka Presbytery, in spite of there being robust church-youth-moral programmes. Probably, the complex nature of an evolving society coupled with inadequate contemporary studies highlighting the reasons for the effectiveness of Church programmes in instilling morality to help in guiding the formulation of evidence-based appropriate interventions. Therefore, it was vital to address this lacuna by exploring the effectiveness of church programmes in instilling morality in the Presbyterian Church of East Africa, Chuka Presbytery, Kenya.

## 3.0 METHODOLOGY

The study adopted the Descriptive Survey Design. Descriptive research is a method of research that gives the characteristics of the population or phenomenon that is being studied (Nardi, 2018). The design was an appropriate choice for this study because the research investigated factors accounting for persistence in moral decadence among the youth despite the church's effort to instil morality among the youth in PCEA Chuka Presbytery. By using the survey method, the study collected the information needed without manipulation of the study variables. It was also possible to collect data from the respondents without influencing them. The study was carried out in PCEA, Chuka Presbytery, located in Tharaka Nithi County (Figure 1).
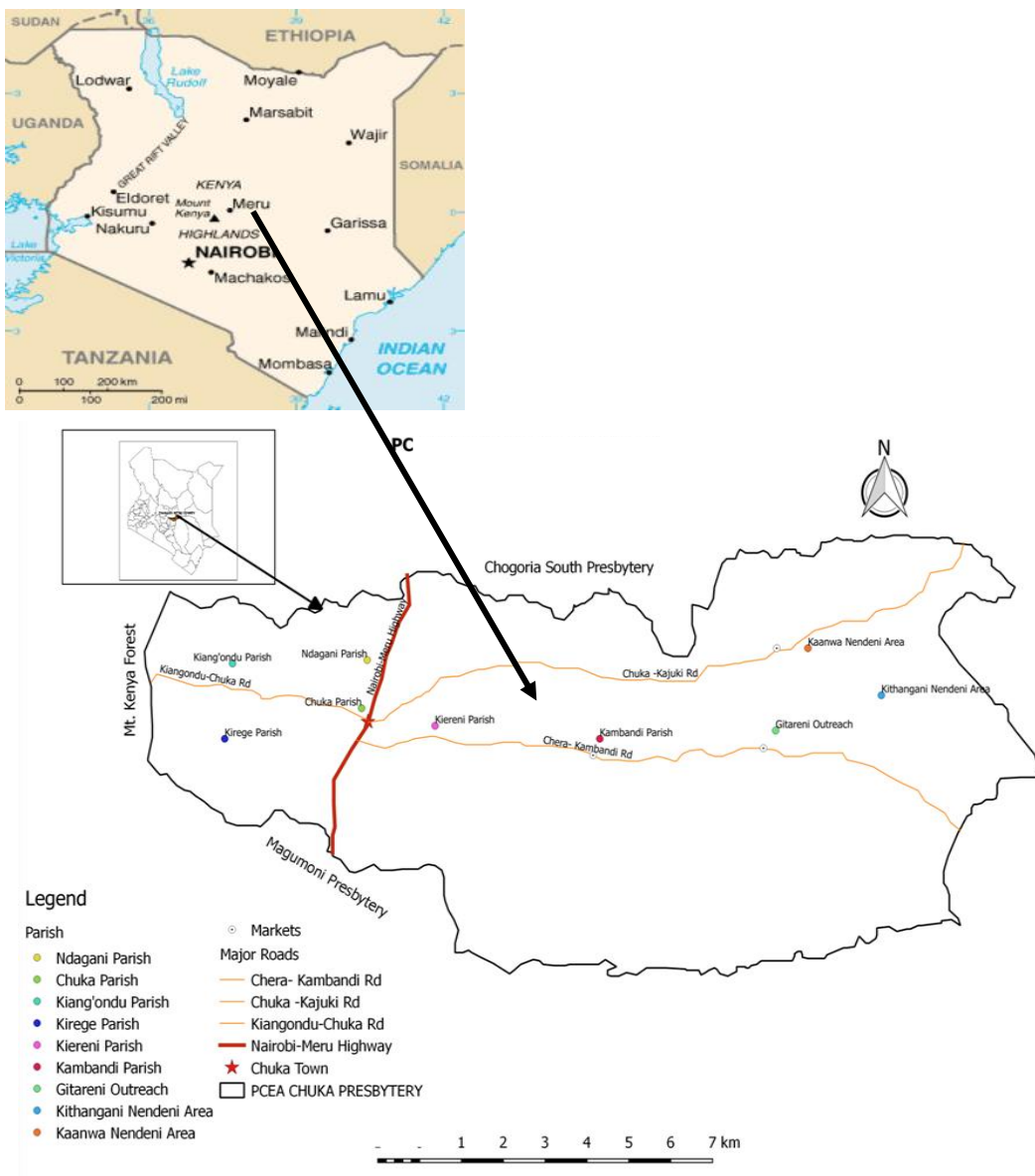
**Figure 1: Map of Kenya Showing PCEA Chuka Presbytery**

