

The Impact of Youth Ministry on Church Growth

by Rachel Shegala

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NAME: RACHEL SHEGELA

STUDENT NO: 2104530

MODULE NUMBER: 601

Abstract

Maintaining a vibrant and practical youth ministry is essential, but most churches face the challenge of attracting young people to their congregations. This study explored the key factors influencing the growth and sustainability of youth ministry programs through a qualitative analysis of relevant articles, reports, and online resources. Through an inductive coding process, five major themes emerged, which include Building Relationships and Creating Safe Spaces, Integrating Youth into the Life of the Church, Training and Development for Youth Leaders, Innovative Approaches and Technology Integration, and Collaborative Efforts and Uniting Churches. The findings revealed that building trustworthy relationships with young people and providing emotionally and spiritually safe environments create a foundation for effective youth engagement. Additionally, integrating youth into decision-making processes and leadership roles and financing their activities fosters a sense of belongingness. Investing in specialized training for youth ministers, providing professional development opportunities, and offering competitive compensation emerged as crucial for sustaining skilled leadership. Local churches that embrace innovation and incorporate technology platforms design interactive experiences that resonate with young people's experiences. In addition, collaborative efforts among churches, partnerships with community organizations, and uniting across denominational lines amplified young people's collective engagement. Findings highlight the requirement for local churches to

prioritize relational connections, empower young people, develop specialized leadership, adapt to changing generational needs, and fosters collaborative networks to promote a vibrant youth ministry.

Keywords: youth ministry, church growth, relationships, safe spaces, youth integration, leadership development, innovation technology, integration collaboration

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CHAPTER 1:INTRODUCTION

Chapter overview

This chapter will cover the reasons and background for my study and its significance. It will also cover my main research questions. I am a Christian and grown in a staunch catholic family. I have a passion for young people and an interest in finding the impact of youth ministry in the growth of the church today. My main purpose of this study is to find the problems facing youth ministry, why it's declining and ways to improve it.

Young people play a crucial role in the church because they are the leaders who will determine the institution's function in communities and lead younger generations into accepting religious roles. While the contributions of the elders are noticeable as the flag bearers, tangible long-term growth requires the active involvement of the young people. The contemporary church must enhance the young people's spiritual development to prepare their generation to become highly involved in church activities and programs. Youth ministry programs support young people's social, spiritual, and emotional development as leaders and models for their peers (McFeeters et al., 2022, p.448).The study evaluates the youth ministry's significance on the church's growth to understand the influence and role of church leadership and youth programs in engaging the young generation while retaining them in church.

1:2 Background

National surveys have tracked rapid generational drops in religious affiliation, attendance, and young people participation across denominations, explaining the current problem most churches face (Pfund et al., 2022). The steady decline has become more evident in most Christian churches. Recent polls found that less than half of millennials now identify as Christian, down

from over two-thirds in previous eras, translating to fewer Christian adults than just a decade ago (Pfund et al., 2022, p. 386). Attracting and engaging young attendees for many contemporary churches has proven increasingly difficult. By some estimates, the median age of the two main churches, the Church of England and Catholic membership, has reduced from 3.5 million members in 1923 to 900,000 in 2019, representing a significant decrease in religious membership (Bruce & Voas, 2023, p. 4). However, individuals under 30 years consist of less than 1 in 10 people among weekly churchgoers across most denominations. According to the British Social Attitudes Survey (BSA), 52% of the people had no religion in 2017 compared to 41% in 2022, where younger people comprise 2% of the population in the Church of England (Sherwood, 2018). As older generations of faithful parishioners and church leaders pass into passive life without significant involvement in the Church, most denominations face the challenge of closure. The lack of young people congregants raises substantial questions about churches' current and future makeup, their messaging resonance with contemporary young adults, and long-term sustainability if current trends continue (Bruce & Voas, 2023). Further statistics indicate that only 8% of citizens attend the Roman Catholic Church, 10% identify with other Christian denominations, and 8% belong to other non-Christian faiths (Sherwood, 2018). Contemporary ministry leaders explain facing persistent obstacles associated with the lack of funding and appropriately trained staff for young people (Church of England, 2022; Mullen, 2022). According to the Church of England (2022), 70% of churches reported a lack of volunteers, and 30% asserted financial barriers as the top two factors undermining youth ministry (p. 18). Likewise, young people wrongly perceive the Church as boring or judgmental, limiting their willingness to attend or engage (Mullen, 2022, p. 52). Financing youth ministry and staffing

young people or obtaining volunteers from demographic to become part of the church leadership can attract peers into the program.

