

**ASSESSMENT OF FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO LOW CHURCH ATTENDANCE  
AND ABSENTEEISM: A CASE OF METHODIST CHURCH IN KENYA NYAMBENE  
SYNOD, MERU COUNTY, KENYA.**


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**DECLARATION**

This is my original work and has not been presented for a degree or any other award in any university

Signature.....  ..... Date..... 17<sup>th</sup>/10/2022 .....

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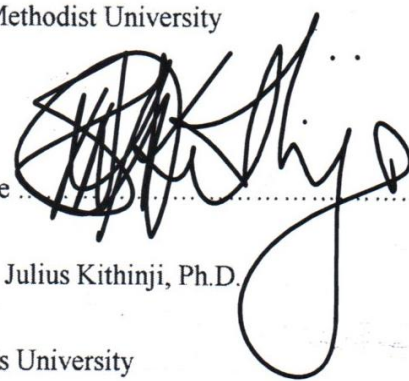
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## **DEDICATION**

This study is dedicated to my beloved wife Florence Karambu Kithure who kept on encouraging and supporting me when I was almost to give up.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

I am grateful to the Almighty God for giving me sound mind without which I would not have undertaken this study. My sincere gratitude goes to my supervisors Rev. Dr. John Njoroge and Rev. Dr. Julius Kithinji for their professional guidance, their patience and the many hours they dedicated into guiding me through my thesis report. I am indebted to all lecturers in the department for their wise advice and invaluable input. To my research assistant Mr. Gilbert Maina, thank you for your priceless support, and to the library staff for their patience, guidance, and recommendations. To the participants who took their time out of their busy schedules to provide feedback, I am very grateful.

## ABSTRACT

Regular Church attendance is often an indicator of Christians' commitment and faith in God. Right from the New Testament, the Church has been symbolic, an assembly of followers of Christ who congregate regularly with an aim of worshipping God together in faith. It follows then that the Low Church attendance and absenteeism undermines Christian faith and the ability of the Church to meet ministry goals. The study sought to investigate the contribution of home based factors, the socio economic factors, and Church based factors that contribute to Low Church attendance and absenteeism. A study was guided by secularization theory under postmodernism philosophy which advocates that as science and technology continue to shape the world social changes in power and class structure tend to persist in similar forms as well (Heywood 2012). The data for the study was mainly quantitative. Simple random and purposive sampling was used to collect the data. The target population comprised of 28,015 men, women and youth members in MCK Nyambene Synod. A descriptive research design was employed for this study with a sample of 379 respondents who were selected through random sampling. Data was collected using two questionnaires, one for the youth and the other for adult members. Prior to the main study, a pilot study with a sample of 38 respondents was conducted in Miathene Synod. Analysis was done using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (Version 25) in which the researcher performed descriptive statistical analyses to determine and rank specific factors that affected Church attendance in line with the study's objectives. Two variables were considered that is Low Church attendance and absenteeism. It was established that Home based factors and Church based factors were significantly associated with Church low attendance and absenteeism. In respect to home based factors, poor family background, lack of monies to channel during fundraisers, unfriendly relationship between youth and parents, and lack of parental guidance greatly contributed to church absenteeism. Thus, parents should endeavour to inculcate a warm and cordial relationship with their children to increase the prevalence of their children's Church attendance. In regard to Church based factors, lengthy sermons, non-involvement of youth in Church activities and lack of uniformity in treatment of members led to church absenteeism. Hence, ministers of the word should strive to ensure that their sermons are precise and straight forward. Socio economic factors were not significantly associated with Low Church attendance and absenteeism. School/work engagements were not a major hindrance to Church attendance and absenteeism however the Church leadership should organize team building activities for the respective Church groups to ensure harmonious relationship and avoid stigma and criticism that is ignited from difference family economic status. In addition, Church leadership should devise creative ways of engaging the youth since inactive youth engagement is associated with Church absenteeism. Since the study focused on Churches under the Methodist Church in Kenya, it is suggested that the study be extended to other Churches to assess whether different findings may be reached regarding factors contributing to Low Church attendance and absenteeism.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Background of the Study

A Church is an assembly of believers who meet together to encourage one another by sharing the word of God (Hebrews 3:13), serve one another (Galatians 5:13), instruct, or teach one another (Romans 15:14), and share with one another. It represents a place where believers gather, a denomination such as the Methodist Church, or an assembly of Christians (Armentrout & Slocum, 2007). According to Hurlbut (2016), Church is an assembly or association of followers of Jesus Christ. A person is initiated into the Church through baptism by the Holy Spirit. Consequently, the baptized become “one body headed by Christ” and in this manner continue to fulfil Christ’s mission through fellowship and evangelism. Thus, Church attendance can be defined as the Christians’ ‘moral duty’ of congregating in the Church regularly in the common purpose of proclaiming the Christian faith, salvation through baptism (Armentrout & Slocum, 2007). Vezzoni and Biolcati-Rinaldi (2015) state that attendance means that someone is present at a particular event or an institution. For example, the Seventh Day Adventists have set aside Saturday as their main day of public worship; a day when they avoid secular activities and attend church just like in the Old Testament Sabbath (Brattston, 2017). For other communions embracing Christendom Sunday is their Lord’s Day in which they attend public worship in churches in line with the Fourth Commandment (Brattston, 2017). Furthermore, the Reformed Churches claim that it is the duty of all members to attend public worship in keeping with the Ten Commandments, a view that is also held in the Westminster Confession that “the Lord’s day is a day of rest and worship, a day of restraining oneself from works, worldly employments and recreation (Mckim & Donald, 2011). Similarly the general rule of the Methodist Church requires

that every member ought to be attending all the ordinances of the Church, which includes public worship of God (Abraham & Kirby, 2011). According to the Lutheran Christian theologian Balthazar, Church attendance is the foundation for the Christian life and it is important for believers because it helps them from backsliding (Merethe, 2013).

Absenteeism does not only hurt the Church but it also hurts individual spiritual growth and maturity in Christian's life. Church absenteeism has been creeping slowly in the Church and now it has now reached a tipping point where the Church needs to address it urgently before it drains off her members.

Consequently, many scholars both globally and locally are conducting surveys to investigate the reasons behind the low Church attendance and Church absenteeism. For example according to a research done by the (European Social Survey [ESS], 2012), it was found that a third of the European Christians attended Church services once a month or more. Another key researcher on this area of Church attendance is (Gallup International Group [GIP], 2015). The group, which is based in America, has done several surveys on why the attendance is edging down since 1950's. According to them, the attendance in 1950's was as high as 49% and since then the trend has been going down. For example, in the year 2013, they conducted a self-reporting survey via telephone, and they found out that only 37% of American Christians attend religious services weekly (GIP, 2015). In other Countries such as France, only 15% of its Citizen attended the Church; in the UK, 10% attended the Church; 5.6 % of Australians citizens attended the Church, whereas 5.6 % of Dutch citizens attended the Church (NCLS Releases Latest estimates of Church attendance, National Church Life Survey, Media release). In the year 2011 there was also evidence of decline of 0.3% in the Anglican Church weekly attendance and in general the rate of weekly Church attendance in Britain dropped down by 1% annually.

Furthermore, according to the Pew Research Centre, 37% of Americans attended the Church weekly (Lipka, 2013). In 2006, another survey published in the *Financial Times Paper* involving 12,507 adults over 16 years old in United States and from five European Countries (Spain, France, Germany, Italy, and Great Britain) indicated that 26% of those who were questioned on whether or how regular they attend the Church, 9% indicated that they attend once or twice a month, 21% indicated they attend few times a year, 3% once a year and 18% never attended religious services (Harris, 2012).

The Methodist church has not also been spared by members absenteeism for example a report received from the department of Church mission in Britain (2014) showed that there was serious decline of Methodists members in Britain. It showed a 3.7 per cent year decline and a reduction of 29.35 per cent overall. In United State of America the united Methodist continued to decline with nearly 72,000 members, with 18 Conferences reporting membership losses of 2 percent or more (report 2011). Another survey done in 2010 showed 33,000 churches had declined in membership nearly by 10 percent. According to Orton and Hart (2017), it was found out that in the year 2009 and 2014 Methodist membership decline in weekly attendance from 17.0 per cent to 15.1 per cent this was attributed to age and family movements.

In Africa, Church attendance statistics indicate that Africans are better at worship attendance than the rest of the world. This view concurs with a famous saying from an African theologian (Mbiti, 1970) that “Africans are notoriously religious.” According to the survey data published by the Pew Research Centre, at least eight in ten adults in sub-Saharan Africa attend regular worship services. These surveys were conducted between 2008 and 2017 (Pew Research Centre, 2018). Surprisingly, the study found that Africans were the most religious people with up to 98% claiming that religion is very important in their lives. Another research done by the



World Values survey (2012) found out that 90% of Africans, especially from Ghana, Nigeria, Rwanda, South Africa and Zimbabwe attend Church regularly. Actually, the report projected that Africans will experience great growth of Christianity with Nigeria having the highest Church attendance, but due to high spread of secularization, this projection might be affected negatively (Surveyor, 2020). However, some studies indicate that Africa's Christianity levels were highest immediately after the missionary era. A few decades post this epoch, Churches, especially the Protestants, started registering declining Church membership (Ferreira & Chipenyu, 2021). For instance in South Africa, membership in Protestant Churches among the black people dropped by about 19% between 2005 and 2012. The figure was way above the global average of 9% (Nel & Schoeman, 2015). In the East African region, particularly, Uganda and Tanzania, weekly Church attendance is ranked at above 80% according to the Pew Research Center (2018). Nonetheless, the declining worship attendance is still manifest in these countries as manifested by various statistics. In Uganda, the decline is evidenced by census reports indicating that affiliation to Christianity declined by an average of 15% across all denominations between the 2002 Census and the 2014 Census (Uganda Bureau of Statistics [UBS], 2016).

According to the Kenya Nations Bureau of Statistics, Nairobi Kenya retrieve (2020), it was found out that 85% of Kenyans are Christians, 10.9% Muslims, and 3.57% other religions, depicting that majority of Kenyans are indeed associated with Christianity. A specific look at this data shows, 9,010,684 are Catholics, 18,307,466 Protestants, 4,304,798, Muslims 53,393, other religions 557,450, those with no religion 922,128, and 6,233 have no known affiliation (Kenya Nations Bureau of Statistics [KNBS], 2020). From these statistics it is clear that large percentages of Christians in Kenya are Protestants. Despite this indication, some of those members do not attend the Church as frequently as expected.

MCK Nyambene Synod is found in Meru County in Kenya. Meru County is one of the 47 Counties of Kenya. According to Interim Independent Boundaries Review Commission, (IIBRC], 2010) the County had a population of 1.55 Million people. The Synod covers three sub

counties that is; Nyambene North, Nyambene Central and Nyambene South and according to the statistical return of the year 2019 it had membership of 28,015( Synod statistical return 2019) but in the first quarter 820 youth and 650 adults did not attend the church. In the second quarter the number increased by 1.5% and by the end of the final quarter it increased by 2.1%. This decline of attendance is evidence that the reasons for such low and absenteeism needed to be established.

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

This study assesses the problem of the Low Church attendance and absenteeism in Methodist Church in Kenya, Nyambene Synod in Meru County. From recent data reported by the Service Attendance Register, the number of congregants attending weekly Church services has been declining steadily. The declining attendance is indeed supported by statistics. In this synod 13,208 adults and 6481 youth were registered as members in their respective Churches across the Synod in 2019. In the first quarter, 650 adults and 820 youth did not meet the attendance threshold of at least three services in a month. In the second quarter this number increased by 1.5 % and in the final quarter it increased by 2.1 %. Just as in the rest of the world the reasons for the declining Church attendance and absenteeism are largely unknown among the Church clergy. At this time, the 0.5%-1% (Synod statistical return 2019) annual contraction in attendance might seem insignificant in terms of numbers; however, the accompanying consequences threaten the beliefs and values of the Church profoundly.

A study conducted in Europe associated Low Church attendance with “greater permissiveness and increased diversity in attitudes towards abortion, divorce, and euthanasia” (Halman & Van, 2015). This moral decadence is also likely to affect the youth and children, which may lead to even worse Church attendance records in the future. The habit of some Christians opting to attend parties or watch television programs on Sundays has also contributed to low Church attendance and absenteeism; all this implies that most Churches will not meet their ministry goals and objectives due to members who lag behind in their teams. This challenge also implies a bigger workload for committed Church leaders, as they must keep bringing absentee members up to speed on various Church matters. Hence, this study anticipates that if the reasons for absenteeism and low attendance are known, then Church leaders will potentially make better decisions to improve Church attendance statistics and avert the dangers associated with the current declining trend. Also conducting a study that investigates the causes of Church

absenteeism among the congregants in the MCK Nyambane Synod would be providing a stepping stone for understanding the causes of this worrying trend not only in this region but also globally. Also it has been noted that there is no research that has been done on Church attendance and absenteeism in the entire Nyambene Synod. Importantly, these reasons will therefore form the basis for generating solutions to this problem among local and global Church leaders.

### **1.3 Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the study was to examine the reasons to why there is Low Church attendance and absenteeism from Sunday to Sunday in MCK Nyambene Synod, Meru County, Kenya.

### **1.4 Objectives of the Study**

This study sought to:

- (a) Examine home based factors contributing to Low Church attendance and absenteeism at MCK Nyambene Synod, Meru County, Kenya.
- (b) Explore socio-economic factors contributing to Low Church attendance and absenteeism at MCK Nyambene Synod, Meru County in Kenya.
- (c) Determine the Church-based factors contributing to Low Church attendance and absenteeism at MCK Nyambene Synod, Meru County.

#### **1.4.1 Research Questions**

The study was guided by the following research questions;

- (i) What are the home-based factors contributing to Low Church attendance and absenteeism at MCK Nyambene Synod, Meru County?
- (ii) What are the social-economic factors contributing to Low Church attendance and Absenteeism at MCK Nyambene Synod Meru County, in Kenya?
- (iii) What Church-based factors are contributing to Low Church attendance and absenteeism at MCK Nyambene Synod, Meru County in Kenya?

### **1.5 Justification of the Study**

The research assessed home-based factors, social-economic and Church-based factors which were contributing to Low Church attendance and absenteeism in the Church and the dangers of

faith fallout which may bring spiritual, social and moral decadence in the society in MCK Nyambene Synod, Meru County in Kenya. The findings could shed light on how faith and practice enhances each other to form a Christian concrete foundation in Christian life. In this case faith put in practice contributes to the well-being of the society as well as the Church.

The research will help the Church to come up with new innovation to address effect of secularism which is seriously affecting Church attendance. Secularism here involves systems that rejects religious faith and tends to replace it with different ideologies which affects strict adherence to religious practices.

### **1.6 Limitations of the Study**

A key limitation to this study is that data was collected during Church service meetings and pastoral visitation. This set-up is a key limiting factor in obtaining a robust data that paints a clear picture of the key reasons that undermine Church attendance in MCK Nyambene Synod. Some of the target participants may attend Church just a few times in a year and may not be available during pastoral visit. While their responses would form the most credible source of data for this study, there is likelihood that most of these participants will miss out on the study due to their irregular attendance or complete absenteeism. However, the researcher made an intentional effort to reach these potential participants by sending those who attend the Church service on the research day to administer the questionnaires to people who fit the description of the target population. Another expected limitation was that respondents could give biased responses, in that they could fail to give the genuine reasons for their absenteeism. To address this challenge the researcher included a clause for participants' anonymity, and the methodology could be adjusted to meet the demands of the participants to boost their confidence in the study.

Another key limiting factor in this study was the occurrence of an ongoing global pandemic that is coronavirus disease (COVID-19) which was a major factor affecting Church attendance at the time of the study and could affect it in the unforeseeable future. Due to the widespread of the pandemic in 2020, many governments had ordered a complete closure of physical Church premises while other administrations regulated the number of congregants who could be allowed to attend Church services. This could hinder the study but at the time of data collection, most COVID19 measures hindering people from gathering had been lifted.

### **1.7 Delimitation of the Study**

This study focused on the home-based, socio-economic, and Church based factors that undermine Church attendance in MCK Nyambene Synod, Meru County in Kenya. In this manner, the study only targeted people who were registered as MCK Church members that was selected for the study in Nyambene synod. While there may be many other people who do not attend a Church service within the study area, their views could not be included in this study as they do not meet the inclusion criteria and registration for membership in any MCK Church in the study area.

### **1.8 Significance of the Study**

The research was intended to help the Church to identify the home based, social economic and Church based Challenges that the Church was experiencing in order to address the problem of Low Church attendance and absenteeism which was affecting many denominations at the time of the study. The research identified the best solutions to address the problem of this chronic absenteeism which could seriously affect the religious demography in the future.

### **1.9 Assumption of the Study**

The researcher assumed that the participants could provide genuine responses that could be used to make credible and reliable inferences on the study problem. The researcher further assumed that the reasons for Low Church attendance and absenteeism could be categorized as home-based, socio-economic, and Church-based.

## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 2.1 Introduction

This chapter entails a review of related literature that is covered under themes emanating from the specific objectives of the study. It is divided into; home-based factors, socio-economic factors, and Church-based factors influencing low Church attendance and absenteeism. Finally, the chapter provided theoretical framework and conceptual framework.

#### 2.2 Definition of the Church

The word church is a translation from a Greek word *ecclesia* and mainly used in the New Testament literally to mean congregation, assembly of believers or the meeting of believers (Korner ,2017). Also to according to Williams (2014), the word church in the Bible is defined as; the body of Christ which consist of the local assembly or local believers (1Corinthians 2:2, 2Corinthians 1:1, Galatians 1:1-2), the body of believers (1Corinthians 15: 9, Galatians 1:13) and a universal group of people who believe in Christ (Mathew 16:8, Ephesians 5: 23-27). From the definitions above it is clear that the church is a gathering of believers whose purpose is to worship God and serve the purpose of his church.

According to John Wesley, the church is a gathering of believers who congregate to worship the Lord. In his 74<sup>th</sup> Sermon (text from 1872 edition) John Wesley explains that the church sometimes is taken to mean a building which is set apart for public worship or a congregation of people who gather together in order to serve God. He further explains that a church is a gathering of believers who assemble to worship either in a building or who gather together as a family to worship God. For instance he quotes Galatians 1:2 where Paul addresses the Christians of Galatians who were dispersed in different places as a church. The church also means all the

Christians scattered over the world (Acts 20:28). So according to John Wesley the church consist any number of people whether two three or million who gather in one spirit, one body, one hope, one baptism to worship one God who is the father of all (Wesley, 1995).

According to the article written by Rev Paul Smalley on the meaning of the church in the Westminster Confession of Faith, the church is not a building but people who worship in it in spirit and truth (John 4:20-25) . He disputes that the church is not a denomination but it exist as gathering of believers. He further explains that the church consists of the elect individuals whose sins are forgiven and therefore they became sons and daughters of God (1Peter 2:4, 9). The church is also a bride of Christ and also the church is joined by Christ who is the head of the church and the redeemer of those who believe in him (Ephesians 5:30-31, 2 Timothy 1:9). He therefore concludes that the church is a universal (catholic) body of Christ which is not restricted to one nation but to all the families of believers who worship the true God through Jesus Christ (William, 2021).