Using an online sample size calculator that computes the minimum number of samples required to meet the desired statistical constraints, a sample size of 334 was obtained at 95 per cent confidence level and a 5 per cent margin of error. The study employed simple random sampling to select the sample of the study from a target population of 3286 members of Chuka Presbytery. Thus, six parish ministers, 175 adult church members and 153 youth constituted the sample. Mixed-methods research, including questionnaires and thematic analysis of semi-structured interviews were used to achieve the research goal. A pilot study was carried out in two parishes involving two parish ministers, 17 adult church members and 15 youths in Chuka Presbytery that were not included in the final survey. The supervisors of this study and other experts in the Department of Arts and Humanities of Chuka University evaluated the items in the

research tools to find out if they would truly measure what they were intended to measure and whether the questionnaire items included all the content of a particular construct and advised accordingly. The reliability of the research instruments was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient. The results found that the range of Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient was 0.721 for parish ministers, 0.723 for adult church members and 0.722 for youth questionnaires. This resulted in a mean of 0.722 on the reliability test. Fraenkel and Wallen (2018) recommend a reliability coefficient of 0.70 and above. Therefore, a reliability coefficient of 0.722 was considered adequate for the study.

Data analysis entailed doing mathematical computations on the data obtained from the field to generate useful information to facilitate cogent discussion and inferences. Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 21 for Windows was used to clean, code, and enter data into the computer for analysis. Quantitative data was analysed quantitatively using descriptive and inferential statistics, while data elicited by interview and FGD were analysed qualitatively by using the Qualitative Data Analysis Program (QDAP), which is free open-source software.

## 4.0 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
### Effectiveness of PCEA Programmes in Instilling Morality among the Youth in PCEA Chuka Presbytery

The study assessed the effectiveness of church programs in imparting morals to the youth of Chuka Presbytery. Presented are the results of the analysis.

#### Table 1: Effectiveness of PCEA Programmes in Instilling Morality among the Youth

| Programme Effectiveness | Responses | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Youth(n=148) | | | | | | | | | | | Adult Church Members(n=169) | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | ES | | VS | | MS | | SS | | NS | | Mean | ES | | VS | | MS | | SS | | NS | | Mean |
| | F | % | F | % | F | % | F | % | F | % | | F | % | F | % | F | % | F | % | F | % | |
| Sports evangelism programmes | 45 | 31.3 | 18 | 12.1 | 7 | 4.9 | 48 | 33.3 | 30 | 20.8 | 3.00 | 10 | 6.0 | 15 | 9.0 | 44 | 26.0 | 55 | 33.0 | 45 | 27.0 | 2.35 |
| Schools and colleges youth programmes | 11 | 7.6 | 12 | 8.3 | 14 | 9.0 | 71 | 48.0 | 40 | 27.0 | 2.13 | 17 | 10.0 | 20 | 12.0 | 29 | 17.0 | 38 | 22.0 | 65 | 38.0 | 2.33 |
| HIV and AIDs programmes | 19 | 13.2 | 10 | 8.0 | 35 | 24.0 | 17 | 11.0 | 67 | 45.0 | 2.30 | 16 | 9.0 | 17 | 10.0 | 32 | 19.0 | 52 | 31.0 | 52 | 31.0 | 2.36 |
| Training and capacity-building programmes | 20 | 14.0 | 15 | 10.0 | 25 | 17.0 | 20 | 14.0 | 68 | 46.0 | 2.32 | 3 | 2.0 | 16 | 9.0 | 40 | 24.0 | 42 | 25.0 | 68 | 40.0 | 2.08 |
| Empowerment and investment programmes | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 58 | 39.0 | 50 | 34.0 | 40 | 27.0 | 2.12 | 14 | 8.0 | 29 | 17.0 | 33 | 20.0 | 42 | 25.0 | 51 | 30.0 | 2.49 |

| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Mission and evangelism programmes | 30 | 20.8 | 25 | 17.0 | 15 | 10.0 | 40 | 27.0 | 38 | 26.0 | 2.79 | 27 | 16.0 | 20 | 12.0 | 35 | 21.0 | 63 | 37.0 | 49 | 29.0 | 2.93 |
| Overall Mean | | | | | | | | | | | 2.44 | | | | | | | | | | | 2.42 |