1:3 Significance of the Study

Findings from the study will guide churches in effectively optimizing their strategies in youth ministries. As a result, church leaders will facilitate youth programs' relevance and continued growth. Training and development of young people takes time, resulting in declining young people in church activities (Griffiths, 2021, p. 88). Therefore, investing in those available empowers and equips them to make young disciples. Church leaders will use the information to understand the significance of promoting programs that reach a wider audience and enhance spiritual enlightenment. Moreover, church leaders should see young people as current leaders by assigning them tasks they could handle to emphasize their growth in the Church.

The central question facing many churches is how to configure youth programming that overcomes such barriers to foster genuine engagement, spiritual nourishment, and personal development for participants across diverse backgrounds. Differences between the youth and their elders influence their willingness to engage in the Church.

1:4 Purpose Statement and Research Questions

Declining religious participation and disillusionment with institutional churches have reached critical levels among British youth and young adults (Torrance, 2023). UK churches have reported low attendance levels, revealing a problem with the youth ministry. Mainstream Christian denominations have experienced sharp generational drops, with over 8 million fewer Christian adults under 30 than just a decade ago in the UK (Sherwood, 2018). As older church populations dwindle without an infusion of youth, the study seeks to understand potential

strategies to create a sustainable modern youth ministry and foster genuine development to support long-term congregation growth (DeVries, 2016).

1:5 The central research questions are:

RQ1: What challenges do contemporary churches face in growing and maintaining youth ministries?

RQ2: Why is the youth ministry's effectiveness declining in recent times with changing generations?

RQ3: What are the most effective elements of the youth ministry that promote church growth?

Understanding these factors holds significance for church leaders, administrators, and families aiming to boost participation and facilitate the spiritual development of younger demographics. Youth ministry concerns a church-based outreach and program focused on members aged 11-25 to enhance their involvement in the institution.

As weekly church attendance, membership, and youth participation decline across the UK Christian denominations, faith leaders have sounded alarm bells about their shrinking flocks and uncertain futures if current trends continue (Sherwood, 2018). However, some churches have expanded through targeted community outreach and particularly impactful youth programs within these broader drops.

In studying churches with the noted membership expansion alongside declining congregations, the comparative reveals the efficacy of the youth ministry as an avenue for facilitating congregational growth when analyzed through factors like attendance numbers before and after program implementation. Qualitative data will also highlight youth perspectives to understand the effects of youth ministry on shaping their spirituality development as a critical group in any

church community. Beyond singular program aspects, the research looks at broader young people's experiences that shift with cultural changes and affect the ministry's capacity to engage with the group. Adolescence and early adulthood mark a critical developmental phase in life when individuals define their beliefs that influence their identity and independence, influencing how young people prioritize their time usage on different social activities, including attending church (DeVries, 2016). The study will gather young people's input on how their life journey can reveal the meaning they assign to the church's involvement in their lives. Unlike the older generations that revered the church, the young people need convincing before accepting the theological abstracts. These insights can help ministry leaders design programs suited to the changing young people needs across high school, college, and early career.

The relationship building between churches and attendees is at the intersection of ministry offerings and shifting youth culture. The proposed project explores this dynamic, assessing how personalized mentorship, safe community spaces, and leadership opportunities cultivate youth investment in their church and its growth. Models that frame practical ministry as merely transactional church services are inadequate in resonating with young people's search for purpose and meaning in life during their spiritual development (DeVries, 2016). The qualitative study focuses on lived experiences to understand the impacts of ministry facilitators, activities, programs, and youth cultures to create enduring youth participation.

Finally, objectives include detailing persistent obstacles churches face in engaging the younger generation of attendees despite a refined youth ministry program. From funding limitations to poor prioritization of the church's goals and distrust in institutional religion, a candid examination of barriers is critical before identifying and overcoming the church's challenges. Thus, the objective is to capture components of the youth ministry that successfully facilitated

church growth alongside persistent challenges that hinder the broader young people participation in the church.