### **2.3 Concept of Low Church Attendance and Absenteeism**

This study sought to investigate factors that contribute to Low Church attendance and absenteeism. Vezzoni and Biolcati-Rinaldi (2015) state that attendance means that someone is present at a particular event or an institution. Hurlbut (2016) explains that the Church is an assembly or association of followers of Jesus Christ. Firstly, according to Hurlbut (2016), the Church can be described as a building where Christians congregate to worship. Secondly, the scholar posits that the Church is a group of individuals with similar beliefs that congregate at a specific place to worship Jesus Christ. Citing these assertions, Church attendance may be described as the presence of Christians in a Church or gatherings aimed at worshiping God. On the other hand, absenteeism may be described as the practice of staying away from these

assemblies (Snyder, 2019). Therefore, Church attendance and absenteeism are associated concepts where higher attendance levels dictate lower absenteeism rates, and higher absenteeism rates indicate lower Church attendance.

## **2.4 Influence of Home-Based Factors on Church Attendance**

Several Home-Based factors affect Church attendance and absenteeism. Wali (2016) posits that home-based factors are attributes that affect the attitudes and behaviours of members of a specific family. According to other scholars, individuals that belong to the same family may have similar attributes such as religious affiliations, cultures, and traditions that affect their participation in various activities such as worship and education (Dollahite et al., 2018). The study conducted by Wali (2016) concludes that three home-based factors affect individuals' outcomes and they include; parents' level of education, family income, and family size. Therefore, it is necessary to consider how these attributes affect Low Church attendance and absenteeism globally, as well as in local churches.

### **2.4.1 Parents' level of education**

Currently, many governments and individuals consider education as an essential tool to deal with challenges affecting the world. Subsequently, levels of literacy have increased in recent years including in less developed regions such as sub-Saharan Africa (Wolhuter & Barbieri, 2017). Statistics indicate that by 2016 most nations in the world had attained more than 50% literacy rates which prove that education levels have improved tremendously (Roser & Ortiz-Ospina, 2016). Furthermore, Wolhuter and Barbieri (2017) conclude that the world literacy rates had increased to 84.32% which means that universal literacy may be achieved by 2030. Adult literacy affects religiosity in two ways. Firstly, as observed by Segall et al. (2015) education changes or reinforces the beliefs of parents. According to these researchers, education improves



critical thinking which enables individuals to examine religious texts and to interpret them accordingly (Segal et al., 2015). Furthermore, when parents are educated, they are more likely to understand and decipher complicated texts from the bible. Most Christians rely on biblical teachings to reinforce or create new beliefs. Therefore, when the parents are more educated, they can read and understand biblical texts that are complicated. Secondly, there are many translations of the bible including local languages. However, as explained by Molosiwa (2020) some people are illiterate thus they lack the essential skills needed to read and understand various versions of the bible. Additionally, other individuals do not understand common languages used in Church, for example, in Botswana many people still depend on translators in Church since they do not understand English (Molosiwa, 2020). Therefore, some of these people fail to attend the Church if translators are not available. These assertions prove that the literacy levels of the parents affect their ability to read and understand religious texts as well as to understand sermons. However, although high literacy can improve the religiousness of parents, in some instances it can also reduce their willingness to participate in religious activities. For example, although most individuals in Kenya are Protestants, various Churches have different beliefs and approaches to religion (Tanui et al., 2016). McIver (2016) states that many Churches attend mass on Sunday whereas others such as the seventh day Adventists (SDA), congregate on Saturday. Additionally, Bauer and Sanou (2015) observe that, unlike most churches, female members of SDA are expected to dress modestly, avoiding jewellery and flashy clothes. These beliefs are different in other affiliations where people are allowed to dress as they want and they attend church on Sunday instead of Saturday. These differences are a result of varying interpretations of the bible where some people use the Old Testament while others use New Testament teachings.

Subsequently, when parents become educated, they may read the bible themselves and they may disagree with certain expectations of their religion increasing Church absenteeism.

Parental literacy affects Church attendance and absenteeism tremendously. Pattachini and Zenou (2016) argue that religious beliefs are transmitted from parents to children. Wali (2016) further explains that most families share similar beliefs and attributes including religion. This scholar observed that many children adopted the religious affiliations of their parents, which explains why most families attend a similar Church. A study conducted by Lanman and Buhrmester (2017) concluded that children who had parents that worshiped in the Seventh-day Adventist Church also became members of the Church since childhood and they maintained these affiliations during adulthood. These observations are supported by Isik-Ercan (2015) who claims that children from Muslim families are likely to maintain these affiliations in their adulthood. Based on these claims, parental attributes affect the religiousness of their children and other family members. When the parents are more religious they are likely to attend Church more often. This means that literate parents can become more or less religious and they can affect the willingness of their children and other family members to attend Church.

#### **2.4.2 Family Income**

Family income also affects religiosity and Church attendance. Evaluated evidence suggests that families with higher income are more likely to attend Church compared to lower-earning ones. A study conducted by Schwadel et al. (2009) concluded that low-income individuals attended Church less often than other people. Another research conducted by Buser (2015) also indicated that families that earn more go to Church more often. According to these arguments, when the overall income of the society improves, the number of Church attendees also improves. On the other hand, if most of the families are struggling with financial issues the church attendance

reduces. Although many scholars argue that Church attendance is related to family income, other scientists refute these observations. For example, a study by Te Grotenhuis et al. (2015) found no correlation between family earnings and Church attendance. Furthermore, the research by Buser (2015) concluded that although rich African American and white families were more likely to attend Church than poor ones, these observations were not noticed in Hispanic families. According to these observations, income inequality does not dictate the church attendance of various families. However, regardless of these claims, research proves that individual and family income affects Church attendance in Kenya. A study conducted by Juma (2015) reveals that many youths in Kenya are unemployed or work in low-income occupations. The study further explains that youths in the country attended Church less frequently compared to other sections of the population such as the elderly. Juma (2015) attributes these differences to poor income associated with the youths in the country. The scholar claims that in some instances, unemployed individuals failed to attend Church to avoid stigma and criticism from other members of the Church who are more affluent. Furthermore, members from low-income families may lack the means to attend Church. Although churches are closer to the congregants in some places, other families have to travel long distances to attend their preferred Church. These individuals may be required to use transport means such as vehicles and motorcycles. This means that low-income families cannot afford these transportation costs each week hence, their Church attendance is lower than for other families.

### **2.4.3 Family Dynamics**

Family dynamics such as family size and family lifecycle also affect Church attendance and absenteeism. Firstly, Petts (2019) states that religion and family life are inherently intertwined institutions. This scholar argues that Christianity and other religious institutions stress the

importance of family and they provide guidelines that can be utilized to attain effective family relationships. These claims are supported by Marks and Dollahite (2016) who posit that religion contributes to higher family functioning and improved family relationships. According to these claims, there is a causal relationship between family dynamics and religiosity. On the other hand, family dynamics such as family size also affect Church attendance. Van et al. (2015) assert that Protestants with no children were less likely to attend Church, while those with children attended church more regularly. Petts (2019) explains that many families view the Church as an essential tool for imparting ideal values in the children. Subsequently, families with more children are more likely to attend Church compared to those with fewer or no children. However, as observed by Ganong et al. (2015) the family dynamics have changed tremendously in the past years. In earlier years, families were composed of married individuals and they had more children. Currently, there are many single-parent families, unmarried parents, and other settings with no, or few children. Since larger families attend church more regularly, changes in family dynamics mean that fewer people are attending Church compared to earlier years. Moreover, unlike earlier years where families shared a common religion, modern families are composed of partners from different affiliations (Petts, 2019). This means that many families do not identify with a specific religion hence, the children may fail to maintain their parent's religious beliefs during adulthood. Therefore, Churches must find applicable measures to support and attract these families.

Secondly, the parenting style utilized by the parents also affects the Church attendance of the family members. Earlier assertions by Pattachini and Zenou (2016) prove that religiosity is transmitted from one generation to the other. These observations explain why most people inherit their religion from other family members. According to Petts (2019), the parenting style used by parents can be helpful or detrimental in transmitting the faith to the children. Dollahite et al.

(2019) states that affectionate independence is the ultimate parenting style to impart Christian commitment and denominational loyalty in children. Children are more likely to adopt and maintain the religious affiliations of their parents, if their relationship with the parents is warm and close (Petts, 2019). On the contrary, Petts (2019) argues that children who were distant from their parents are less likely to continue with their parents' religion. This means that poor parenting methods can contribute to lower Church attendance rates once the children become adults. Unarguably, parents act as role models and guardians for their children. This means that children may observe and follow the guidance of their parents. However, as explained by Mathews (2015) many parents practice spiritual hypocrisy. Some of these parents attend church and portray themselves as devoted Christians, yet they do not uphold Christian ideals. For example, Christianity emphasizes qualities such as kindness, patience, peace-making, and other qualities. Nevertheless, few parents uphold these ideals out of the Church (Petts, 2019). On the other hand, children tend to believe what they see instead of what they are told (Marks et al., 2018; Petts, 2019). Therefore, as these children develop into adulthood they uphold less religious perspectives that contribute to lower Church attendance rates and poor religiosity. Citing these claims, the parenting style of a parent may affect the willingness of an individual to attend Church during adulthood.

## **2.5 How Socio-Economic Attributes Affect Church Attendance**

Many researchers have attempted to establish a correlation between socioeconomic attributes and other measures of religiosity such as Church attendance and participation in religious events. However, as explained by Becker et al. (2017) regardless of abundant research in the realm, the findings remain inconclusive and difficult to interpret. Socioeconomic determinants such as education, occupation, and income have large impacts on other aspects of human life such as

religion, lower levels of risky behaviour, and civic participation (Mellor & Freeborn, 2011). Mellor and Freeborn (2011) further explain that religion has similar effects on society which makes it difficult to separate and identify the causality between religion, and socioeconomic attributes such as educational and economic attainments. Other scholars such as Hungerman (2014) argue that regardless of these contradictions, immense evidence in economics proves that education and income affect religiosity immensely. Therefore, this section evaluates how education, income, and occupation affect religious participation and Church attendance.

### **2.5.1 Influence of Education on Church Attendance**

Earlier assertions revealed that family factors such as parents' level of education can affect Church attendance of the children and other family members. In addition to the parent's level of education, the educational attainments of the individual can also affect their religiosity and willingness to attend Church. Initially, many children have no choice whether to attend Church or not since this is decided by their parents (Wood, 2010; Simamora, 2020). Parents determine if/which Sunday school the children will attend, which explains why many children attend their parent's Church. However, as these children become adolescents and adults, they leave home and become independent meaning they can make their own choices. According to Hungermann (2014), these choices depend on various attributes such as educational attainments. This scholar posits that there is a positive correlation between education and religion (Hungermann, 2014). This means that when people become more educated, they become more religious compared to uneducated individuals. Conversely, other scholars such as Schwadel (2011) allege that although educated people are more religious it does not mean that they attend Church more regularly. Instead, these Christians believe in the personal observance of religious faith. This means that educated individuals are likely to associate with a certain denomination but they do not

participate in religious activities such as attending weekend services, Subsequently, Schwadel (2011) claims that education affects religion in three ways. Firstly, education challenges an individual's beliefs in various religious attributes such as God and the presence of one true religion. Secondly, religion affects how people perceive the importance of religious participation and Church attendance in the case of Christians. Thirdly, educational attainments influence a person's willingness to change their religious affiliation.

Education influences how people understand and perceive various attributes associated with Christianity such as God, miracles, angels, and the bible as the implicit word of God. Berger (2017) asserts that most religions support the attainment of education. This is reflected in numerous efforts by religious groups to create educational institutions and charities that sponsor students. These efforts are aimed at creating Christians who are literate and can understand the bible and create liberal views of the secular and spiritual world. In earlier years, most people in less developed areas such as African countries were illiterate. Ordway (2017) states that due to widespread illiteracy in the region religious participation and religious thought were challenged. Many people depended on pastor's translations of bible passages since they could not read the Bible on their own. Moreover, they also lacked critical thinking skills associated with higher education levels. These factors explain why some nations sent missionaries to Africa to spread the gospel and indoctrinate Africans to accept Christianity. However, some researchers reveal that missionaries faced immense issues to spread the gospel since many people opposed Christianity and the message due to illiteracy and traditions. Currently, education levels in the world have improved tremendously. Wolhuter and Barbieri (2017) claim that in the coming years the world will attain universal literacy rates. Hungermann (2014) observes that although education allows people to understand and participate in religion, religiosity has decreased in the

world as the literacy rates improve. He attributes these trends to changes in how people think about attributes such as God and the bible. Unlike earlier years when people believed that the bible is the word of God and that it should be followed implicitly, modern individuals are developing more liberal attitudes. For example, as explained by Schwadel (2011) many schools teach scientific worldviews that challenge religious approaches such as creation. Most institutions teach the Darwinian evolution theory that contradicts the biblical stories of creation. This means that many students have adopted scientific approaches that are verifiable and these students may perceive the bible as false or at least not the inherent word of God. Furthermore, education allows students to socialize with diverse individuals (Schwadel, 2011). As a result, these students learn to accept diverse world views and opinions. These people are less likely to emphasize that other's beliefs are false and that their assertions are correct. Due to these factors, some students may change their attitudes towards their religion which may result in increased or reduced participation in church activities. Therefore, literacy can improve or reduce church attendance depending on how the Christian perceives specific attributes of his/her denomination.

Education also affects how people perceive the importance of Church participation and devotional activities. Schwadel (2011) claims that increase in education lead many people to compartmentalize religion to weekend service attendance. These assertions are supported by Cragun et al. (2019) who argue that many Christians believe that attending church on Saturday or Sunday is essential to maintain and improve their spirituality. Weekend masses are associated with activities such as prayer, reading the bible, and worship. However, these approaches are changing drastically due to improvements in education. For example, many college students have to study for most days of the week including on weekends. Uecker et al. (2007) conclude that during college years many students experience diminished importance of religious participation.



During this period most of the students stop attending Church or participating in religious activities in favour of other social events. For example, some scholars state that nowadays many people are confused about whether to attend Church or to participate in recreational activities such as watching Sunday football (Cragun et al., 2019). Furthermore, Schwadel (2011) affirms that highly educated individuals are more likely to support denominations that emphasize personal expression and observance of religious faith. This means that these people are less likely to incorporate religious practices such as attending church in their daily or weekly schedules. These factors prove that the importance of Church attendance and participation is reducing in favour of personal observance of religiousness. Subsequently, many people may agree that they are Christians who pray and read the Bible personally, rather than attending church gatherings. Therefore, education can affect Christians' perception of the importance of Church attendance and participation.

Additionally, education improves the willingness of an individual to switch religions. Data from the Kenya Bureau of Statistics (KBS) indicates that over 27,318,150 of the Kenyan population are Christians while only 928,361 were categorized under no religion and were not sure (KNBS, 2018). These figures indicate that many people are associated with Christianity in the Country. However, as observed by Schwadel (2011) many people associate as Christians yet they do not attend Church services or are not affiliated with any denomination. Other scholars such as Kang'entu (2017) posit that although many people still identify with Christianity in Kenya, secularization in the country is increasing. According to this scholar, many youths in Kenya identify as Christians while they are not affiliated or attend any specific Church. Kang'entu (2017) claims that most of the educated youths are willing to switch to religions that favour their ideologies and personal assertions. Some of the upcoming Churches do not conform

to traditional Church and biblical teachings and they utilize less stringent approaches to virtues and other Christian values. Consequently, these Churches attract more educated youths who seek less strict doctrines which explain why traditional doctrines are experiencing lower attendance rates while emerging ones are attracting more worshipers. According to evaluated evidence, youths and adults who are more educated are avoiding mainstream doctrines in favour of other affiliations that favour personal exercise and observance of religious practices such as prayer. These attributes contribute to lower Church attendance rates as more people decide to worship personally rather than participate in collective gatherings.

### **2.5.2 Influence of Income/Occupation on Church Attendance**

Many researchers agree that youths attend church less often compared to other groups due to various factors such as unemployment or employment in low-paying professions. According to the observations by Schwadel et al. (2009), low-income parents are less likely to attend church compared to more affluent ones. These factors also affect other individuals in society, for example, Kang'entu (2017) states that most Churches in Kenya rely on weekly contributions and offerings from the congregation. Furthermore, these institutions also expect the members to contribute to other projects such as Church maintenance and development. However, since there are economic hardships, individuals from low-earning families are under more pressure to contribute which makes some of them avoid attending these services. Furthermore, due to economic issues in Kenya and other developing nations, Churches demand more contributions to keep running. For example, Kang'entu explains that there are higher rents, utility bills, and clerical costs in most churches compared to earlier years. On the other hand, there are increased unemployment rates as well as higher costs of living. Therefore, many people avoid attending church to save costs associated with Church attendance such as tithes, offerings, and other

contributions. It is claimable that rising costs of living, unemployment, and expected contributions in the Church are contributing to reducing Church attendance rates in the country.

Low incomes and high unemployment rates also force youths and other individuals to work in low-paying and demanding jobs. Balogun (2018) states that high-paying jobs offer flexible working times and more off-days. These allow professionals in these jobs to attend to other activities such as Church services. On the other hand, low-paying jobs are more strenuous and have fewer benefits such as off-days during weekends (Balogun, 2018). This means that the prevalence of unemployment is forcing youths and other individuals in developing countries such as Kenya to enrol in jobs that prevent them from attending Church services. Additionally, people that work in casual work such as construction and agricultural services are increasing in Kenya. Jobs in these sectors are temporary meaning that workers must work for most days to attain more money. This explains why most youths in Kenya must work most days including during when they must attend Church. Those that do not work on Sabbath are too exhausted by long working hours that they decide to relax or participate in other recreational activities. Citing these arguments an individual's income and occupation also affect their Church attendance and participation in religious activities.

### **2.5. 3 Other Social Factors contributing to Low Church attendance**

The researchers have also revealed several other social factors which suggest why there is Low Church attendance. Those reasons are attributed to changes in pattern of life, social setting, age and the surrounding environments. According to the article written by Scot Ball (2022), the vice president of the Malphurs group on the reasons to why there is decline of church attendance, he noted that some families opt to use their weekends to meet other family members, to attend tournaments, games and competitions and to do other social related activities like attending

parties and birthdays. All those activities snatches the opportunity for the willing members to attend the church because they are tied by the family obligations. Change of environment or location may also affect church attendance. This change may come due to job transfers or family relocation which may affect the church of their choice.

In MCK Nyambene Synod the social factors affecting church attendance includes; attending of parties, family events, attending of weddings on Saturdays or dowry events which sometimes affect members because of exhaustion.