Key: Extremely Satisfied (ES-scored 5), Very Satisfied (VS-scored 4), Moderately Satisfied (MS-scored 3), Slightly Satisfied (SS-scored 2) and Not Satisfied (NS- scored 1)

According to data generated from the youth respondents, only sports evangelism (Mean = 3.00), mission and evangelism programmes (Mean = 2.79) were fairly effective. In contrast, adult church members indicated that only mission and evangelism programmes were fairly effective. From the findings, it can be deciphered that the PCEA youth programmes for instilling morality among the youth are not effective except for the programmes on sports evangelism, mission and evangelism. In his book, Town (2012) indicates that church-initiated programmes have low efficacy because the youth sometimes fail to participate in the church programs due to their stereotyped image as viewed by adults who consider them as impulsive, immature, unreliable, undependable, inexperience, untrusted, dishonest, leadership threat due to their education or disobedient which hence erects psychological barriers between the older generation and youth commonly referred to as generation gap.

**Sports Evangelism Programmes**
The results on the effectiveness of sports evangelism show that the majority, 48(33.3%) youths that took part in the study, reported that they were moderately satisfied with the programme as compared to 55(33.0%) adult church members that reported slight satisfaction with the programme. Thus, it can be interpreted that sports evangelism is fairly effective in instilling morality among the youth. Jenkins and Pfautz (2019) demonstrated that sports are an effective way to reach both un-churched and churched youth and young adults. Youth are exposed to a spiritual environment during sporting activities. On a different school of thought, Wheaton et al. (2017) argue that the most successful sports programmes are those that do not solely rely on sports but instead use sports to initially attract youth to the project and then offer formal tuition in personal development and social awareness. This demonstrates that the use of sport in engaging young people may be effective and can lead to the development of crucial life skills and morals.

Wamugunda (OI, 2022) indicated that Bible study, seminars and workshops accounted for the main youth training forums engaged by the church. Given the importance of morals and values in modern sports, especially among young people, it was established in an exclusive interview with Wamugunda (OI, 2022) that sports can be a platform for evangelism or a classroom for morality. The moral reasoning of youngsters in a team is highly influenced by both the moral environment of the team and the performance orientation of the team, which dictates individual behavioural norms. Qualitative evidence from focus groups suggested that collective moral responsibility in sports influences individual behavioural standards. Sports, through socialisation processes, teach habits, attitudes, and standards that are consistent with society's expectations, shaping and constructing teenagers' moral understanding. Sports actions are morally significant because they might have a beneficial or bad impact on other individuals who participate in sports. Proactive sports behaviours manifest as the ability to behave humanely, whereas

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inhibitive sports behaviours manifest as the ability to refrain from behaving inhumanely. According to this viewpoint, high levels of morality are visible when team members exhibit both positive and negative athletic behaviours. Despite the challenges and complexities of using sports to prevent youth immoral behaviours, it is clear that sports can be an effective means of engaging and empowering young people.

Hanna (2020) has shown the positive impact sports mentoring programs have in the lives of developing youth. Hanna (2020) posits that sports can teach values such as fairness, teambuilding, equality, discipline, inclusion, perseverance and respect. Kuusisto et al. (2019) concur by noting that faith-based youth work is developing steadily in many churches to help young people in their spiritual and holistic growth to adulthood. In particular, Kuusisto et al. (2019) assert that Christian faith-based youth programmes provide valuable support to many young people in more informal settings than school. Samah et al. (2017) found that sports evangelism among youth can generate a healthy lifestyle of the youngsters and prevents youth from fulfilling their leisure time with negative activities. While there is intuitive knowledge that sports evangelism has social implications, the current study's findings show that sports evangelism has a significant positive impact on moral outcomes, particularly for young people. The church has long battled to correctly appreciate the role of sports in God's larger purposes. Fortunately, there is increasing evidence from this study to locate the history of the church's attitude toward sports evangelism. This austere viewpoint correctly underlines the church's call to embrace sports evangelism as a cure for youth moral degeneration.

## Schools and Colleges Youth Programmes

The results of this study, however, show that the PCEA inter-school and college youth programmes have not been successful in curbing moral decadence among the youth. In the breadth of the same unanimity, adult church members and the youth that took part in the survey affirmed this from the viewpoint of their responses (mean = 2.13 and 2.33), respectively.