Griffiths (2021) emphasizes that a church needs dedicated resources to facilitate youth training, enhance voluntary work among peers, and sustain the Church's presence and direct involvement in society (p. 88). By spotlighting the specific program elements and outreach approaches that recent youth participants themselves find most spiritually enriching and purpose-driven, findings inform concrete building blocks that resonate with the ministry.

Researchers have flagged declining youth group involvement as detrimental to the Church's role of building values, creating purpose-driven lives, and enhancing the well-being of the target group facing harsh developmental changes (DeVries, 2016). A deeper understanding of what the young people need from their church community to reverse declining congregants can provide direct answers to enrich their spiritual development. For concerned leaders and families alike, insight into the problem can assist communities in realigning youth ministry to fit the contemporary Church.

1:6 Definitions

Definitions of the following terms vary but for this study, I will be using the following definitions:

i) Youth Ministry: Church-based outreach programs and community engagement targeted young people to enhance growth and meet their needs as a special demographic to lead the group to salvation (Aziz, 2019, p. 3). Youth ministry activities seek to guide spiritual development, convey religious teachings, provide mentorship, create peer community, support positive youth development, and cultivate enduring ties between young people and a church (DeVries, 2016).

ii) Church Growth: Numerical growth of participants and the multiplication of church members as the congregation (Goodhew, 2016, p. 5). Church growth is much more than the organic increase of congregation; it focuses on prioritizing practices that integrate new cultural practices to ensure increased church membership. Likewise, the concept combines Biblical studies, doctrine, and church history that affect the Christian experience across time (Goodhew, 2016).

iii) Spiritual Development: The meaning of the concept from a Christian perspective is the formation of image of God and Christ within an individual through fellowship with God and the community of believers, leading to a growth of the personal relationship with God the Father and the commitment to generation with support of the Holy Spirit (Morris et al., 2010, p. 33)

CHAPTER 2:

Literature Review

The Decline and Pathways Forward: A Review of Contemporary Youth Ministry and Church Growth

2:1 Foundational Theories and the Conceptual Models

The study seeks to understand the reason behind low congregational numbers among young people. Insight into challenges associated with adolescent faith development reveals perspectives that can help church leaders develop new strategies to increase the group's presence in the church. Solutions must take into account the fact that young people face a tumultuous task of adjusting before participating in religious functions due to their vulnerable stages of identity formation while socially transitioning into adults. According to Erikson (1968), young people must form stable ideologies with a moral purpose stemming from social interactions and bonding

with spiritually aware elders to develop skills that become pivotal during the rest of their lives. Building on this, subsequent researchers have framed youth ministry goals as twofold: facilitating enduring personal spirituality among young people and strengthening their affiliation with church institutions (Erikson, 1968). DeVries (2016) clarifies that the relational model of sustainable youth ministry focuses on emotional connections with the church and the value religion plays in aligning an individual with a community of congregants. Once young people understand and prioritize a church as a trusted space for spiritual exploration, they believe in the institution. The approach facilitates the formation of a positive affiliation relationship between the young people and the church, retaining more young people even when they continue questioning and evolving their role and position in the church (DeVries, 2016). Despite the changing perspective about the church, young people can become members.

2:2 Historic Evolution of Youth Ministry Models and the Cultural Influences

At the turn of the 19th century, a growing cultural phenomenon attributed to industrialization compelled the Church to introduce changes that focused on molding young people into purpose-driven individuals through catechism and youth church programs (Hampton, 2022). As concern grew for proper moral development among young people who faced the simultaneous challenge of the widening gap between financial dependence during childhood and independence as adults, the Church started creating specialized programs for contemporary young people. Hampton (2022) asserts that youth ministry philosophy started focusing on spiritual nurturing programs suited to the young people's unique developmental needs. Churches established Sunday Schools, summer camps, and a dedicated subculture of fellowship, discipleship, and pastoral mentorship for young congregants during the first half of the 1900s (Hampton, 2022). Experiments show that faith-rooted programs succeeded in the postwar era by offering young people a sense of

belonging that countered estrangement, delinquency, and susceptibility to temptation (Erikson, 1968).