## **2.6 How Church-Based Factors Affect Church Attendance**

Church-based factors also contribute to fluctuations in Church attendance rates. Many scholars claim that religiousness in the world is reducing while other factors such as literacy and economic development are improving (Berger, 2017; Buser, 2015; Hungerman, 2014; Mellor & Freeborn, 2011; Schwadel et al., 2009). In addition to home-based and socioeconomic attributes, these trends can also be attributed to Church-based issues. For example, Lankshear et al. (2018) allege that 5-6-year-old students claim that Church is boring. A study by Francis (2020) also revealed that adolescents had lower attendance rates since they considered sermons and Churches as boring. The Gallup International Group (2015) explains that most individuals quit their ministers and pastors rather than Christianity. The Gallup has been comparing the performance of leaders and Church pastors to determine whether they contribute towards decline of the Church absenteeism or attendance. This is because much of their research is also based on business and industry which analyses the importance of managers and employees engagements. To them, workers do not quit companies, but they quit managers. So, it is possible that Church goers do not quit Churches; instead, they quit ministers, priests, and rabbis. According to a research done in 2013 which considered seven points that appeal to most Church goers, it was

established that a sermon's content appealed to most Church goers and specifically sermons that deal with issues that connect congregants to their personal lives (Newport, 2013). Many pastors still maintain traditional approaches where sermons are long and pastor-centred. These approaches were effective in earlier years where few people afforded or could read and interpret the bible. Additionally, since many people could not read or interpret biblical texts they relied on the pastors' interpretations. However, currently, many people can read and interpret the bible meaning that long sermons have become less interesting. Moreover, in earlier years, the Church was a place for people from the same community to meet and interact (Kang'entu, 2017). Currently, intermarriages, urbanization, and globalization have affected the sociological attributes of the Church. In earlier times members of the same village or family could attend the same Church, but in recent time people seat with strangers. This is also affected by the increasing size of churches that can accommodate many unrelated members. These factors affect the connections of Church members. Finally, due to strict Church perspectives about drug use, cohabitation, premarital sex, and other vices, some youths avoid Church altogether. Kang'entu (2017) and Francis et al. (2018) allege that many people avoid Church due to judgment and stigmatization associated with attributes associated with immoral behaviour such as premarital sex, and drug use. This means that Churches must implement measures to reduce stigmatization to attract more members and to reduce Church attendance. In addition, the Churches should also adopt appropriate actions to make masses more interesting for example, short sermons, youth involvement, and activities to keep the service lively for all individuals such as use of visual aids, films and group discussions.

## **2.7 Theoretical Framework**

### **2.7.1. Secularization Theory**

In religion and theological literature, the secularization theory is perhaps the most plausible theory to explain religious attendance. Some recent studies that have examined this theory include (Stolz & Tanner 2017) as well as (Dhima & Golder, 2020). Based on this theory, religious gathering is determined by the competition between demand for religious goods and supply for secular goods (Stolz & Tanner, 2017). Thus, the general hypothesis in this theory proposes that increased human development increases the supply of secular goods and, consequently, the ease and cost of consuming them. In this case, human development is defined by such factors as education, income levels, and state of health. Thus, increased human development translates directly to a higher secular utility, mostly at the expense of religious utility. Again, in the pursuit for either of these goods, secular versus religious, an individual has to make a tradeoff. Both religious and secular goods require investments in effort, time, and money (Dhima & Golder, 2020). Thus, when an individual is inclined to the pursuit of secular goods then compromises have to be made in the pursuit of religious goods, and the most common outcome is reduced religious attendance. Nonetheless, secularization does not directly affect negatively religious faith. In making the compromise to gain secular goods over religious ones, an individual may still remain as a believer in religion only that he or she channels more resources to secular motives (Dhima & Golder, 2020). Thus according to this theory, Church attendance declines with increased secularization since people invest time, money, and other human resources in obtaining secular goods than in acquiring religious goods. Similarly, religious absenteeism does not translate directly into religious nihilism; this reminds us of our

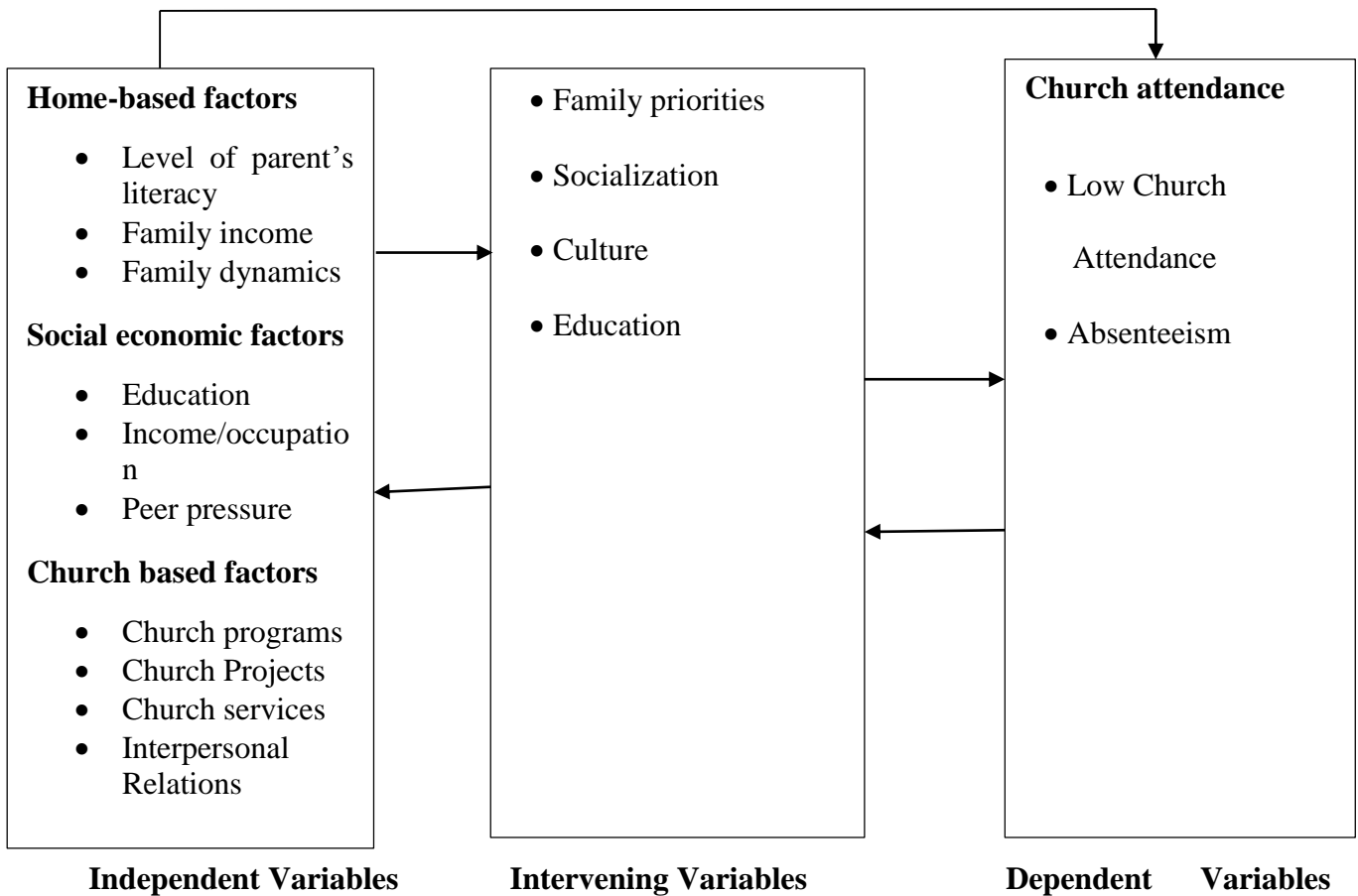
founder John Wesley who once said “Where riches have increased, religion has decreased in the same proportion (Kenneth, 2003).

## 2. 8 Conceptual Frame Work

This framework elaborates the researcher’s projection of how the main concepts/variables of the study inter-relate. This illustration is shown in Figure 2.1

**Figure 2.1**

*Conceptual Framework*



## **2.9. Definition of Terms**

- Absenteeism:** This is a habitual pattern of absence from duty or expected obligation with or without reason
- Attendance:** This is a gathering of people or individuals appearing at a location or a place with a common agenda
- Church:** The Church is the body of Christ which refers to the gathering or assembly of believers or in Greek ekklesia which means assembly of believers.
- Synod:** Synod is a unit of the administration in Methodist Church which governs all the Circuits as stipulated in the rules and regulations of Methodist Church which are found in the Standing Orders .The Synod is governed by the Synod Bishop
- MCK:** This Means Methodist Church in Kenya.
- Circuit:** A Circuit is a unity of the administration in Methodist Church which is Headed by the superintendent minister
- Women Fellowship:** This is a fellowship of all women in Methodist Church in Kenya
- Superintendent Minister:** The superintendent minister is the official head of the church in the Circuit who carries all duties as directed by the Conference and Methodist Church in Kenya Standing order



## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

This chapter describes the research methodology that was used to carry out the study. It focuses on the research design, location of the study, target population, sample size, sampling techniques, research instruments, pilot study, reliability and validity, data analysis, and ethical considerations.

#### **3.2 Research Design**

A research design is the process an investigator follows right from inception to the completion of the study (Cooper & Schindler, 2014). According to Gujarati and Porter (2010), a research design describes the blue print for collecting, measuring and analyzing the data needed for a study. This study employed descriptive research. The purpose of descriptive research is to determine and report the way things are (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2013). According to Kothari (2014), the main purpose of descriptive research is description of the state of affairs as it exists at present. This is supported by Orodho (2014) who argues that descriptive survey can be used when collecting information about people's attitudes, opinions, habits or any of the variety of education or social issues. According to Mills et al. (2018), descriptive research design designs help provide answers to the questions of who, what, when, where, and how associated with a particular research. The research design is appropriate because of its suitability in gathering data on the perception of the population in addressing research questions (Ponto, 2017). Hence, descriptive design was appropriate in examining factors contributing to Church absenteeism.

### **3.3 Location of Study**

This research was carried out in MCK Nyambene Synod in Meru County in Kenya. The Methodist Church in Kenya (MCK) comprises of 13 Synods namely, Nairobi, Mombasa, Nkubu, Nyambene, Western, Singwaya, Tharaka, Miathene, Kilifi, Kaaga, Tanzania, Uganda and Kajiado Synod.

Meru County has an approximate population of about 1,545, 714 (KNBS, 2018). It borders Isiolo County to the North, Tharaka Nithi County to the east, Nyeri County to the south West, and Laikipia County to the west. The County covers a total area of 7,006 km<sup>2</sup> (Meru County Integrated Development Plan CIDP, (2018-2022) out of which 972.3 km<sup>2</sup> is gazetted as forest. The main economic activities in the County include; Miraa, Coffee, Tea, Horticulture, dairy farming, quarrying, and Tourism. Specifically, Nyambene Synod covers three Sub Counties namely Igembe North, Igembe Central and Igembe South.

### **3.4 Target Population**

A population or universe for a research is any collection of people or institutions with one or more similar features or characteristics that are of interest to the investigator or researcher (Cooper & Schindler, 2014). The target population comprised 28,015 members in MCK Nyambene Synod as per Nyambene Synod 2019 annual Statistical return and reports. Table 3.1 illustrates the target population per circuit.

**Table 3.1***Computation of Target Population*

S/N	Circuit Name	Membership
1	St. Joseph	3,492
2	Kiegoi	2,078
3	Laare	531
4	Mutuati	880
5	Mariri	828
6	Machungulu	884
7	Kathelwa	530
8	Kaoronene	1,126
9	Kabachi	865
10	Naathu	600
11	Kiengu	646
12	Athiru Ruujine	1,054
13	Maua	2,127
14	Kawiru	1,193
15	Athiru Gaiti	1,192
16	Njiia	2,013
17	Njia North	950
18	Kangeta	1,148
19	Ntuene	1,078
20	Ndoleli	1,002
21	Leeta	1,343
22	Nyambene	684
23	Athiru Gaiti	1,221
24	Nthambiro	550
	Total	28,015

### 3.5 Sample Size and Sampling Procedure

This section presents sampling procedures and sample size of the population incorporated in the study.

#### 3.5.1 Sample Size

According to Punch (2009), a sample is a smaller group that is actually studied, drawn from a larger population, from which data is collected and analyzed, and inferences are then made on the population. Kothari (2009) states that for descriptive studies, the most appropriate sample size ranges from 10% to 30%. Therefore 30% of the Circuits in Nyambene Synod were included in the study. According to Nyambene Synod 2019 annual Statistical records and reports, there were 24 circuits in the Synod. Hence, eight circuits were selected for the study as illustrated in Table 3.2. The eight circuits were randomly selected. The researcher wrote the names of the twenty four circuits, folded them and placed them in a container. Subsequently, eight papers were selected and the names captured informed the circuits selected. The sample size for this study comprised 379 respondents. This figure was derived from the sampling table formulated by (Krejcie & Morgan ,1970).

**Table 3.2**

*Determination of Sample size*

Total No. of Circuits	Sample size for the Target population	Sample size : As per Krejcie and Morgan (1970) table
24	8	379

### **3.5.2 Sampling Procedure**

Sampling is a process of picking a number of individuals or objects from a population in a manner that the picked group has features typical to the characteristics evident in the whole group (Orodho, 2009). The sampling frame comprised of the data of all members in Nyambene Synod. According to Kothari (2004), in descriptive studies, one should employ random sampling technique to ensure elimination of bias and proper estimation of the sampling error. Both random and purposive sampling methods were used. Random sampling was utilized to identify the eight Circuits whereas Purposive sampling method was used to select respondent to be included in the research which is a probability sampling technique. .

### **3.6 Instrumentation**

The method of data collection was through structured questionnaires. Questionnaires are important research tools that help in collecting data from a huge sample (Kombo & Tromp, 2009). Orodho (2014) backs this up by stating that questionnaires are the most common used research instruments that help in collecting crucial data about the population under study. Two questionnaires were developed to acquire information on factors contributing to Church attendance absenteeism. Each questionnaire comprises five sections. Section A has two items on demographic information of the respondents. Section B has items on influence of home based factors on church absenteeism and section C has items on influence of socio economic factors on Church absenteeism. Moreover, section D has items on church based factors while section E has an item on church attendance. One questionnaire was administered to the youth while the second questionnaire was administered to members in Men and Women fellowship.

### **3.7 Piloting of the Research Instruments**

According to Orodho (2014), conducting a pre-test on another sample with common features to the actual study sample, ensure efficiency of the questionnaires and reduce or eliminate the shortcomings. Mugenda and Mugenda (2003) state that, the size of the sample for the pre-test should range from 1% to 10%. The pre-test involved 38 respondents from Miathene Synod which is 10% of the sample size. Miathene Synod was chosen for pilot study since it neighbors Nyambene Synod and is also located in Meru County. Due to its proximity to Nyambene Synod, the respondents are likely to encounter similar experiences in terms Church absenteeism. Members from the two Synods share the same culture and also engage in similar socio economic activities. Obtaining the pre-test sample was through purposive sampling. Piloting would help in eliminating researcher bias, eradicating ambiguities of the questions and assisting the researcher to assess the probable responses and the scrutiny of the information to be gathered.

#### **3.7.1 Validity of the Research Instruments**

Validity of a research instrument assesses the extent to which the instrument measures what it is designed to measure (Robson, 2011). Besides, it involves correctness and significance of the inferences or interpretations that are based on findings of the research. In other words, validity may be defined as the degree to which findings attained from examination of the data represent the actual phenomena under study. When there is high validity meaningful and accurate conclusions and inferences are arrived at based on such information. Creswell (2014) affirms that validity of a behavioral measure depends on its ability to achieve what it was intended to measure. Having a variety of items that try to gauge the various factors contributing to church absenteeism would ensure content validity or sampling validity. Additionally, content validity would further be ensured by the results of the pilot study.

Gall and Borg (2007) articulates that the expert judgment is one of the most crucial methods for improving the validity of an instrument. The instruments were given to lecturers in the department to determine the relevance of content validity, and their inputs will help in revision of the tools. The study objectives would also be checked against instruments for validity. Equally, expert judgment was sought from the examiners during the presentation of the research proposal thus helping enhance the content validity. The required change was made based on the expert opinion on the research instrument to improve validity.

Face validity would be enhanced by use of appropriate font size, line spacing, and logical arrangement of items in the data collection instruments. The language used on the instruments was simple to ensure that the respondents would understand and decode the meaning.

### **3.7.2 Reliability of the Research Instruments**

Reliability implies the degree or extent to which a questionnaire, observation, test or any measurement technique, generates similar outcomes on repeated experiments (Orodho, 2009). The study will utilize internal consistency reliability, which involves the degree to which things on the test or instruments are estimating a similar thing (Yin, 2013). According to Sekaran and Bougie (2016), Cronbach's alpha has the most utility for multi-items scales at the interval level of measurement. It requires only a single administration and provides a unique quantitative estimate of the internal consistency of a scale. The closer Cronbach's alpha coefficient is to 1, the higher the internal consistency reliability. In general, Cronbach's alpha of 0.8 is good, 0.7 is acceptable range while if it is 0.6 and below, it is poor (Kothari & Garg, 2004). Field (2009) suggests that Cronbach's alpha should not be smaller than 0.7 for the research instrument to be considered good and reliable. Hence, during pilot study, the Cronbach's alpha coefficient for

each of the study variables was computed. The value of the Cronbach's alpha informed the appropriate action to be taken on the scales enumerating low scores.

### **3.8 Data Analysis Procedures**

Data analysis involved classifying and summarizing the collected data to acquire the responses to the research questions. The data for the study was mainly quantitative. Simple random and stratified sampling was used to collect the data. Information was coded correctly with respect to the answers to different questions. The questionnaires were distributed to the respondents during the scheduled pastoral visits. This ensured that members with Low Church attendance rates are also included in the study. Prior arrangement was made with the Chairpersons of the selected Churches to sensitize them on the importance of the study. The researcher engaged two well-trained research assistants to assist in data collection. The minimum qualification for the research assistants was a University degree.

The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (Version 25) was utilized for data analysis. Furthermore, the study employed descriptive statistics in data analysis. Specifically, objective one – to examine home based factors contributing to Low Church attendance and absenteeism in Nyambene Synod was analysed using descriptive statistics. In addition, differences in the home based factors contributing to Church absenteeism between genders were examined using using a T-test. In a T – test, the scores of a continuous variable between two groups are compared. The likert scale on home based factors was combined to form a single continuous scale. Objective two and three was analyzed using the same criteria.



### **3.9 Ethical Considerations**

The researcher sought introduction letter from Kenya Methodist University upon which permit was received from National Commission for Science Technology and Innovation. The researcher also sought consent of Nyambene Synod Bishop, Miathene Synod Bishop and the Superintendent Ministers of the respective Circuits.

Ethical issues were highly observed throughout the period of research to safeguard human rights. In the first place the researcher fully explained the study in advance, and this helped in obtaining consent. The researcher sought consent from the respondents before collecting data from them, in order for them to participate in the study voluntarily. The researcher strictly observed and applied virtues of sincerity, honesty, truthfulness, and confidentiality in collecting data. The information provided by the respondents was treated with confidentiality and anonymity.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS**

#### **4.1 Introduction**

This chapter presents results of data analysis. The data analysis is in harmony with the specific objectives where patterns were investigated, interpreted and inferences drawn on them. A detailed discussion has also been provided as the current findings are compared to findings of other studies in related areas.

##### **4.1.1 Response Rate**

The data for the study was collected by use of questionnaires. A total of 379 questionnaires were distributed to the targeted members of MCK Nyambene Synod comprising of 189 youths and 190 members of men and women fellowship. As shown in Table 4.1, a total of 334 questionnaires were successfully completed; 163 youths and 171 members of men and women fellowship. This represents 88.1% of the questionnaires and according to Mugenda and Mugenda (2009), above 50% return of the questionnaires is acceptable. The impressive return rate could be attributed to the fact that the researcher was a serving Bishop in the Synod hence, there was adequate rapport between the researcher and the respondents. The findings of the study from the data collected were analyzed using statistical package for social sciences (SPSS Version 25), organized and presented in tables.