The most effective and practical ways to foster moral competence in adolescents are not to create a teaching package focusing entirely on moral competence. Instead, a comprehensive and all-around positive youth development program is a better choice. Parent education for building moral competence in adolescents should be integrated into any educational packages involving moral competence as far as possible. It is stated that in order for the school-based program to be successful in assisting students in increasing their moral and prosocial behaviours and reducing their antisocial behaviours, the program should be based on all-round or whole-person development, and its length should be sufficiently long. According to research, youth intervention programs are most effective when they are implemented into routine practice (Barry et al., 2017). Previous studies have also demonstrated that youth fellowship-focused programs in schools and colleges can help to decrease antisocial behaviour (Khoury-Kassabri & Schneider, 2018). Thus, schools and colleges youth programmes implemented by the PCEA may be effective in the promotion of moral competence provided they are well structured, and youth are given meaningful and visible roles as participants.

## Youth Training and Capacity Building Programme

The PCEA initiated a strategy of instilling morality among the youth by engaging them in training and

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capacity-building programmes. The results of this study reveal that youth training and capacity-building programmes were not effective, as indicated by the mean youth (Mean = 2.32) and adult church members (Mean = 2.08) responses. Previous empirical studies on the effectiveness of seminars and workshops in curbing youth alcohol and drug abuse problems established that such forums have, at best, a small positive effect (Jones et al., 2020). The contention so far has been that character is not the result of verbal instruction. Buttrey et al. (2022) posit that scheduled moral instruction cannot be depended on to develop moral behaviours.

### Youth HIV and Aids Programme
The results of this study show that the youth HIV and AIDS programme was not effective (Mean = 2.30; 2.36). In his study findings, Smith (2015) did not find a positive link between church-initiated youth HIV and Aids programmes and decline in youth immorality. Despite the fact that churches exert a powerful effect in the communities in which they operate and have credibility in society, they appear to have not succeeded in curbing the problem of youth moral decadence. Kuttner's (2009) study on nurturing ethical values in the 21st-century youth in Naperville, Illinois, established that the church's duty is to assist others, especially the young, to establish and nurture ethical values that will ensure the continuance of an acceptable moral order in society. In particular, the HIV and AIDS programme empowers young people to live moral and theological virtues and apply these virtues in making moral sexual decisions. Participation in youth church programmes such as HIV and AIDS provides an opportunity to positively assist youth in developing their moral value system. Churches have embraced a humanistic, compassionate leadership role in HIV and AIDS education and prevention. However, the efficacy of this programme has remained largely unevaluated. In an endeavour to bridge this lacuna, the current study surveyed a group of youth, clergy and adult church members of the PCEA.

### Youth Empowerment, Entrepreneurship, and Investment Programme
Approaches to youth empowerment include strategies that provide young people with opportunities for meaningful involvement and participation in their education or support services. The current study sought to establish the effectiveness of youth empowerment, entrepreneurship and investment programmes in instilling youth morality. The results generated in this study indicate that youth empowerment, entrepreneurship and investment programmes were not effective in helping instil morality among the youth (Mean = 2.12; 2.49). According to Nduyo (2013), programmes for youth empowerment need an acceptance of youth as partners in order to succeed in achieving its objectives.

### Youth Mission and Evangelism Programme
Evangelism is the practice of spreading Christian belief (Reid, 1998; Beougher & Reid, 2004). The goal of evangelism is to raise up obedient disciples who will be absorbed into the church through baptism. Its activities involve Christian witnessing, preaching the gospel and proclaiming repentance and forgiveness of sins. Despite there being so much written about youth programmes and morality, no one has specifically looked into the effectiveness church initiated programmes in the moral transformation of the youth in Chuka Presbytery. The current study gathered information to ascertain the effectiveness of the church youth mission and evangelism programmes in instilling morality among the youth in Chuka Presbytery. The descriptive statistics summarised in Table 1 show that the youth mission and evangelism

programme was fairly effective based on the youth and adult church members' responses (Mean = 2.79; 2.93), respectively. Mwangi (2015) reveals that PCEA implements programmes for the youth whose component focuses on compassion, empathy, and sincere caring. However, some lack the capacity to address the real concerns and issues of the youth in the contemporary church. As a result, they slowly lose their impact and become less appealing to the youth. Without new insights, attendance is affected, whereby very few youths attend some of these programmes.

## 5.0 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

**Conclusion:** Program effectiveness is concerned with whether the programs are, in fact, achieving the desired objectives and to what extent these goals are realised. This study evaluated the effectiveness of church-initiated programs in imparting morals to the youth in Chuka Presbytery. The results show that, with the exception of the programs on sports evangelism, mission, and evangelism, the PCEA youth programs for imparting morals are ineffective.

**Recommendations:** The effectiveness of church youth moral programmes can be enhanced through the preparation of epic or classic training content, establishing a youth ministry to spearhead moral development programmes, enhancing partnership and collaborations, encouraging early socialisation and moral training, engagement of strategic communication experts as well as youth engagement in programme design, implementation, evaluation and follow-ups. Equally, service learning can have a positive impact too.

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