Bevins (2020) asserts that the Victorian era during the 19th century saw an increase in church congregation as people sought answers to overcome problems associated with the Industrial Revolution. The Church became a sanctuary for children as young as six years who work long hours with little to no pay, fostering their spiritual development away from urban crime, poverty, and the need for God's guidance (Bevins, 2020). Church extension became a critical component of expanding the congregation during the 1800s as the London Bishop, Charles James Blomfield, asked for funding to build an additional fifty churches at once to ensure that 3000 people have access to one cathedral (Bevins, 2020, p. 10). In response, the Parliament allocated the Church of England 1 million pounds to build new churches in London. The Victorian era collected more than 5 billion in value, comparable to the 21st-century counterparts that went into making new churches (Bevins, 2020, p. 11). On the contrary, the contemporary Church faces not the problem of unconstructed churches but people leaving the institution. Bevins (2020) reports that 700,000 people stop attending Church every year, and one-third of the young people have no religious affiliation. Similarly, England recorded a sharp decrease in church membership from 10.6 million in 1930 to 5.5 million in 2010 (Bevins, 2020, p. 11).

2:3 Contemporary Best Practices

The changing youth cultural contexts have highlighted the impact of youth ministry on Church growth to enhance spiritual development for individuals. Powell et al. (2011) indicate the disconnection between youth ministry and the detached Millennials who require a different approach to mentoring and teaching theology through role model approaches. DeVries (2016) insists on developing invitational programs that focus on youth development by identifying and

bringing together the best practices that support young people's spiritual development. The program requires the church to allow young people to self-select the best-suited activities that match their interests rather than enforcing the implementation of top-down activities. The approach increases participation through strategies that include the church funding mission trips, leadership councils, and affinity groups where young people interact and exchange ideas that support their development. Besides sharing their values on faith and questioning dogmatic notions, young people involved in church activities result in the growth of congregates. Programs that target young people will encourage voluntary engagement and self-affirming community-building activities that are critical in reinforcing the internal desire for involvement over mere attendance.

Churches need to adopt programs that address complex contemporary issues that affect the demographic group and generate solutions that foster the spirit of self-exploration that contributes more to individual spiritual development. Young people face severe ideological struggles that require access to meaning-filled peer connections in the church to clarify their issues.

2:4 Barriers Forward

The most significant barrier to attaining church growth among young people stems from a lack of funding, volunteers, and access to opportunities. This is because the church seems a bit boring, outdated to young people and needs trained staff and volunteers who could help in keeping it vibrant and more welcoming to them. National surveys found over 60% of congregations needed designated youth minister positions, with already overwhelmed priests and volunteers shouldering responsibility alone (Barna Group, 2006). A low number of young people in leadership positions means fewer future congregants because peers do not see the role of

joining an institution led by older adults without the slightest idea of their needs. Deficits in tailoring leadership to attract young people into the church hampers strategic planning and capacity to lead youth into the church (Strommen et al., 2001). A mismatch between the diverse youth priorities and meaning-making church activities versus the older congregational practices requires a shift integrated with practical activities that encourage tailored experiences to encourage young people to participate in the institution (Taylor, 2017). Adult gatekeepers in the church remain confined to older ideologies that make young people feel out of place. De Kock (2015) insists that the older generation holds to homogeneous assumptions that create disagreement with the young people's experiences, undermining the possibility of engagement in a genuine dialogue.

2:5 Conceptualizing Change

Unlike the larger faith community in the past that increased congregants from automatic parental affiliation, the contemporary church has failed to create a platform that allows young people to engage in involving leadership, volunteerism, and social activities with a matching budgetary allocation to the group's activities. The Church of England started a mission in response to the dwindling congregants in 2015, dubbed "New Fire in London," that sought to engage people through conversations, establishing new churches or opening old ones, and prayers to build new relationships (Bevins, 2020, p. 17). The result included increasing congregants from 20 to 100 in St. Peter's Anglican Church in Bethnal Green. However, the approach did not work well with young people because the Church still holds to the traditional liturgy, follows outdated vestments, and formal leadership style. Young people desire non-traditional outlooks and outreach programs that benefit their peers in the community (Bevins, 2020, p. 18). The Anglican Church has witnessed the need to change the liturgy by integrating changes. The cross-tradition

worship approach engages the local community through a youth ministry program. It includes “a food bank, employment training program, a credit union, and they have given start-up space to two local businesses” (Bevins, 2020, p. 18). A realization that the church is at a crossroads and requires fresh expression demands the implementation of a post-Christian and post-modern context.