**Table 4.1***Response Rate*

Respondents' Category	No. Distributed	No. Completed	Percentage Completed
Youth	189	163	86.2
Men and Women	190	171	90
Total	379	334	88.1

**4.1.2 Demographic Information**

The profile of the respondents details their gender and age category. The profile of the youth respondents has been highlighted first followed by the profile of members of men and women fellowship. Results displayed in Table 4.2 indicate that 54% of the youths included in the study were females while 46% were males. These results suggest that both genders were adequately represented in the study in nearly equal proportions. This was good for the study as it could allow for comparison of variables scores between the genders.

**Table 4.2***Distribution of youth respondents by Gender*

Gender	Frequency	Percent
Male	75	46.0
Female	88	54.0
Total	163	100.0

In regard to age category of the youth respondents, 42.3% aged 26 to 29 years, 30.1% aged 22 to 25 years, 17.2% aged 30 to 33 years and 10.4% aged 18 to 21 years (Results displayed in Table

4.3). These results imply that all the age categories for the youth were adequately represented in the study.

**Table 4.3**

*Distribution of youth respondents by Age*

Age category	Frequency	Percent
18 to 21 years	17	10.4
22 to 25 years	49	30.1
26 to 29 years	69	42.3
30 to 33 years	28	17.2
Total	163	100.0

It was revealed that 50.9% of the respondents in men and women fellowship were females while 49.1% were males as illustrated in Table 4.4. Hence, both genders were adequately represented in the study in nearly equal proportions. This result was good for the study, since each gender was adequately represented and thus, scores for various study variables could be compared between genders.

**Table 4.4**

*Distribution of respondents in men and women fellowship by Gender*

Gender	Frequency	Percent
Male	84	49.1
Female	87	50.9
Total	171	100.0

The study established that 45.0% of respondents in men and women fellowship aged between 41 and 50 years, 28.7% aged between 31 and 40 years, 22.2% aged 51 to 60 years and 4.1% aged 61

to 70 years (Results displayed in Table 4.5). These results indicate that all the age categories were adequately represented in the study.

**Table 4.5**

*Distribution of respondents in men and women fellowship by Age*

Age category	Frequency	Percent
31 to 40 years	49	28.7
41 to 50 years	77	45.0
51 to 60 years	38	22.2
61 to 70 years	7	4.1
Total	171	100.0

## **4.2 Home Based Factors contributing to Low Church Attendance and Absenteeism**

The study sought to establish whether home based factors were contributing to Church attendance and absenteeism at Nyambene Synod. To examine this objective, seventeen items were posed to the youth respondents and nine items to the respondents in men and women fellowship.

### **4.2.1 Home Based Factors Contributing to Low Church attendance and Absenteeism for the Youth**

The respondents were asked to state their family status. As shown in Table 4.6, 68.7% lived with both parents, 14.1% lived with their mothers, 13.5% were independent and 3.7% lived with their guardians. These results indicate that most of the youth respondents were living with their parents at the time of the study. Less than a third of the respondents gave a diverging response.

**Table 4.6***Family status of the youth respondents*

Family status	Frequency	Percent
I live with both parents	112	68.7
I live with my mother	23	14.1
I live with my guardian	6	3.7
I am independent	22	13.5
Total	163	100.0

On the issue of the youths attending same Church with parents, 80.4% indicated that they were attending same Church as parents while 19.6% stated that they were attending different Church with parents (Results displayed in Table 4.7). These results show that there was a very strong correlation between the Church attended by the youth and their parents. This finding is in line with the assertion of Pattachini and Zenou (2016) who argued that religious beliefs are transmitted from parents to children. The finding is also in harmony with the observation of Lanman and Buhrmester (2017) who concluded that children who had parents that worshiped in the Seventh-day Adventist Church also became members of the Church since childhood and they maintained these affiliations during adulthood. Equally, Isik-Ercan (2015) posited that children from Muslim families are likely to maintain these affiliations in their adulthood.

The finding also supports the argument of Petts (2019) who indicated that children are more likely to adopt and maintain the religious affiliations of their parents, if their relationship with the parents is warm and close. Hence, it's paramount for parents to act as good mentors to their children. Parents should endeavour to inculcate a warm and cordial relationship with their children to increase the prevalence of their children's Church attendance; since many families

view the Church as an essential tool for imparting ideal values in children, as explained by (Petts ,2019). Moreover, parents should ensure they regularly attend Church as children learn from what they see much more than what they are told. Marks et al. (2018) observed that children tend to believe what they see instead of what they are told.

**Table 4.7**

*Youth attending same Church with parents*

Church attendance status	Frequency	Percent
Youth attending same church as parents	131	80.4
Youth attending different Church with parents	32	19.6
Total	163	100.0

Respondents were asked to state their father’s employment status. As shown in Table 4.8, 46.6% of the respondents indicated self-employment, 20.2% specified casual worker, 14.1% did not have a father, and 9.2% stated that their fathers were retired officers. A small proportion of the respondents (6.7%) indicated formal employment while 3.1% stated that their fathers were peasant farmers. These results imply that self-employment and casual work were the prevalent occupations for the respondents’ fathers. Less than a fifth of the respondents stated otherwise.

**Table 4.8***Father's employment status*

Employment status	Frequency	Percent
Self employed	76	46.6
Formal employment	11	6.7
Casual worker	33	20.2
I don't have a father	23	14.1
Peasant farmer	5	3.1
Retired officer	15	9.2
Total	163	100.0

Respondents were asked to state their mother's employment status. As shown in Table 4.9, 70.6% indicated self-employment, 16.0% specified casual worker and 6.7% stated that their mothers were peasant farmers. A small proportion of the respondents (3.7%) indicated that they did not have a mother while 3.1% specified that their mothers were large scale farmers. These results signify that most of the respondents' mothers were either self-employed or casual workers. More than four fifths of the respondents stated so.

**Table 4.9***Mother's employment status*

Employment status	Frequency	Percent
Self employed	115	70.6
Casual worker	26	16.0
I don't have a mother	6	3.7
Peasant farmer	11	6.7
Large scale farmer	5	3.1
Total	163	100.0



Respondents were asked to state their father’s education qualification. As shown in Table 4.10, 26.4% specified primary qualification, 24.5% indicated secondary qualification, and 19.0% stated post-secondary qualification while 12.9% indicated that their fathers had no formal education. A tenth of the respondents (10.4%) indicated not applicable, possibly because they did not have a father and 6.7% specified that their fathers had some diploma qualifications. These results signify that a high proportion of the respondents’ fathers had education qualifications of up to secondary education. Only a quarter of the respondents indicated post-secondary education qualifications.

**Table 4.10**

*Father’s Education qualification*

Education qualification	Frequency	Percent
No formal education	21	12.9
Primary education	43	26.4
Secondary education	40	24.5
Post-secondary Certificate	31	19.0
Diploma	11	6.7
Not Applicable	17	10.4
Total	163	100.0

Respondents were asked whether their parents assigned them tasking chores on Sundays. As shown in Table 4.11, more than two thirds of the respondents (69.9%) indicated that they were not given tasking assignments on Sunday while 16.6% gave a differing response. A small proportion of the respondents (13.5%) was living independently from their parents and thus gave ‘not applicable’ response. These results suggest that some parents were not mindful of their

children church attendance. Nearly a fifth of the respondents attested that they were assigned tasking chores on Sundays.

**Table 4.11**

*Assignment of tasking chores on Sundays*

Assignment of tasking chores	Frequency	Percent
Tasking chores assigned	27	16.6
Not assigned	114	69.9
Not applicable	22	13.5
Total	163	100.0

A deeper examination of the relationship between the youths’ Church absenteeism and their parents’ economic status was sought. Five items were utilized to assess the relationship between Church absenteeism and parent’s economic status. Item 1 of parent’s economic status scale sought to establish whether, youth whose parents drove cars were more likely to miss Church than their counterparts without cars. Results displayed in Table 4.12 show that, 49.7% disagreed, 34.4% agreed and 16.0% were unsure and thus gave a neutral response. These results suggest that, in the opinion of the respondents, youth whose parents drove cars were not likely to miss Church than their counterparts without cars. Nearly half of the respondents upheld this opinion.

In respect to Item 2 of parent’s economic status scale, respondents were asked whether youth whose parents are not educated were more likely to miss Church than their counterparts with educated parents. Majority of the respondents (73.0%) disagreed, 20.9% agreed and 6.1% were unsure and thus gave a neutral response. These results imply that, in the opinion of the respondents, parents’ education was not significant in influencing church attendance or otherwise of a youth. Only a fifth of the respondents believed that parent’s education had an impact on their

Church absenteeism. Item 3 of parent's economic status scale inquired on whether, youth from poor families were more likely to miss Church than their counterparts from rich families. Majority of the respondents (44.2%) disagreed, 42.9% agreed and 12.9% were unsure and thus gave a neutral response. These results imply that, in the opinion of the respondents, poor background was a major contributor to Church absenteeism. More than two fifths of the respondents upheld this opinion. This finding is in line with the assertion of Schwadel et al. (2009) who concluded that low-income individuals attended Church less often than other people. It also supports the observation of (Buser , 2015) who indicated that families that earn more go to Church more often.

A possible explanation of this finding could be the fact that, at times, youth from poor families may lack suitable cloths and shoes to attend Church. Besides, if the Church of preference is some distance, the youth may lack means of transport to facilitate Church attendance. On the other hand, youth from rich families have many fashionable clothes and would find Church as an appropriate place to showcase their new wardrobe arrivals. For example, during festive seasons, like Christmas, many children with new clothes would be eager to attend Church and show off their new clothes. On the contrary, their counterparts without new clothes shy away from attending Church as they fear ridicule and intimidation from other children.

Item 4 of parent's economic status scale sought to establish whether, youth whose parents had good jobs were more likely to miss Church than their counterparts. Slightly above half of the respondents (50.3%) disagreed, 33.7% agreed and 16.0% were unsure and thus gave a neutral response. These results suggest that, in the opinion of the respondents, youth whose parents had good jobs were not likely to miss Church than their counterparts. More than half of the respondents upheld this opinion. In respect to Item 5 of parent's economic status scale,

respondents were asked whether, when there is a fundraiser in Church; some youth are likely to miss due to lack of funds to contribute. Interestingly, an overwhelming 82.8% of the respondents agreed, 10.4% disagreed and 6.7% were unsure and thus gave a neutral response. These results signify that lack of monies to channel during designated fundraiser days was a key contributor to Church absenteeism among the youth. Only a tenth of the respondents gave a contrary opinion. This finding is in line with that of Juma (2015) who argued that in some instances, unemployed individuals failed to attend Church to avoid stigma and criticism from other members of the Church who are more affluent.

Most Methodist Churches in Kenya frequently hold fundraisers to raise monies for designated causes. In most cases, each group in the Church namely; men fellowship, women fellowship, youth and the Sunday school have a fundraiser at least once a year. Before the material fundraiser day, a particular group aggressively mobilizes its members to ensure that it achieves the set target, which may take a month or so. During this mobilization period and also on the material day, some members shy away from attending Churches due to lack of funds to contribute. Worse still, is when a member pledges to give a particular amount of money and is not in a position to honor his pledge. The said member may result to missing several Church services until a point where the objective of the fundraiser has either been met or overtaken by events. The many fundraisers in the Methodist Church could be explained by the fact that each Church group is supposed to remit a specified amount of money each year to run the administrative affairs of the Church. This is in addition to the amount that the Church as a unit is required to submit. Consequently, where the usual offerings done on Sundays are not sufficient to cater for the Church expenses, fundraisers are chosen to fill the gap.

**Table 4.12***Church absenteeism and parent's economic status*

Parent's economic status item	D		N		A	
	F	%	F	%	F	%
Youth whose parents drive cars are more likely to miss Church than their counterparts without cars	81	49.7	26	16.0	56	34.4
Youth whose parents are not educated are more likely to miss Church than their counterparts with educated parents	119	73.0	10	6.1	34	20.9
Youth from poor families are more likely to miss Church than their counterparts from rich families	72	44.2	21	12.9	70	42.9
Youth whose parents have good jobs are more likely to miss Church than their counterparts	82	50.3	26	16.0	55	33.7
When there is a fundraiser in Church, some youth are likely to miss due to lack of funds to contribute	17	10.4	11	6.7	135	82.8

The study sought to investigate factors contributing to Low Church attendance and absenteeism.. Five items were utilized to assess the relationship between Church absenteeism and parenting style. Item 1 of parenting style scale sought to establish whether, youth with very strict parents were likely to miss Church. As shown in Table 4.13, majority of the respondents (60.7%) disagreed, 33.1% agreed and 6.1% were unsure and thus gave a neutral response. These results suggest that, in the opinion of the respondents, youth with very strict parents were not likely to miss Church than their counterparts. Nearly two thirds of the respondents upheld this opinion.

Item 2 of parenting style scale inquired on whether, youth with parents who care less about them were likely to miss Church. Majority of the respondents (76.7%) agreed, 16.6% disagreed and 6.7% were unsure and thus gave a neutral response. These results signify that youth with parents

who cared less about them were likely to miss Church. More than three quarters of the respondents upheld this opinion. This finding is in line with the assertion of Petts (2019) who argued that children who were distant from their parents are less likely to continue with their parents' religion. Subsequently, when a parent is not mindful about the children whereabouts, he would not realize when the child misses or attends Church service. Moreover, due to lack of concern on the part of the parent, a child who may be willing to attend Church may miss the same due to lack of requisite preparation like clean clothes and money for offertory. On the other hand, a concerned parent would ensure that on the weekend onset, children are well prepared to attend Church by having their clothes cleaned and ready, waking up early on Sunday and availing money for offertory.

In respect to Item 3 of parenting style scale, respondents were asked whether youth miss Church if their parents are unfriendly. Nearly three quarters of the respondents (74.2%) agreed, 16.6% disagreed and 9.2% were unsure and thus gave a neutral response. These results show that unfriendly relationship between the youth and their parents greatly contributed to absenteeism among the youth. Only less than a fifth of the respondents upheld a contrary opinion. This finding is in harmony with the observation of Petts (2019) who indicated that children are more likely to adopt and maintain the religious affiliations of their parents, if their relationship with the parents is warm and close. When children enjoy a cordial relationship between themselves and their parents, they positively take the guidance given and seamlessly follow their parents' footsteps. Conversely, a strained relationship between the child and his parent may result in great rebellion and the child interprets any guidance by the parents as out-dated and old school. As the child transits to adulthood, he drops most of the practices that had been instilled by his parent. Subsequently, the youth misses Church and engages in what seems fashionable to him.

Item 4 of parenting style scale inquired on whether, youth miss Church if their parents do not guide them. A whopping 83.4% agreed, 13.5% disagreed and 3.1% were unsure and thus gave a neutral response. These results signify that lack of parental guidance prominently contributed to Church absenteeism among the youth. More than four fifths of the respondents upheld this view. This finding supports the observation of Petts (2019) who stated that religion and family life are inherently intertwined institutions. In the church, spiritual nourishment is sought while parental guidance is acquired at home. A child that lacks parental guidance may not develop the need for spiritual nourishment and subsequently would result in missing Church. On the other hand, a child that is constantly guided by the parent may develop the need for spiritual nourishment as he would view his parents' advice as voice from God. In Ephesians chapter six, the bible commands children to honour their parents and emphasizes that it's the first commandment that comes with a promise. This is also captured in the fifth commandment which states "Honour your father and mother; that your days may be long upon the land which the Lord gives you". Consequently, a youth that attends church and follows its teaching is likely to listen to his parents. Moreover, listening to one's parent is likely to enhance a youth's Church attendance. Hence the two institutions; Church and family, endeavour to achieve the same objective of bringing up a responsible and God fearing youth.

In respect to Item 5 of parenting style scale, respondents were asked whether youth missed Church due to tasking chores assigned to them by their parents. Half of the respondents (50.3%) disagreed, 40.5% agreed and 9.2% were unsure and thus gave a neutral response. These results suggest that youth missed Church due to tasking chores assigned to them by their parents. More than two fifths of the respondents upheld this view. This finding is in line with the assertion of

Petts (2019) who argued that the parenting style used by parents can be helpful or detrimental in transmitting the faith to the children.

**Table 4.13**

*Church absenteeism and parenting style*

Parenting style item	D		N		A	
	F	%	F	%	F	%
Youth whose parents are very strict are likely to miss Church	99	60.7	10	6.1	54	33.1
Youth with parents who care less about them are likely to miss Church	27	16.6	11	6.7	125	76.7
Youth miss Church if their parents are unfriendly	27	16.6	15	9.2	121	74.2
Youth miss Church if their parents do not guide them	22	13.5	5	3.1	136	83.4
Youth miss Church due to tasking chores assigned to them by their parents	82	50.3	15	9.2	66	40.5

The respondents' opinion on parents influence on Church attendance was sought. As shown in Table 4.14, 39.9% opined large extent, 30.1% very large extent, 16.0% little extent and 14.1% moderate extent. These results signify that, in the opinion of the respondents, parents had a significant influence on Church attendance among the youth. Less than a fifth of the respondents upheld a contrary view. This finding is in harmony with the observation of Petts (2019) who indicated that children are more likely to adopt and maintain the religious affiliations of their parents, if their relationship with the parents is warm and close.



**Table 4.14***Respondents opinion on parents influence on Church attendance*

Rating	Frequency	Percent
Little extent	26	16.0
Moderate extent	23	14.1
Large extent	65	39.9
Very large extent	49	30.1
Total	163	100.0

#### **4.2.2 Home Based Factors Contributing to Low Church attendance and Absenteeism for Men and Women**

Respondents were asked to state their marital status. As shown in Table 4.15, 91.2% were married, 4.7% were widowed and 4.1% were either separated or divorced. These results indicate that most of the respondents were married. Only less than a tenth reported otherwise.

**Table 4.15***Family status of the respondents in men and women fellowship*

Family status	Frequency	Percent
I am married	156	91.2
I am a widow/widower	8	4.7
I am separated/divorced	7	4.1
Total	171	100.0

Respondents were asked whether at the time they were children their parents monitored their Sunday school attendance. Results displayed in Table 4.16 indicate that majority of the

respondents (56.1%) had their Sunday school attendance monitored by their parents while the rest (43.9%) gave a contrary response. These results signify that a significant proportion of the respondents had their Sunday school attendance monitored by their parents.

**Table 4.16**

*Response on whether respondents parents ensured their Sunday school attendance*

Status of Sunday school attendance	Frequency	Percent
Monitored by parents	96	56.1
Not monitored	75	43.9
Total	171	100.0

In respect to whether respondents had demanding family chores on Sundays, 82.5% disagreed while 17.5% agreed that they had demanding family chores on Sundays (Results displayed in Table 4.17). Hence, most respondents did not have engaging family chores on Sundays. Only less than a fifth of the respondents attested that they had tasking chores on Sundays.

**Table 4.17**

*Demanding family chores on Sundays*

Status of family chores on Sunday	Frequency	Percent
Demanding	30	17.5
Not demanding	141	82.5
Total	171	100.0

The study sought to establish the relationship between home-based factors and Church absenteeism. Five items were utilized to examine home based factors and their influence on Church absenteeism. Item 1 of home based factor scale inquired on whether persons with high

income were more likely to attend Church than their counterparts with low income. As shown in Table 4.18, majority of the respondents (57.9%) disagreed, 32.7% agreed and 9.4% were unsure and thus gave a neutral response. These results indicate that, in the opinion of the respondents, high income earners had no edge in Church attendance over their counterparts with lower income. Only less than a third of the respondents held a contrary opinion.

Item 2 of home based factor scale inquired on whether educated persons were more likely to attend Church than their counterparts who were not educated. Majority of the respondents (45.6%) disagreed, 41.5% were unsure and thus gave a neutral response and 12.9% agreed. These results suggest that, in the opinion of the respondents, educated persons had no edge in Church attendance over their counterparts with less education. In respect to Item 3 of home based factor scale, respondents were asked whether the discipline of regular Church attendance is learnt from the family. An overwhelming 83.6% agreed, 12.3% were unsure and thus gave a neutral response and 4.1% disagreed. These results imply that, in the opinion of the respondents, the discipline of regular church attendance is learnt from the family. Less than a twentieth of the respondents upheld a divergent opinion. This finding is in line with the assertion of Pattachini and Zenou (2016) who argued that religious beliefs are transmitted from parents to children. It also corresponds well with an earlier finding in this study which established that most youth attended same church with their parents.

In respect to Item 4 of home based factor scale, respondents were asked whether poor parenting methods can contribute to lower church attendance once children become adults. More than nine tenths of the respondents (90.6%) agreed while 9.4% disagreed. These results signify that, in the opinion of the respondents, improper parenting methods greatly accounted for Church absenteeism once children become adults. Only less than a tenth of the respondents upheld a

contrary opinion. This finding is in line with the assertion of Petts (2019) who argued that the parenting style used by parents can be helpful or detrimental in transmitting the faith to the children. The finding also supports an earlier outcome in this study which established that lack of parental guidance prominently contributed to church absenteeism among the youth.

Item 5 of home based factor scale inquired on whether when there is a fundraiser in Church, some people are likely to miss due to lack of funds to contribute. Majority of the respondents (81.9%) agreed, 12.9% were unsure and thus gave a neutral response and 5.3% disagreed. These results imply that, in the opinion of the respondents, church levies were significantly associated with church absenteeism. Only a twentieth of the respondents upheld a differing opinion. This finding is in line with that of Juma (2015) who argued that in some instances, unemployed individuals failed to attend church to avoid stigma and criticism from other members of the Church who are more affluent. It also supports an earlier finding in this study which established that that lack of monies to channel during designated fundraiser days was a key contributor to Church absenteeism among the youth.

**Table 4.18***Church absenteeism and home based factors*

Home based factor item	D		N		A	
	F	%	F	%	F	%
Persons with high income are more likely to attend Church than their counterparts with low income	99	57.9	16	9.4	56	32.7
Educated persons are more likely to attend Church than their counterparts who are not educated	78	45.6	71	41.5	22	12.9
The discipline of regular Church attendance is learnt from the family	7	4.1	21	12.3	143	83.6
Poor parenting methods can contribute to lower Church attendance once children become adults	16	9.4	0	.0	155	90.6
When there is a fundraiser in Church, some people are likely to miss due to lack of funds to contribute	9	5.3	22	12.9	140	81.9

The respondents' opinion on parents influence on Church attendance was sought. As shown in Table 4.19, 37.4% opined moderate extent, 24.0% indicated very large extent, and 22.2% specified large extent while 8.2% indicated little extent, same as little extent. These results suggest that, in the opinion of the respondents, parents had a significant influence on their children Church attendance. Only less than a fifth of the respondents upheld a contrary opinion. This finding supports the observation of Petts (2019) who stated that religion and family life are inherently intertwined institutions. It also supports the observation of Petts (2019) who indicated that children are more likely to adopt and maintain the religious affiliations of their parents, if their relationship with the parents is warm and close. The finding corresponds well with an earlier revelation which established that youth believed that parents had a significant role on their Church attendance.

**Table 4.19**

*Respondents opinion on parents influence on church attendance*

Rating	Frequency	Percent
No extent	14	8.2
Little extent	14	8.2
Moderate extent	64	37.4
Large extent	38	22.2
Very large extent	41	24.0
Total	171	100.0

### **4.3 Socio Economic Factors affecting low Church Attendance and Absenteeism**

The study sought to establish whether socio economic factors were contributing to Low Church attendance and absenteeism at Nyambene Synod. To examine this objective, nine items were posed to the youth respondents as well as those posed to the respondents in men and women fellowship.

#### **4.3.1 Socio Economic factors affecting Low Church attendance and absenteeism for the Youth**

Respondents were asked to state their education qualifications. As shown in Table 4.20, 40.5% had post-secondary certificate qualifications, 28.8% had university degrees, 19.6% had diploma qualifications and 11.0% had secondary education qualifications. These results signify that majority of the youth respondents had a minimum of post-secondary certificate qualifications. This was good for the study as the respondents were in a position to accurately interpret the questions and give credible responses.

**Table 4.20***Education qualification of the youth respondent*

	Frequency	Percent
Secondary education	18	11.0
Post-secondary Certificate	66	40.5
Diploma	32	19.6
Graduate	47	28.8
Total	163	100.0

In respect to occupation status of the youth respondents, majority of the respondents (39.9%) were employed, 36.2% self-employed and 23.9% were students in tertiary institutions (Results displayed in Table 4.21). These results indicate that the youth respondents included in the study comprised of both college students and working category.

**Table 4.21***Occupation status of the youth respondents*

Occupation status	Frequency	Percent
College/University student	39	23.9
Employed	65	39.9
Self employed	59	36.2
Total	163	100.0

Respondents were asked to specify the rate at which they missed Church due to work/school engagements. It was revealed that majority of the respondents (36.8%) missed Church few times, 30.7% sometimes and 19.6% never missed Church due to work/school engagements. A small proportion of the respondents (9.2%) indicated that they frequently missed Church while 3.7% reported that they always missed Church due to work/school engagements (Results displayed in

Table 4.22). These results signify that Church/work engagements were not a major hindrance to Church attendance. Less than a fifth of the respondents associated Church absenteeism with school/work engagements.

**Table 4.22**

*Frequency in which youth respondents miss Church due to work/ school engagement*

Rate of absenteeism due to work/school	Frequency	Percent
Never	32	19.6
Few times	60	36.8
Sometimes	50	30.7
Frequently	15	9.2
Almost always	6	3.7
Total	163	100.0

To examine the influence of engagement in work/school on Church absenteeism, five work/school engagement items were subjected to the respondents. Item 1 of work/school engagement scale inquired on whether most Sundays, the respondents gladly prepared themselves to attend Church in time. As shown in Table 4.23, most of the respondents (83.4%) agreed, 9.8% were unsure and thus gave a neutral response and 6.7% disagreed. These results suggest that the respondents were enthusiastic in attending Church and thus their work/school engagement did not significantly contribute to their Church absenteeism.

In respect to Item 2 of work/school engagement scale, respondents were asked whether most Sunday mornings they force themselves to attend Church. Majority of the respondents (83.4%) disagreed, 9.8% agreed and 6.7% were unsure and thus gave a neutral response. These results imply that the respondents did not associate school/work engagement with Church absenteeism.

Item 3 of work/school engagement scale inquired on whether most Sundays the respondents



experienced intense exhaustion as a result of work/school engagement. Slightly above three quarters of the respondents (76.7%) disagreed, 16.6% were unsure and thus gave a neutral response and 6.7% agreed. These results signify the respondents did not associate Low Church attendance and absenteeism with exhaustion due to work/school engagements.

In respect to Item 4 of work/school engagement scale, respondents were asked whether some Sundays they chose to relax at home due to exhaustion. Majority of the respondents (83.4%) disagreed, 13.5% agreed and 3.1% were unsure and thus gave a neutral response. These results imply that the respondents did not associate Church absenteeism with relaxing at home due to exhaustion from work/school engagements. Item 5 of work/school engagement scale inquired on whether the respondents preferred to watch televised services over attending Church. Slightly above two thirds of the respondents (67.5%) disagreed, 20.2% agreed and 12.3% were unsure and thus gave a neutral response. These results indicate that a significant proportion of the respondents preferred to watch televised services over attending Church.

**Table 4.23**

*Church absenteeism and engagement in your work/school*

Work/school engagement item	D		N		A	
	F	%	F	%	F	%
Most Sunday mornings, I gladly prepare myself to attend Church in time	11	6.7	16	9.8	136	83.4
Most Sunday mornings, I force myself to attend Church	136	83.4	11	6.7	16	9.8
Most Sunday mornings, I feel very exhausted as a result of my work engagement	125	76.7	27	16.6	11	6.7
Some Sundays, I choose to relax at home due to exhaustion	136	83.4	5	3.1	22	13.5
I prefer to watch televised Services	110	67.5	20	12.3	33	20.2

The respondents were asked to rate the influence of their engagement in work/school on Church absenteeism. As shown in Table 4.24, majority of the respondents (33.7%) indicated moderate extent, 25.8% no extent, 20.2% large extent, and 12.9% very large extent while 7.4% specified little extent. These results imply that, in the opinion of the respondents, youth engagement in school/work had no significant influence on Church absenteeism. Only less than a third of the respondents significantly associated their engagement in school/work with Church absenteeism.

**Table 4.24**

*Influence of youth respondents engagement in school/work on Church absenteeism*

Rating	Frequency	Percent
No extent	42	25.8
Little extent	12	7.4
Moderate extent	55	33.7
Large extent	33	20.2
Very large extent	21	12.9
Total	163	100.0

#### **4.3.2 Socio Economic factors affecting Church attendance and absenteeism for Men and Women**

Respondents were asked to state their education qualifications. Majority of the respondents (32.2%) had diploma qualifications, 31.0% secondary, and 14.0% had primary education qualification (Results displayed in Table 4.25). A small proportion of the respondents (9.4%) had a first degree, same as those with post-secondary certificate qualifications while 4.1% had no formal education. These results indicate that most of the respondents had acquired basic education. Only less than a twentieth of the respondents indicated they had no formal education.

This was good for the study since the respondents could credibly respond to the items captured in the questionnaire.

**Table 4.25**

*Education qualification of the respondents in men and women fellowship*

Education qualification	Frequency	Percent
No formal education	7	4.1
Primary education	24	14.0
Secondary education	53	31.0
Post-secondary Certificate	16	9.4
Diploma	55	32.2
Graduate	16	9.4
Total	171	100.0

In respect to occupation status of the respondents, nearly half of the respondents (49.7%) indicated they were self-employed, 28.1% were employed, 12.9% were peasant farmers, 5.3% casual workers and 4.1% were retired officers (Results displayed in Table 4.26). These results signify that the respondents included in the study engaged in different economic activities.

**Table 4.26**

*Occupation status of the respondents in men and women fellowship*

Occupation status	Frequency	Percent
Employed	48	28.1
Casual worker	9	5.3
Peasant farmer	22	12.9
Self employed	85	49.7
Retired officer	7	4.1
Total	171	100.0

Respondents were asked to indicate the frequency in which they missed Church due to work engagement. As shown in Table 4.27, more than half of the respondents (55.6%) indicated few times, 16.4% stated sometimes while 28.1% attested that they never missed Church due to work engagement. These results indicate that the respondents did not closely associate work engagement and church absenteeism. None of the respondents indicated that they frequently missed Church due to work engagement.

**Table 4.27**

*Frequency in which respondent miss Church due to work engagement*

Rate of absenteeism due to work engagement	Frequency	Percent
Never	48	28.1
Few times	95	55.6
Sometimes	28	16.4
Total	171	100.0

To examine the influence of engagement in work on Church attendance and absenteeism, five work engagement items were subjected to the respondents. Item 1 of work engagement scale inquired on whether most Sundays, the respondents gladly prepared themselves to attend Church in time. As shown in Table 4.28, more than nine tenths of the respondents (91.8%) agreed while 8.2% disagreed. These results show that the respondents were delighted in attending Church in time. Only less than a tenth of the respondents upheld a differing opinion.

In respect to Item 2 of work engagement scale, the respondents were asked whether most Sundays they forced themselves to attend Church. An overwhelming 95.9% of the respondents disagreed while 4.1% agreed. These results indicate that the respondents enthusiastically attended Church. Item 3 of work engagement scale inquired on whether most Sundays the

respondents felt exhausted as a result of their work engagement. Majority of the respondents (85.4%) disagreed, 10.5% were unsure and thus gave a neutral response and 4.1% agreed. Hence, the respondents did not associate Church absenteeism and exhaustion due to work engagement.

Item 4 of work engagement scale inquired on whether some Sundays they chose to relax at home due to exhaustion. Remarkably, all the respondents disagreed. These results mean that the respondents did not miss Church due to exhaustion due to engagement in work. In respect to Item 5, the respondents were asked whether they preferred to watch televised services over attending church. Majority of the respondents (86.5%) disagreed, 9.4% agreed and 4.1% were unsure and thus gave a neutral response.

**Table 4.28**

*Church absenteeism and engagement in your work station*

Work engagement item	D		N		A	
	F	%	F	%	F	%
Most Sunday mornings, I gladly prepare myself to attend Church in time	14	8.2	0	0	157	91.8
Most Sunday mornings, I force myself to attend Church	164	95.9	0	0	7	4.1
Most Sunday mornings, I feel very exhausted as a result of my work engagement	146	85.4	18	10.5	7	4.1
Some Sundays, I choose to relax at home due to exhaustion	171	100.0	0	0	0	.0
I prefer to watch televised Services	148	86.5	7	4.1	16	9.4

The respondents were asked to rate the influence of their engagement in work on Church attendance and absenteeism. As shown in Table 4.29, 36.3% of the respondents indicated no extent, 19.9% very large extent, 17.5% little extent, and 14.0% large extent while 12.3%

specified moderate extent. These results suggest that the respondents did not significantly associate their Low Church attendance and absenteeism with work engagement. Only a third of the respondents upheld a contrary opinion.

**Table 4.29**

*Influence of respondents engagement in work on Low Church attendance and absenteeism*

Rating	Frequency	Percent
No extent	62	36.3
Little extent	30	17.5
Moderate extent	21	12.3
Large extent	24	14.0
Very large extent	34	19.9
Total	171	100.0

#### **4.4 Church Based Factors Contributing to Low Church attendance and Absenteeism**

The study sought to establish whether Church based factors were contributing to Low Church attendance and absenteeism at Nyambene Synod. To examine this objective, fourteen items were posed to the youth respondents as well as those posed to the respondents in men and women fellowship.

##### **4.4.1 Church Based Factors Contributing to Low Church attendance and Absenteeism for the Youth**

Church based factor scale for the youth comprised thirteen items. Item 1 of Church based factor scale inquired on whether sermons in the respondents' Church were very long. As shown in table 4.30, majority of the respondents (53.4%) disagreed, 30.7% agreed and 16.0% were unsure and thus gave a neutral response. These results signify that a significant proportion of the

respondents opined that the sermons in their Churches were very long. Nearly one third of the respondents upheld this opinion. This finding is in line with the argument of Francis (2020) who observed that adolescents had lower attendance rates since they considered sermons in their Churches as long. It also supports the assertion of Newport (2013) who posited that many pastors still maintain traditional approaches where sermons are long and pastor-centred. Currently, many people can read and interpret the bible meaning that long sermons have become less interesting. Subsequently, ministers of the word should strive to ensure that their sermons are precise and straight forward. They should spare long and too elaborate sermons for seminars and camps where participants have dedicated days or long hours to seek knowledge on the word of God.

In respect to Item 2 of Church based factor scale, respondents were asked whether sermons in their Church were boring. An overwhelming 90.8% disagreed, 6.1% were unsure and thus gave a neutral response and 3.1% agreed. These results suggest that the respondents did not find sermons in their Church boring. Only less than a twentieth of the respondents upheld a contrary view. Item 3 of Church based factor scale inquired on whether sermons in respondents' Church were preacher centered. Majority of the respondents (83.4%) disagreed, 9.8% were unsure and thus gave a neutral response and 6.7% agreed. These results mean that the respondents did not find sermons in their Church preacher centered.

Item 4 of Church based factor scale inquired on whether sermons in the respondents' Church were very relevant. An overwhelming 81.0% of the respondents agreed, 9.8% disagreed and 9.2% were unsure and thus gave a neutral response. These results signify that the respondents found sermons delivered in their Church very relevant. Only less than a tenth of the respondents upheld a differing opinion. In respect to Item 5 of Church based factor scale, respondents were

asked whether preachers in their Church adequately prepared sermons. More than three quarters of the respondents (77.3%) agreed, 13.5% disagreed and 9.2% were unsure and thus gave a neutral response. These results imply that the respondents opined that preachers in their Church adequately prepared sermons.

Item 6 of Church based factor scale inquired on whether preachers in the sampled Churches were very inspiring. Majority of the respondents (81.0%) agreed, 9.2% were unsure and thus gave a neutral response and 6.7% disagreed. These results indicate that preachers in their Church were very inspiring. Only less than a tenth of the respondents upheld a differing opinion. In respect to Item 7 of Church based factor scale, respondents were asked whether their Church had very many members that limited socialization. Majority of the respondents (79.8%) disagreed, 13.5% were unsure and thus gave a neutral response and 6.7% agreed. These results indicate that the respondents did not find the population of their Churches too high to limit socialization.

In respect to Item 8 of Church based factor scale, respondents were asked whether youth in their Church were actively engaged. Majority of the respondents (63.2%) agreed, 23.9% disagreed and 12.9% were unsure and thus gave a neutral response. These results imply that youth were not actively engaged in the Church activities. Nearly a quarter of the respondents exhibited that youth in their Church were not actively engaged. This finding is in line with the assertion of Powell (2018) who concluded that Churches should also adopt appropriate actions to make masses more interesting for example, short sermons, youth involvement, and activities to keep the service lively for all individuals. Adolescence is a stage in life associated with need for recognition. For a Church to retain youth and reduce their Church absenteeism, it must come up with creative ways of actively engaging them. For instance, since the youth enjoy praise and worship sessions, they could be tasked with the responsibility of conducting the same. A Church



should invest in reliable public address system, keyboards and other music instruments to ensure that the youth are actively engaged. Besides, the youth should be allowed to showcase their talents in Church which will in turn improve their commitment to Church. Activities such as routine dancing, skits and spoken words are very attractive to the youth. In addition, a lot of time is required to prepare such activities thus increasing the number times the youth attends Church. Consequently, an active youth is likely to identify with his Church and long to attend Church services and thus curb Church absenteeism.

In respect to Item 9 of Church based factor scale, respondents were asked whether their Church had activities that kept the service lively for all individuals. Majority of the respondents (69.9%) agreed, 20.2% disagreed and 9.8% were unsure and thus gave a neutral response. These results suggest that there were activities that kept the services lively for all the Church members. Only a fifth of the respondents upheld a divergent opinion. In respect to Item 10 of Church based factor scale, respondents were asked whether their Church leadership embraced diversity among Church members. More than three quarters of the respondents (76.7%) agreed, 16.6% disagreed and 6.7% were unsure and thus gave a neutral response. These results imply that the Church leadership embraced diversity among members.

In respect to Item 11 Church based factor scale, respondents were asked whether some members of their Church felt unfairly discriminated. Slightly above two thirds of the respondents (67.5%) disagreed, 16.6% agreed and 16.0% were unsure and thus gave a neutral response. These results imply that some members felt unfairly discriminated. Only two thirds of the respondents were categorical that there was no perceived discrimination in their Church. Item 12 of Church based factor scale inquired on whether all members were equally recognized irrespective of the contribution they made. Majority of the respondents (66.3%) agreed, 20.9% disagreed and

12.9% were unsure and thus gave a neutral response. These results imply that, in the opinion of the respondents, recognition of members was skewed towards contribution made. More than a fifth of the respondents upheld this view. In respect to Item 13 of Church based factor scale, the respondents were asked whether some members in their Church were perceived to be more special than others. Majority of the respondents (47.2%) agreed, 46.6% disagreed and 6.1% were unsure and thus gave a neutral response. These results signify that, in the opinion of the respondents, there was a general perception that some Church members were more special than others. Nearly half of the respondents upheld this opinion.

These findings are in line with the assertion of Gallup International Group (2015) who explained that most individuals quit their ministers and pastors rather than Christianity. When members of a Church perceive that some followers receive preferential treatment either due to the magnitude of their financial contribution due to the influence they command they feel unduly discriminated. There is likelihood that Church leaders and pastors could pay greater attention to influential members' needs and overlook other members deemed less significant. This practice would in turn contribute to less commitment to Church and subsequently greater Church absenteeism. Church leaders and pastors should strive to be impartial in their service delivery. For instance, during pastoral visits, the amount of time spent on each home should be near uniform. It would be seen as discrimination when the pastoral team spends one hour in one home but only spends five minutes in the next home; unless there is a justifiable reason for the overstay. Equally, if the pastoral team has a policy of not taking any food or gifts during the visits, such policies should be strictly adhered to. Besides, during times of need like bereavement, equal treatment should be offered to all members as practical as possible. Hence, Church leadership should come up with policies to ensure uniform treatment is accorded to all members in times of need. This would

ensure that all members perceive equal treatment and thus Church ownership is enhanced among members. Subsequently church absenteeism is curbed.

**Table 4.30**

*Church based factors and Low Church attendance and absenteeism*

Church based factor item	D		N		A	
	F	%	F	%	F	%
The sermons in my Church are very long	87	53.4	26	16.0	50	30.7
The sermons in my Church are boring	148	90.8	10	6.1	5	3.1
The sermons in my Church are pastor/preacher centered	136	83.4	16	9.8	11	6.7
The sermons in my Church are very relevant	16	9.8	15	9.2	132	81.0
The preachers/pastors in my Church adequately prepare sermons	22	13.5	15	9.2	126	77.3
The preachers/pastors in my Church are very inspiring	11	6.7	15	9.2	137	84.0
My Church has very many members thus limiting socialization	130	79.8	22	13.5	11	6.7
In my Church, the youth are actively engaged	39	23.9	21	12.9	103	63.2
In my Church, there are activities that keep the service lively for all individuals	33	20.2	16	9.8	114	69.9
The leadership in my Church embrace diversity among church members	27	16.6	11	6.7	125	76.7
Some members in my Church feel unfairly discriminated	110	67.5	26	16.0	27	16.6
In my Church, all members are equally recognized irrespective of the contribution they make	34	20.9	21	12.9	108	66.3
There is a general perception in my Church that some members are more special than others	76	46.6	10	6.1	77	47.2

Respondents were asked to rate the influence of Church based factors on their Church attendance and absenteeism. As shown in Table 4.31, majority of the respondents (42.9%) specified large extent, 37.4% moderate extent, 12.9% little extent and 6.7% very large extent. These results imply that, in the opinion of the respondents, Church based factors significantly contributed to their Church absenteeism. Half of the respondents indicated large or very large extent influence of Church based factors on their Low Church attendance and absenteeism.

**Table 4.31**

*Influence of Church based factors on Church absenteeism for the youth*

Rating	Frequency	Percent
Little extent	21	12.9
Moderate extent	61	37.4
Large extent	70	42.9
Very large extent	11	6.7
Total	163	100.0

#### **4.4.2 Church Based Factors Contributing to Low Church attendance and Absenteeism for Men and Women**

Church based factor scale for members in men and youth fellowship comprised thirteen items. Item 1 of Church based factor scale inquired on whether sermons in the respondents' Church were very long. As shown in table 4.32, more than half of the respondents (55.6%) agreed, 36.3% disagreed and 8.2% were unsure and thus gave a neutral response. These results imply that the respondents found sermons in their Church to be very long. Only less than two fifths of the respondents upheld a divergent opinion. In respect to Item 2 of Church based factor scale, respondents were asked whether sermons in their Church were boring. Remarkably, all the

respondents disagreed. These results signify that the respondents did not find sermons in their Church boring. Not a single respondent opined otherwise. Item 3 of Church based factor scale inquired on whether sermons in respondents' Church were preacher centered. Majority of the respondents (90.6%) disagreed and 9.4% were unsure and thus gave a neutral response. These results mean that the respondents did not find sermons in their Church preacher centered.

Item 4 of Church based factor scale inquired on whether sermons in the respondents' Church were very relevant. Nearly two thirds of the respondents (66.1%) agreed and 33.9% disagreed. These results signify that the respondents found sermons delivered in their Church very relevant. Only a third of the respondents upheld a differing opinion. In respect to Item 5 of Church based factor scale, respondents were asked whether preachers in their Church adequately prepared sermons. More than nine tenths of the respondents (90.6%) agreed, 5.3% were unsure and thus gave a neutral response and 4.1% disagreed. These results imply that the respondents opined that preachers in their Church adequately prepared sermons.

Item 6 of Church based factor scale inquired on whether preachers in the sampled Churches were very inspiring. Majority of the respondents (95.9%) and 4.1% disagreed. These results indicate that preachers in their Church were very inspiring. Only less than a twentieth of the respondents upheld a differing opinion. In respect to Item 7 of Church based factor scale, respondents were asked whether their Church had very many members that limited socialization. Majority of the respondents (67.3%) disagreed, 28.1% agreed and 4.7% were unsure and thus gave a neutral response. These results indicate that the respondents did not find the population of their Churches too high to limit socialization. In respect to Item 8 of Church based factor scale, respondents were asked whether youth in their Church were actively engaged. Majority of the respondents (69.0%) agreed, 17.5% disagreed and 13.5% were unsure and thus gave a neutral

response. These results imply that youth were not actively engaged in the Church activities. Nearly a fifth of the respondents attested that youth in their Church were not actively engaged.

In respect to Item 9 of Church based factor scale, respondents were asked whether their Church had activities that kept the service lively for all individuals. Majority of the respondents (77.2%) agreed, 17.5% disagreed and 5.3% were unsure and thus gave a neutral response. These results suggest that there were activities that kept the services lively for all the Church members. Only a fifth of the respondents upheld a divergent opinion. In respect to Item 10 of Church based factor scale, respondents were asked whether their Church leadership embraced diversity among Church members. Majority of the respondents (53.8%) agreed, 33.9% were unsure and thus gave a neutral response and 12.3% disagreed. These results imply that the Church leadership embraced diversity among members. In respect to Item 11 Church based factor scale, respondents were asked whether some members of their Church felt unfairly discriminated. Slightly above four fifths of the respondents (82.5%) disagreed, 9.4% were unsure and thus gave a neutral response and 8.2% agreed. These results suggest that, in the opinion of the respondents, there was minimal perceived discrimination in their Church.

Item 12 of Church based factor scale inquired on whether all members were equally recognized irrespective of the contribution they made. Majority of the respondents (87.7%) agreed, 8.2% disagreed and 4.1% were unsure and thus gave a neutral response. These results suggest that, in the opinion of the respondents, there was equal recognition of all members irrespective of the contribution made. Only less than a tenth of the respondents upheld a contrary opinion. In respect to Item 13 of Church based factor scale, the respondents were asked whether some members in their Church were perceived to be more special than others. Majority of the respondents (87.7%) disagreed, 8.2% agreed and 4.1% were unsure and thus gave a neutral

response. These results imply that, in the opinion of the respondents, no Church members received preferential treatment.

**Table 4.32**

*Church based factors and Low Church attendance and absenteeism*

Church based factor item	D		N		A	
	F	%	F	%	F	%
The sermons in my Church are very long	62	36.3	14	8.2	95	55.6
The sermons in my Church are boring	171	100.0	0	0	0	0.0
The sermons in my Church are pastor/preacher centered	155	90.6	16	9.4	0	0.0
The sermons in my Church are very relevant	58	33.9	0	0	113	66.1
The preachers/pastors in my Church adequately prepare sermons	7	4.1	9	5.3	155	90.6
The preachers/pastors in my Church are very inspiring	7	4.1	0	0	164	95.9
My church has very many members thus limiting socialization	115	67.3	8	4.7	48	28.1
In my church, the youth are actively engaged	30	17.5	23	13.5	118	69.0
In my church, there are activities that keep the service lively for all individuals	30	17.5	9	5.3	132	77.2
The leadership in my Church embrace diversity among church members	21	12.3	58	33.9	92	53.8
Some members in my Church feel unfairly discriminated	141	82.5	16	9.4	14	8.2
In my church, all members are equally recognized irrespective of the contribution they make	14	8.2	7	4.1	150	87.7
There is a general perception in my Church that some members are more special than others	150	87.7	7	4.1	14	8.2

Respondents were asked to rate the influence of Church based factors on the Low Church attendance and absenteeism. As shown in Table 4.33, majority of the respondents (74.3%) specified large extent, 13.5% moderate extent and 12.3% very large extent. These results imply that, in the opinion of the respondents, Church based factors significantly contributed to their Church absenteeism. More than four fifths of the respondents indicated large or very large extent influence of Church based factors on their Church absenteeism.

**Table 4.33**

*Influence of Church based factors on the Low Church attendance and absenteeism for men and women*

Rating	Frequency	Percent
Moderate extent	23	13.5
Large extent	127	74.3
Very large extent	21	12.3
Total	171	100.0

#### **4.5 Church Attendance Ratings**

Church attendance rating was used to examine the dependent variable for the study; Church attendance and absenteeism. The rating was done both for the youth respondents and for members of men and women fellowship.

##### **4.5.1 Church Attendance Ratings for the Youth**

The youth respondents were asked to rate their Church attendance. As shown in Table 4.34, majority of the respondents (59.5%) indicated that they always attended Church, 27.6% indicated that they attended Church 2 to 3 times a month and 6.1% stated few times in a year while 3.7% specified few times in a year Church attendance. A small proportion of the respondents (3.1%)



attested that they attended Church once a year. These results imply that a significant proportion of the youth respondents were not attending Church regularly. More than two fifths of the youth respondents indicated Low Church attendance.

**Table 4.34**

*Church attendance ratings for the youth respondents*

	Frequency	Percent
I always attend Church	97	59.5
I attend Church 2 to 3 times a month	45	27.6
I attend Church once a month	6	3.7
I attend Church few times in a year	10	6.1
I attend Church once a year	5	3.1
Total	163	100.0

A cross tabulation was done to examine the distribution of Low Church attendance and absenteeism between genders. As shown in Table 4.35, male respondents were more consistent in Church attendance than their female counterparts. Nearly three quarters of the male respondents (73.3%) indicated regular Church attendance compared to 47.7% of their female counterparts. Moreover, 39.8% of the female respondents attended Church 2 to 3 times a year while 13.3% of the male counterparts were in the same church attendance category. However, there were no female respondents who indicated attendance of once a year whereas 6.7% of the male respondents indicated Church attendance of once a year. In addition, the proportion of male respondents who attended Church few times a year (6.7%) was slightly higher than that of their female counterparts (5.7%) in the same category. These results imply that Low Church attendance was more prevalent among female youths than their male counterparts.

**Table 4.35***Cross tabulations of Church attendance for the youth based on Gender*

Church attendance ratings		Gender		
		Male	Female	Total
I always attend Church	F	55	42	97
	%	73.3%	47.7%	59.5%
I attend Church 2 to 3 times a month	F	10	35	45
	%	13.3%	39.8%	27.6%
I attend Church once a month	F	0	6	6
	%	.0%	6.8%	3.7%
I attend Church few times in a year	F	5	5	10
	%	6.7%	5.7%	6.1%
I attend Church once a year	F	5	0	5
	%	6.7%	.0%	3.1%
Total	F	75	88	163
	%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

A chi square test was performed to examine the relationship between the Low Church attendance and absenteeism as per gender. The relationship between Low Church attendance and gender was significant,  $\chi^2(4, N = 163) = 25.8, p < .001$  as shown in Table 4.36. Hence, irregular Church attendance varied significantly between genders. Subsequently, the prevalence of Low Church attendance among the female youths was much higher than that of their male counterparts.

**Table 4.36***Chi-Square Tests of Church attendance for the youth based on Gender*

	Value	Df	P - Value
Pearson Chi-Square	25.8	4	.000
Likelihood Ratio	30.7	4	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	.425	1	.515
N of Valid Cases	163		

A cross tabulation was done to examine the relationship between the Low Church attendance and assignment of tasking chores on Sundays. The column indicated 'Not applicable' represents youths living independently and hence the question of assignment of tasking chores by parents on Sundays could not arise. Incidentally, all youth respondents living independently indicated that they always attended Church. Results displayed in Table 4.37 indicate that 61.4% of the youth respondents not assigned tasking chores by their parents on Sundays always attended Church compared to only 18.5% Church regular church attendance of their counterparts who were assigned tasking chores on Sundays. Equally, 18.5% of the youth respondents carrying out tasking chores assigned by their parents attested that they attended Church once a year. On the contrary, none of the youth respondents not assigned tasking chores indicated Church attendance of once a year. These results imply that the prevalence of Low Church attendance among youths who were assigned tasking chores on Sundays was higher than that of their counterparts not assigned tasking chores on Sundays.

**Table 4.37***Church attendance for the youth and tasking chores on Sundays*

Church attendance ratings		Tasking chores on Sundays			Total
		Yes	No	Not applicable	
I always attend Church	F	5	70	22	97
	%	18.5%	61.4%	100.0%	59.5%
I attend Church 2 to 3 times a month	F	17	28	0	45
	%	63.0%	24.6%	.0%	27.6%
I attend Church once a month	F	0	6	0	6
	%	.0%	5.3%	.0%	3.7%
I attend Church few times in a year	F	0	10	0	10
	%	.0%	8.8%	.0%	6.1%
I attend Church once a year	F	5	0	0	5
	%	18.5%	.0%	.0%	3.1%
Total	F	27	114	22	163
	%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

A chi square test was performed to examine the relationship between the Low Church attendance and absenteeism and tasking chores on Sundays. The relationship between the Low Church attendance and absenteeism and tasking chores on Sundays was significant,  $\chi^2 (8, N = 163) = 64.5, p < .001$  as shown in Table 4.38. Hence, the prevalence of Low Church attendance among youths who were assigned tasking chores on Sundays was higher than that of their counterparts not assigned tasking chores on Sundays.

**Table 4.38**

*Chi-Square Tests of Church attendance for the youth and tasking chores on Sundays*

	Value	df	P – Value
Pearson Chi-Square	64.5	8	.000
Likelihood Ratio	66.5	8	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	22.3	1	.000
N of Valid Cases	163		

A cross tabulation was done to examine the relationship between the Low Church attendance and absenteeism due to work/school engagement and gender. As shown in Table 4.39, 39.8% of females sometimes missed Church due to work/school engagements compared to 20.0% of their male counterparts in the same category. In contrast, 26.7% of male respondents never missed Church due to work/school engagement compared to 13.6% of female respondents who never missed Church for the same reason. These results suggest that more females missed Church due to school/work engagements than males.

**Table 4.39***Frequency of Church absenteeism due to work/school engagement based on Gender*

Frequency of missing Church (Youth)		Gender		
		Male	Female	Total
Never	F	20	12	32
	%	26.7%	13.6%	19.6%
Few times	F	25	35	60
	%	33.3%	39.8%	36.8%
Sometimes	F	15	35	50
	%	20.0%	39.8%	30.7%
Frequently	F	15	0	15
	%	20.0%	.0%	9.2%
Almost always	F	0	6	6
	%	.0%	6.8%	3.7%
Total	F	75	88	163
	%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

A chi square test was performed to examine the relationship between Low Church attendance and absenteeism due to school/work engagements and gender. The relationship between the Low Church attendance and absenteeism due to school/work engagements and gender was significant,  $\chi^2 (4, N = 163) = 31.8, p < .001$  as shown in Table 4.40. Hence, Church absenteeism due to school/work engagements varied significantly between genders. Subsequently, the prevalence of Church absenteeism due to school/work engagements among the female youths was much higher than that of their male counterparts.

**Table 4.40***Chi-Square Tests of low Church attendance and absenteeism for youth based on Gender*

	Value	df	P – Value
Pearson Chi-Square	31.8	4	.000
Likelihood Ratio	40.0	4	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	.681	1	.409
N of Valid Cases	163		

**4.5.2 Low Church Attendance and absenteeism Ratings for Men and Women**

In respect to Church attendance ratings for members of men and women fellowship, 54.4% indicated that they always attended Church while 26.9% stated that they attended Church 2 to 3 times a month as shown in Table 4.41. A small proportion of the respondents (9.4%) specified that they attended church once a month and a similar proportion specified church attendance of a few times in a year. These results imply that a significant proportion of the members were not attending Church regularly. Nearly half of the respondents indicated Low Church attendance.

**Table 4.41***Low Church attendance and absenteeism ratings for members of men and women fellowship*

	Frequency	Percent
I always attend Church	93	54.4
I attend Church 2 to 3 times a month	46	26.9
I attend Church once a month	16	9.4
I attend Church few times in a year	16	9.4
Total	171	100.0

A cross tabulation was done to examine the distribution of Low Church attendance and absenteeism between genders. As shown in Table 4.42, a third of the male respondents (33.3%) indicated that they attended Church 2 to 3 times a month compared to 20.7% of female respondents in the same category. In contrast, 58.6% of the female respondents indicated that they always attended Church compared to 50.0% of male respondents. These results suggest that the prevalence of Low Church attendance and absenteeism among respondents in men fellowship was higher than that of their counterparts in women fellowship.

**Table 4.42**

*Low Church attendance and absenteeism for members of men and women fellowship based on Gender*

Church attendance ratings		Gender		
		Male	Female	Total
I always attend Church	F	42	51	93
	%	50.0%	58.6%	54.4%
I attend Church 2 to 3 times a month	F	28	18	46
	%	33.3%	20.7%	26.9%
I attend Church once a month	F	7	9	16
	%	8.3%	10.3%	9.4%
I attend Church few times in a year	F	7	9	16
	%	8.3%	10.3%	9.4%
Total	F	84	87	171
	%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

A chi square test was performed to examine the relationship between Low Church attendance and absenteeism as per gender. The relationship between Low Church attendance, and absenteeism and gender was not significant since the p – value was greater than .05 as shown in



Table 4.43. Hence, Low Church attendance and absenteeism did not vary significantly between genders.

**Table 4.43**

*Chi-Square Tests of Low Church attendance and absenteeism ratings based on Gender*

	Value	df	P – Value
Pearson Chi-Square	3.5	3	.322
Likelihood Ratio	3.5	3	.319
Linear-by-Linear Association	.030	1	.862
N of Valid Cases	171		

A cross tabulation was done to examine the relationship between Low Church attendance and absenteeism in the previous commitment to Sunday school. As shown in Table 4.44, 40.0% of the respondents who did not experience parental involvement in Sunday school matters attended Church 2 to 3 times a month compared to 16.7% of the respondents whose parents were keen on Sunday school attendance during their childhood. In contrast, 74.0% of the respondents whose parents were keen on Sunday school matters always attended church compared to 29.3% of their counterparts whose parents were not keen on Sunday school matters. These results suggest that the prevalence of Low Church attendance among respondents whose parents did not play a significant role in their Sunday school affairs was higher than that of their counterparts whose parents were keen on their Sunday school affairs.

**Table 4.44**

*Cross tabulations of Low Church attendance and absenteeism based on previous commitment to Sunday school*

Church attendance ratings		Parents involvement in Sunday school attendance		Total
		Yes	No	
I always attend Church	F	71	22	93
	%	74.0%	29.3%	54.4%
I attend Church 2 to 3 times a month	F	16	30	46
	%	16.7%	40.0%	26.9%
I attend Church once a month	F	9	7	16
	%	9.4%	9.3%	9.4%
I attend Church few times in a year	F	0	16	16
	%	.0%	21.3%	9.4%
Total	F	96	75	171
	%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

A chi square test was performed to examine the relationship between Low Church attendance and absenteeism for the previous commitment to Sunday school. The relationship between irregular Church attendance and previous commitment to Sunday school was significant,  $\chi^2(3, N = 171) = 44.4, p < .001$  as shown in Table 4.45. Hence, prevalence of Low Church attendance among respondents whose parents did not play a significant role in their Sunday school affairs was higher than that of their counterparts whose parents were keen on their Sunday school affairs.

**Table 4.45**

*Chi-Square Tests of Church attendance and previous commitment to Sunday school*

	Value	df	P – Value
Pearson Chi-Square	44.4	3	.000
Likelihood Ratio	51.3	3	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	33.8	1	.000
N of Valid Cases	171		

A cross tabulation was done to examine the relationship between Low Church attendance and absenteeism and demands for family chores on Sundays. As shown in Table 4.46, 23.3% of the respondents with demanding family chores on Sundays attended Church once a month compared to 6.4% of the respondents without demanding family chores on Sundays. These results imply that the prevalence of irregular Church attendance among respondents with demanding family chores on Sunday was higher than that of their counterparts without demanding family chores on Sundays

**Table 4.46***Cross tabulations of Church attendance and demanding family chores on Sundays*

Church attendance ratings		Demanding family chores on Sundays		Total
		Yes	No	
I always attend Church	F	16	77	93
	%	53.3%	54.6%	54.4%
I attend Church 2 to 3 times a month	F	7	39	46
	%	23.3%	27.7%	26.9%
I attend Church once a month	F	7	9	16
	%	23.3%	6.4%	9.4%
I attend Church few times in a year	F	0	16	16
	%	.0%	11.3%	9.4%
Total	F	30	141	171
	%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

A chi square test was performed to examine the relationship between Low Church attendance and absenteeism and demands for family chores on Sundays. The relationship between Church attendance and absenteeism and demands for family chores on Sundays was significant,  $\chi^2 (3, N = 171) = 11.2, p = .011$  as shown in Table 4.47. Hence, prevalence of Low Church attendance and absenteeism among respondents with demanding family chores on Sunday was higher than that of their counterparts without demanding family chores on Sundays.

**Table 4.47***Chi-Square Tests of Church attendance and demanding family chores on Sundays*

	Value	df	P – Value
Pearson Chi-Square	11.2	3	.011
Likelihood Ratio	12.3	3	.007
Linear-by-Linear Association	.052	1	.819
N of Valid Cases	171		

A cross tabulation was done to examine the relationship between Low Church attendance and absenteeism and demands on family chores on Sundays and gender. It was revealed that 25% of male respondents had demanding family chores on Sundays compared to 10.3% of their female counterparts in the same category as shown in Table 4.48. These results imply that the prevalence of demanding family chores among respondents in men fellowship was higher than that of their counterparts in the women fellowship.

**Table 4.48**

*Cross tabulations of demanding family chores on Sundays based on Gender*

Status of family chores of Sundays		Gender		Total
		Male	Female	
Demanding	F	21	9	30
	%	25.0%	10.3%	17.5%
Not demanding	F	63	78	141
	%	75.0%	89.7%	82.5%
Total	F	84	87	171
	%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

A chi square test was performed to examine the relationship between demanding family chores on Sundays and gender. The relationship between demanding family chores on Sundays and gender was significant,  $\chi^2(1, N = 171) = 6.3, p = .012$  as shown in Table 4.49. Hence, demanding family chores on Sundays varied significantly between genders. Subsequently, the prevalence of demanding family chores on Sundays among respondents in men fellowship was much higher than that of their counterparts in women fellowship.

**Table 4.49***Chi-Square Tests of demanding family chores on Sundays based on Gender*

	Value	df	P - Value
Pearson Chi-Square	6.3	1	.012
Likelihood Ratio	6.5	1	.011
Linear-by-Linear Association	6.3	1	.012
N of Valid Cases	171		

A cross tabulation was done to examine the relationship between Low Church attendance and absenteeism due to work engagement and gender. As shown in Table 4.50, a third of the respondents in men fellowship (33.3%) sometimes missed Church due to work engagements while none of the respondents in the women fellowship was in this category. These results mean that the prevalence of Church absenteeism due to work engagements among respondents in men fellowship was much higher than that of their counterparts in women fellowship.

**Table 4.50***Cross tabulations of Church absenteeism due to work engagement and Gender*

		Gender		
		Male	Female	Total
Never	F	21	27	48
	%	25.0%	31.0%	28.1%
Few times	F	35	60	95
	%	41.7%	69.0%	55.6%
Sometimes	F	28	0	28
	%	33.3%	.0%	16.4%
Total	F	84	87	171
	%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

A chi square test was performed to examine the relationship between Church low attendance and absenteeism due to work engagements and gender. The relationship between Church absenteeism due to work engagements and gender was significant,  $\chi^2(2, N = 171) = 35.3, p < .001$  as shown in Table 4.51. Hence, Church absenteeism due to work engagements varied significantly between genders. Subsequently, the prevalence of Low attendance and absenteeism due to work engagements among respondents in men fellowship was much higher than that of their counterparts in women fellowship.

**Table 4.51**

*Chi-Square Tests of Low Church attendance and absenteeism due to work engagement and Gender*

	Value	df	P - Value
Pearson Chi-Square	35.3	2	.000
Likelihood Ratio	46.2	2	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	15.3	1	.000
N of Valid Cases	171		

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **5.1 Introduction**

This chapter provides the summary of key findings, conclusions and recommendations. The summary, conclusions and recommendations are aligned to the specific objectives of the study. The study sought to establish whether home based factors, social economic factors and Church based factors contributed to Low Church attendance and absenteeism among members of Methodist Church in Kenya, Nyambene Synod, Meru County.

#### **5.2 Summary of the Findings**

The summary of key findings have been presented according to the three study objectives; home based factors contributing to low Church attendance and absenteeism, social economic factors Affecting the low Church attendance and absenteeism, and the Church based factors contributing to low Church attendance and absenteeism.

##### **5.2.1 Church Based Factors Contributing to low Church attendance and Absenteeism**

Church based factors were significantly associated with Low Church attendance and absenteeism, for example the respondent's perceived sermons in their Churches to be very long however they were not boring. Preachers sometimes preach long sermons because of lack of preparedness and lack of consciousness of the people they serve. The wish of many people is that they spend minimum hours in the church in order to do other activities because of the tight schedules of the week. To address this challenge of long sermons the preachers of the gospel needs to know the techniques and methods of preaching in order to reach their members



precisely and clearly. They also need to know the context of the people they are preaching too, for example some members who are farmers would wish to save time in order to go back home and milk their cows especially those who milk their cows three times a day. Therefore it is necessary for the preachers to learn on how to improve their sermons in order to meet the needs of their members without compromising the standard of preaching. Also preacher's needs to exercise the discipline of saving time by preaching precise sermon and short sermons, obviously this will require prior preparations accompanied with proper communication skills which can be learnt either through short courses or refresher courses on preaching. In those short courses the church need to train their preachers on how to prepare short and clear sermons that fit the context of their members.

In this research it was also found that the youth were not actively engaged in Church activities. This scenario of not involving Youth in the church is a dangerous trend that needs to be addressed. The church need to invest in today's youth in order to prepare them to serve Christ and to prepare them for future leadership. The church needs to update youth programs that are outdated with the contemporary and relevant programs. For example the church needs to revive social days, worship sessions, talent shows, youth retreats and any other activity that will keep them busy provided that it does not encourage any indiscipline behaviors. The church also needs to consider employing a youth pastor or minister who can mentor and work together with the young people in order to come up with programs and activities that are relevant and suitable to their ages. Assigning a pastor to serve in the youth department create an opportunity to know their needs and therefore guiding them properly. The church also ought to improve its music system like key board and other musical instruments in order to keep the young people actively

involved in the church because it has been learnt elsewhere that where those instruments are missing there are no youth.

The other factor that led to the Low Church attendance and absenteeism was that some members felt unfairly discriminated while others were regarded as special members. Recognition of members was also skewed towards contribution made. These factors led to Church absenteeism among the members who felt that their Church attendance was not of great significant to the Church. The ministers of the gospel are not supposed to overlook on any member on the bases of what they contribute but on the bases of the service they need. The bible is clear on this where Jesus said that he came to serve and not to be served (Mark 10:41-45) so leaders are servants and they need to serve all the members whether poor or rich or whether disabled or not. The church leadership should not discriminate in any way but they should try as much as possible to be impartial so as to be able to deliver services such as pastoral visits or any other attention that member needs. The church leadership also needs to come up with strategized policies on how to handle issues when they arise in the church. For instance the church leadership needs to come up with modalities of handling the issue of bereavement because this is where some feel discriminated due to the different treatment they receive when they lose their members through death. The bible is also clear that we should desist from practicing favoritism or partiality for they lead to sin (James 2. 8-9). James here wants to communicate that we need to love one another by demonstrating it through faith. Since discrimination of members was observed as contributing factor to Low Church attendance the church leaders need to be extra careful on the way they treat members because poor treatment leads to Low Church attendance and absenteeism.

In response to rating of church attendance per gender it was established that male youth respondent who attended church were fewer than female counterparts. This therefore traces the problem of a boy child in the church and society. For example a report filed by National gender and equality commission in Kenya found out that some of the factors contributing to boy child are related with family issues and according to Convention on the rights of the child UN (1989, Parents are supposed to provide good environment for the proper growth of their children's . For instance in families where fathers are absent children's lack role models and parental guidance and therefore this affect their growth and their moral behaviors. On the same issue it was noted that cultural belief and practices also affected the boy child, this mostly happens during boy's circumcision period where they are taught about their culture and religious beliefs. If this stage is not handled well some boys are lost here. Therefore it is the responsibility of the church leadership to help the parents either through seminars to take the upper hand in mentoring their children when they are young. The church also needs to take charge of boy child support program such as circumcision so as to instill spiritual knowledge during their seclusion period and also the church needs to initiate programs that are suitable in mentoring both boys and girls when they are young in order to lay strong foundation in the early childhood stages.

So in a nutshell the church based factors such as sermon delivery, fair treatment of members, involvement of youth in the church activities and recognition of all members need to be observed carefully in order to avoid Low Church attendance in the church.

### **5.2.2 Home Based Factors Contributing to low Church Attendance and Absenteeism**

As noted by Wali (2016), home based factors which include parent's level of education, family income and family dynamics contributed a lot to church absenteeism. This is confirmed in this

research which established a very strong correlation between the Church attended by the youth and their parents. Thus, parents played a significant role in the choice of Church for their children. From this assertion it is clear that the parent plays big role in anchoring the spirituality of their children's. This therefore calls all the parents to take responsibility of mentoring their children's at early age because this will determine their future affiliation with the church. This is demonstrated by the worshippers of the Seventh day Adventist who takes their children with them in the church (Lanman & Buhrmester, 2017). This also goes in line with the word of God in the Bible which encourages parents to nurture their children's by instructing them according to the word of the Lord (Ephesians 6.4). The words of wisdom from Proverbs 22.6 encourage parents to train their children with the right discipline and when they grow they will never go astray. So in order to curb future absenteeism of youth in the church, parents need to introduce their children in the church as early as possible. The church also needs to establish special rooms or Sunday school halls where different categories of children's can be taken care of when their parent service is going on. The church leaders also need to train and equip Sunday school teachers who can take charge of children when their parents are attending the church. This will automatically provide a ground to introduce young children to the church as they grow to maturity.

Secondly it was also found out that Poor family background was a major contributor to Church absenteeism. From this finding majority of the respondent were self-employed and casual workers. This therefore, affected the economy of those people and mainly the youth. This therefore predicts that the youth members from the poor families were more likely to miss Church than their counterparts from rich families. Those findings clearly fit the conditions of some of the congregations within Nyambene Synod where poverty index is so high. This

therefore calls for the church to cheer in and identify with the suffering members either by assisting them with both short term and long term solutions. For long term solutions the church can help the surrounding community with favorable development projects which can at least help in reducing poverty level. The church leadership should also be in the front line in conducting frequent pastoral visits to such members, so as to encourage them, assist them and also to associate with them.

Thirdly, Lack of monies to channel during designated fundraiser days was a key contributor to Church absenteeism among the youth, men and women. This affirms the argument of Juma (2015) who argues that unemployed individuals may fail to attend the church to avoid stigma and criticism from the affluent members. This assertion is true and the church needs to regulate fundraising in the church by planning and strategizing those fundraising activities. This is because too much of them will become a bother to many and therefore will escalate the trend of members absenteeism. The church also needs to invent other means of funding so as to support the church activities rather than relying on members.

Fourthly, it was also found that youth with parents who were strict in upbringing them were not likely to miss the church however youth whose parent cared less about them were likely to miss the Church. Equally, unfriendly relationship between the youth and their parents greatly contributed to Church absenteeism among the youth. In addition, youth missed Church due to tasking chores assigned to them by their parents. In relation to this the church need to do parental seminars in order to educate parents on their family responsibilities and mainly on how to nurture their children's. Also the factor of demanding family chores on Sunday in some extent affected church attendance and therefore to arrest this the church leaders needs to intensify their pastoral visits in order to meet with parents of those youth.

### **5.2.3 Socio-economic Factors contributing to Low Church Attendance and Absenteeism**

According to the argument of Mellor and Freeborn (2011), it is impossible to separate religion and social economic activities because they influence each other. For example social economic activities such as education, occupation and income have large impact which does not only affect the society but also religion. In response to this research, questions on effects of school/work level of education, occupation and exhaustion after work were given to determine how this area of social economical affected church attendance. The result implies that none of the above significantly affected Church absenteeism. However from the reality this area has been considered as one of the major area which has greatly affected the church attendance. In my view therefore the scope of the questions on this area need to be broad in order to accommodate more views concerning social economic factors which may be associated with church absenteeism. For instance from the results it was found out that a third of the respondent associated engagement in school/work with church absenteeism. These clearly demonstrate that although this was a small representation but it also contributed to Low Church attendance.

In the social economic factors we also find effects of social activities which affect church attendance. Such activities includes attending parties on Sunday, watching of football , watching television programs and attending of family associated activities on Sundays. In order to address this, the church needs to come up with modalities of serving her members who are far and near. This can be achieved by use of modern technology like radio and televisions to reach members who are not able to attend church services physically because of the nature of their work and clash of time with Sunday services, for instance in the time of COVID 19 the media played a vital role in communicating the gospel while people were restricted from gatherings. Therefore the church needs to embark on offering online sermons either through televisions or radio so as

to reach her members who may not have an opportunity to attend the church. However members who are able to attend the church need to be encouraged to attend the church.

### **5.3 Conclusions**

From the findings arrived at in respect to each of the three study objectives the researcher made the following conclusions:

#### **5.3.1 Home Based Factors Contributing to low Church Attendance and Absenteeism**

Poor family background, lack of monies to channel during fundraisers, unfriendly relationship between youth and parents, and lack of parental guidance greatly contributed to Low Church attendance and absenteeism. Subsequently, home based factors were significantly associated with Church absenteeism. Children who are distant from their parents are less likely to continue with their parents' religion. Thus, parents should endeavour to inculcate a warm and cordial relationship with their children to increase the prevalence of their children's Church attendance. The church leadership needs to intensify pastoral oversight to all members through church elders and church groups in order to reach all members at all the time.

#### **5.3.2 Socio Economic Factors affecting the low Church Attendance and Absenteeism**

Socio economic factors were not significantly associated with Church absenteeism. School/work engagements were not a major hindrance to Church attendance and Church absenteeism was not associated with exhaustion due to work/school engagements. Moreover, Church absenteeism was not associated with relaxing at home due to exhaustion from work/school engagements.

### **5.3.3 Church Based Factors Contributing to Low Church Absenteeism**

Long sermons, non-involvement of youth in Church activities and lack of uniformity in treatment of members led to Church absenteeism. Consequently, Church based factors were significantly associated with Church absenteeism. Hence, ministers of the word should strive to ensure that their sermons are precise and straight forward. Moreover Church leadership should devise creative ways of actively engaging the youth and also come up with policies to ensure uniform treatment is accorded to all members in times of need.

### **5.4 Recommendation**

From the conclusions arrived at in respect to each of the three study objectives, the researcher wishes to make the following recommendations:

On the Home based factors the study established a very strong correlation between the Church attended by the youth and their parents. Youth with parents who cared less about them were likely to miss Church. In addition, youth missed Church due to tasking chores assigned to them by their parents; thus, parents played a significant role in the choice of Church for their children. These observations clearly demonstrate the importance of introducing young children in the church in their early ages in order to nurture them to Christian maturity. It is also the role of the parents to see to it that children's are introduced to the church doctrines, practices and teaching so as to ground them in Christian faith. For instance the Methodist Church in Kenya need to intensify catechumen classes to the young children so as to ground them on their spiritual growth and this will help them to know the importance of attending the church and demerit of it. The parent also need to be role models to their children and especially in matters of attending the church, this is because parents who do not attend the church also affect the attendance of their



children's in the church. Parents should also endeavour to inculcate a warm and cordial relationship with their children to increase the prevalence of their children's Church attendance

It was also observed that youth from poor families were more likely to miss Church than their counterparts from rich families. This was attributed by the lack of monies to channel during the designated fundraising days. This was a key contributor to Church absenteeism among the youth. To arrest this situation the church leadership should strategize on ways to initiate income generating activities to supplement Sunday offerings and thus minimize the need for frequent fundraisers which are associated with Church absenteeism. The Church leadership also should device a way of recognizing non – monetary contribution to ensure inclusivity and curb Church absenteeism associated with lack of funds to channel during fundraisers this also calls for the church leadership to invest so as to increase church revenue to avoid such pitfalls of losing members and especially the youth members.

Lack of parental guidance was also significantly associated with Church absenteeism. Equally, unfriendly relationship between the youth and their parents greatly contributed to Church absenteeism among the youth It is worthy to note here that Parental guidance is a key to the formation of holistic life of children and therefore it is the role of the parents to make sure that they mentor and support their children's as they grow for I believe parents who stimulates their children's end up influencing them to form strong spiritual foundation which cannot be shaken in the future. On the other hand Church leadership ought to organize regular parenting seminars as lack of proper parenting is associated with Church absenteeism

On the issue of Low Church attendance and absenteeism among the adults it was realized that discipline of regular church attendance is learnt from the family and that improper parenting

methods greatly accounted for church absenteeism even at the adult age. This concurs with Pattachini and Zenou (2016) who argued that religious beliefs are transmitted from parents to children. This clearly demonstrates the importance of encouraging parents to take their young children's to the church at their early ages to avoid future irregular attendance of the church when they became adults. The Bible is also clear on this in Proverbs 22:6 where it says "train up a child the way he should go and when he is old, he will not depart from it.

To avoid stigma and discrimination in the church as observed from the findings it is recommended that the Church leadership need to organize team building activities for the respective Church groups to ensure harmonious relationship and to avoid stigma and criticism that is ignited from difference family economic status. The Church leadership also needs to come up with policies to ensure uniform treatment is accorded to all members in times of need.

Socio-economic factors were not significantly associated with Church absenteeism. School/work engagements were not a major hindrance to Church attendance and Church absenteeism was not associated with exhaustion due to work/school engagements. Moreover, Church absenteeism was not associated with relaxing at home due to exhaustion from work/school engagements. However though the observation made didn't associate social economic factors with church absenteeism still there are clear indication that some social factors such as going for parties on Sunday, watching television programs and other recreation activities affects church attendance. The social economic factors are also associated with secularism as (Hungerman ,2014) argue that immense evidence in economics proves that education and income affect religiosity immensely. Also another area that needs to be considered in the future affecting church attendance in MCK Nyambene Synod will be Miraa (Al-Mugahed, 2008) farming. This is because the nature of

Miraa business or trade is carried from Sunday to Sunday therefore drastically affecting church attendance.

On the Church based factors respondents perceived sermons in their Churches to be very long and also youth were not actively engaged in Church activities, some members were also discriminated as recognition of members was skewed towards contribution made. All these factors led to Church absenteeism among the members who felt that their Church attendance was not of great significant to the Church. In response to this the Ministers of the word should strive to ensure that their sermons are precise and straight forward. The Church leadership should also devise creative ways of actively engaging the youth since inactive youth engagement was associated with Church absenteeism. Pastoral care need to be interfiled to identify members that fail to attend Church regularly due to factors that are associated with Church based issues.

### **5.5 Recommendations for Further Research**

Since the study focused on Churches under the Methodist Church in Kenya, it is suggested that the study be extended to other Churches to assess whether different findings may be reached regarding factors contributing to low Church attendance and absenteeism.

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## **APPENDICES**

### **APPENDIX I: Letter of Introduction**

**Dear Sir/Madam,**

#### **RE: PERMISSION TO CARRY OUT RESEARCH**

I am a student undertaking a course in Masters of Arts in Religious Studies at Kenya Methodist University. I am required to submit, as part of my research work assessment, a research thesis on **“Assessment of factors contributing to Low Church attendance and absenteeism: A Case of Methodist Church in Kenya Nyambene Synod, Meru County, Kenya”**. To achieve this, you have been selected to participate in the study. I kindly request you to give your responses to the questions herein. This information will be used purely for academic purpose and your name will not be mentioned in the report. Findings of the study, shall upon request, be availed to you.

Your assistance and cooperation will be highly appreciated.

Thank you in advance.

Yours faithfully,

REV. GERALD KITHURE

**APPENDIX II: Informed Consent Form**

Dear respondent,

The researcher is a student undertaking a course in Masters of Arts in religious studies at Kenya Methodist University, carrying out a research on “**Assessment of factors contributing to Low Church attendance and absenteeism: A Case of Methodist Church in Kenya Nyambene Synod, Meru County, Kenya**”. For this study I will request you to give me some time as you will be asked some questions. I will maintain your privacy and confidentiality about your information. Your name will not be written on any of the materials, and only the researcher will have access to your information. The research will not benefit you personally. Your participation is totally voluntary, and you may change your mind and withdraw at any time before and during the study. We will not pay or give any facilities for this participation. If you want to take part to participate in this research, please sign the form below.

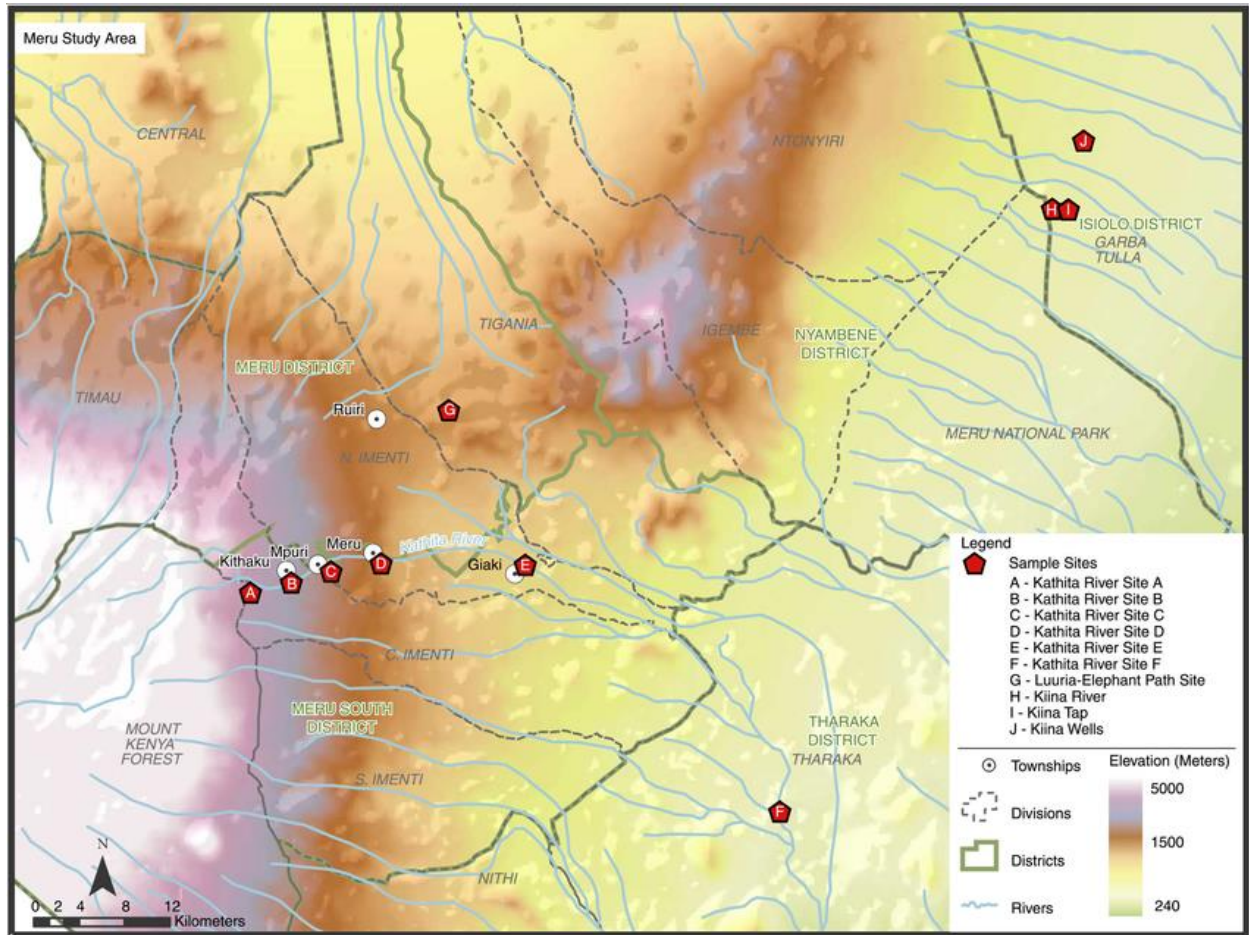
**Participant:**

-----	-----	-----
Code of Participant	Signature	Date

**Researcher:**

-----	-----	-----
Name of Researcher	Signature	Date

### APPENDIX III- Map of Meru County



## APPENDIX IV

### Questionnaire for Youth

#### Meaning of the Abbreviation

SN- Strongly Disagree

D-Disagree

N-Neutral

A-Agree

SA-Strongly Agree

#### Section A: Demographic Information

1. Gender
  - a. Male
  - b. Female
2. Age .....

#### Section B: Home Based Factors and Church Absenteeism

3. Which of the following best describe your family
  - a. I live with both parents
  - b. I live with my mother
  - c. I live with my father
  - d. I live with my guardian
  - e. I live in a child headed family
  - f. I am independent
4. Do you attend the same church as your parents?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
  - c. Not applicable
5. Which of the following best describes your father's employment status?
  - a. Self-employed
  - b. Formal employment
  - c. Casual worker
  - d. I don't have a father
  - e. Other ..... (Please specify)

6. Which of the following best describes your mother's employment status?
- a. Self-employed [ ]
  - b. Formal employment [ ]
  - c. Casual worker [ ]
  - d. I don't have a mother [ ]
  - e. Other ..... (Please specify)
7. Which of the following best describes your guardian's employment status?
- a. Self-employed [ ]
  - b. Formal employment [ ]
  - c. Casual worker [ ]
  - d. Not applicable [ ]
  - e. Other ..... (Please specify)
8. Which of the following best describes the level of education attained by your father?
- a. No formal education [ ]
  - b. Primary education [ ]
  - c. Secondary education [ ]
  - d. Certificate [ ]
  - e. Diploma [ ]
  - f. Graduate [ ]
  - g. Post graduate [ ]
9. Are you assigned tasking chores by your parents on Sunday?
- a. Yes [ ]
  - b. No [ ]
  - c. Not applicable [ ]
10. Please indicate your level of agreement or disagreement to each of the following statements in regard to church absenteeism and parent's economic status

S/N	Item	SD	D	N	A	SA
i	Youth whose parents drive cars are more likely to miss Church than their counterparts without cars					
ii	Youth whose parents are not educated are more likely to miss Church than their counterparts with educated parents					
iii	Youth from poor families are more likely to miss church than their counterparts from rich families					
iv	Youth whose parents have good jobs are more likely to miss Church than their counterparts					
v	When there is a fundraiser in Church, some youth are likely to miss due to lack of funds to contribute					



11. Please indicate your level of agreement or disagreement to each of the following statements in regard to church absenteeism and parenting style

S/N	Item	SD	D	N	A	SA
i	Youth whose parents are very strict are likely to miss Church					
ii	Youth with parents who care less about them are likely to miss Church					
iii	Youth miss Church if their parents are unfriendly					
iv	Youth miss Church if their parents do not guide them					
v	Youth miss Church due to tasking chores assigned to them by their parents					

12. To what extent has your parents contributed to your Church attendance?

- a. Very large extent [ ]
- b. Large extent [ ]
- c. Moderate extent [ ]
- d. Little extent [ ]
- e. No extent [ ]

**Section C: Social Economic Attributes and Church Absenteeism**

13. What level of education have you attained?

- a. No formal education [ ]
- b. Primary education [ ]
- c. Secondary education [ ]
- d. Certificate [ ]
- e. Diploma [ ]
- f. Graduate [ ]
- g. Post graduate [ ]

14. What is your occupation?

- a. Primary school student [ ]
- b. Secondary school student [ ]
- c. College/ University student [ ]
- d. Employed [ ]
- e. Peasant farmer [ ]
- f. Self-employed [ ]
- g. Other ..... (Please specify)

15. How often do you miss church due to engagement in your work station or school?

- a. Almost always [ ]

- b. Frequently
- c. Sometimes
- d. Few times
- e. Never

16. Please indicate your level of agreement or disagreement to each of the following statements in regard to Church absenteeism and engagement in your work station or school

S/N	Item	SD	D	N	A	SA
a	Most Sunday mornings, I gladly prepare myself to attend Church in time					
b	Most Sunday mornings, I force myself to attend Church					
c	Most Sunday mornings, I feel very exhausted as a result of my work engagement					
d	Some Sundays, I choose to relax at home due to exhaustion					
e	I prefer to watch televised Services					

17. To what extent has your engagement in school/work influenced your Church attendance?

- a. Very large extent
- b. Large extent
- c. Moderate extent
- d. Little extent
- e. No extent

**Section D: Church Based Factors and Church Absenteeism**

18. Please indicate your level of agreement or disagreement to each of the following statements in regard to your church

S/N	Item	SD	D	N	A	SA
a	The sermons in my Church are very long					
b	The sermons in my Church are boring					
c	The sermons in my Church are pastor/preacher centered					
d	The sermons in my Church are very relevant					
e	The preachers/pastors in my Church adequately prepare sermons					
f	The preachers/pastors in my Church are very inspiring					

g	My Church has very many members thus limiting socialization					
h	In my Church, the youth are actively engaged					
i	In my Church, there are activities that keep the service lively for all individuals					
j	The leadership in my Church embrace diversity among Church members					
k	Some members in my Church feel unfairly discriminated					
l	In my church, all members are equally recognized irrespective of the contribution they make					
m	There is a general perception in my Church that some members are more special than others					

19. To what extent has the Church based factors outlined in the table labeled 18 influenced your Church attendance?

- a. Very large extent [ ]
- b. Large extent [ ]
- c. Moderate extent [ ]
- d. Little extent [ ]
- e. No extent [ ]

**Section E: Church Attendance Ratings**

20. Which of the following best describes your Church attendance

- a. I always attend church [ ]
- b. I attend church 2 to 3 times a month [ ]
- c. I attend church once a month [ ]
- d. I attend church few times in a year [ ]
- e. I attend church once a year [ ]

## APPENDIX V: Questionnaire for Members in the Men and Women Fellowship

### Section A: Demographic Information

1. Gender
  - a. Male
  - b. Female
2. Age .....

### Section B: Home Based Factors and Church Absenteeism

3. Which of the following best describe your family status
  - a. I am married
  - b. I am a single parent
  - c. I am a widow/widower
  - d. I am separated/divorced
  - e. Other .....(Please specify)
4. Did your parents/guardians ensure that you attended Sunday school when you were young?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
5. Do you have demanding family chores that engage you most Sundays?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
  - c. Not applicable
6. Please indicate your level of agreement or disagreement to each of the following statements in regard to church absenteeism and home based factors

S/N	Item	SD	D	N	A	SA
i	Persons with high income are more likely to attend Church than their counterparts with low income					
ii	Educated persons are more likely to attend Church than their counterparts who are not educated					
iii	The discipline of regular Church attendance is learnt from the family					
iv	Poor parenting methods can contribute to lower Church attendance once children become adults					
v	When there is a fundraiser in Church, some people are likely to miss due to lack of funds to contribute					

To what extent has your parents contributed to your Church attendance?

- a. Very large extent [ ]
- b. Large extent [ ]
- c. Moderate extent [ ]
- d. Little extent [ ]
- e. No extent [ ]

**Section C: Social Economic Attributes and Church Absenteeism**

7. What level of education have you attained?

- a. No formal education [ ]
- b. Primary education [ ]
- c. Secondary education [ ]
- d. Certificate [ ]
- e. Diploma [ ]
- f. Graduate [ ]
- g. Post graduate [ ]

8. What is your occupation?

- a. Formal employment [ ]
- b. Casual worker [ ]
- c. Peasant farmer [ ]
- d. Self-employed [ ]
- e. Other ..... (Please specify)

9. How often do you miss Church due to engagement in your work station?

- a. Almost always [ ]
- b. Frequently [ ]
- c. Sometimes [ ]
- d. Few times [ ]
- e. Never [ ]

10. Please indicate your level of agreement or disagreement to each of the following statements in regard to church absenteeism and engagement in your work station

S/N	Item	SD	D	N	A	SA
a	Most Sunday mornings, I gladly prepare myself to attend Church in time					
b	Most Sunday mornings, I force myself to attend Church					
c	Most Sunday mornings, I feel very exhausted as a result of my work engagement					
d	Some Sundays, I choose to relax at home due to exhaustion					
e	I prefer to watch televised Services					

11. To what extent has your engagement in work influenced your church attendance?

- a. Very large extent [ ]
- b. Large extent [ ]
- c. Moderate extent [ ]
- d. Little extent [ ]
- e. No extent [ ]

**Section D: Church Based Factors and Church Absenteeism**

12. Please indicate your level of agreement or disagreement to each of the following statements in regard to your church

S/N	Item	SD	D	N	A	SA
a	The sermons in my Church are very long					
b	The sermons in my Church are boring					
c	The sermons in my Church are pastor/preacher centered					
d	The sermons in my Church are very relevant					
e	The preachers/pastors in my Church adequately prepare sermons					
f	The preachers/pastors in my Church are very inspiring					
g	My Church has very many members thus limiting socialization					
h	In my Church, the youth are actively engaged					
i	In my Church, there are activities that keep the service lively for all individuals					
j	The leadership in my Church embrace diversity among church members					
k	Some members in my Church feel unfairly discriminated					
l	In my Church, all members are equally recognized irrespective of the contribution they make					
m	There is a general perception in my Church that some members are more special than others					

13. To what extent has the church based factors outlined in the table labeled 13 influenced your Church attendance?

- a. Very large extent [ ]
- b. Large extent [ ]
- c. Moderate extent [ ]
- d. Little extent [ ]
- e. No extent [ ]

**Section E: Church Attendance Ratings**

14. Which of the following best describes your Church attendance

- a. I always attend Church [ ]
- b. I attend Church 2 to 3 times a month [ ]
- c. I attend Church once a month [ ]
- d. I attend Church few times in a year [ ]
- e. I attend Church once a year [ ]



## APPENDIX VI : LETTER FROM THE INSTITUTION



**KENYA METHODIST UNIVERSITY**

P. O. Box 267 Meru - 60200, Kenya  
Tel: 254-064-30301/31229/30367/31171

Fax: 254-64-30162  
Email: [deanrd@kemu.ac.ke](mailto:deanrd@kemu.ac.ke)

### DIRECTORATE OF POSTGRADUATE STUDIES

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August 11, 2021

Commission Secretary,  
National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovations,  
P.O. Box 30623-00100,  
**NAIROBI.**

Dear sir/ Madam,

**GERALD KITHURE (MAR-3-0181-1/2015)**

This is to confirm that the above named is a bona fide student of Kenya Methodist University, Department of Theology, Religious Studies and Counselling, undertaking a Degree of Master of Arts in Religious Studies. He is conducting research on, 'Assessment of Factors contributing to Irregular Church Attendance and Absenteeism: A case of MCK Nyambene Synod'.

We confirm that his research proposal has been defended and approved by the University.

In this regard, we are requesting your office to issue a permit to enable him collect data for his research.

Any assistance accorded to him will be appreciated.

Thank you.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'John Muchiri', is written over a circular stamp. The stamp contains the text 'AUG 2021'.

**Dr. John Muchiri, Ph.D.**  
**Director Postgraduate Studies**

Cc: Dean SESS  
COD, TRSC  
Postgraduate Co-ordinator  
Supervisors

**APPENDIX VII: NACOSTI LETTER**

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