Browning and Clairmont (2007) provide four approach levels to engaging people: individual, participating groups, organizational settings, and broader community contexts. The unique approach focuses on understanding and integrating perceived personal value, relationship belongingness, and aligning youth program elements to the group's needs. Developmental growth occurs through interventions that provide young people with skills to participate in risk-free activities away from behavioural problematic issues such as drug abuse (Ciocanel et al., 2017). At the individual level, young people want to acquire skills rather than theological abstracts that older people find appealing in the church. Likewise, group assessments focus on engagements that can increase peer attendance, volunteerism, and leadership roles that benefit an individual as a group member (Olson et al., 2001). Growth at the organizational level emphasizes church-wide programs that boost young people engagement, young adult membership continuity, cross-generation integration, and budget allocations to youth ministry (Uecker et al., 2007). Denominational and national tracking of youth numbers offers a broader context around their fluctuating membership and program involvement across churches over decades to provide solutions that churches can use to address the immediate gap (Pew Research, 2019). Scholars advocate combined indicators encompassing individual experiences and program operations to boost faster response to current and future cultural shifts (Stetzer et al., 2009).

The persistent research gap in understanding the impacts of youth ministry on church growth focuses on the lived experiences to understand strategies that can integrate the group's needs (Browning & Clairmont, 2007). The study aims to contribute by illuminating which program elements resonate with the cultural shift and overcome barriers that persist over time in creating awareness about the young people's needs.

2:6 Good News Stories

For the third research question, which is different and more progressive towards obtaining materials communicating good stories, the search strategy will be the same, focusing on success of youth ministry. The search will most focus on finding stories that reveal events, church programs, and other activities that have increased the number of young people in the church. Most of the stories on success will come from sources where churches and reviews contain examples of effective youth programs. Success testimonies are critical in understanding the third question and becoming more aware of the possible strategies that modern churches can use to engage more young people.

While several churches have success testimonies, few report continuous achievements as milestones for implementing youth programs. The emphasis on organizations and churches that have executed successful programs and attained higher number of young people will reveal the strategies that influence the demographic. The aspiration to understand young people from different perspectives is critical in acknowledging programs that can work from those that do not address the specific needs of the demographic group. Research and assessment associated with local churches in the UK can reveal effective strategies that help in engaging with young people. Churches can learn from the success stories of such agencies and become more aware of

programs that satisfy the target group's needs. Most of the charismatic churches easily connect with young people because of focusing on programs that attract the group.

A focus on local churches will reveal the strategies the institutions have used to achieve a high engagement rate with young people. Local churches with stories of success in youth ministry have accomplished the expected milestones for the development of young people by deploying different approaches rather than concentrating on direct liturgical programs. Instead of preaching or asking young people to engage with matters about developing their faith in God, these programs have implemented an alternative approach to engaging with others. A concentration of such groups and others that handle young people provides potential solutions that churches can integrate into their programs to address the diverse needs of the young generation. Solutions come from the existing programs that have successfully connected with young people using different strategies contrary to the typical way the church conducts its activities.

2:7 Reviews of Good News Stories

Unlike the diminishing numbers of most religious institutions, local churches have implemented appropriate programs that have attracted more young people. Hand (2023) explains that creating a safe space where young people can flourish has attracted more young people to the church. Pastor Mark Hand from the High Street Methodist Church, Lurgan, asserts that giving young people a room to share, fellowship, and go deeper in their faith can transform their lives. Hand (2023) insists that the church attracts more than 100 young people each week who come to connect and worship in groups with various activities, including resident trips, first aid training, sports, and baking classes. Giving young people a chance to learn something new during weekends has increased attendance rates. However, the church has incurred the cost of investing

in equipment related to the activities that the young people prefer doing. The church has purchased equipment, including sporting, baking, and other tools.

According to the New Life Publishing (2023) clarifies that youth have increased in the church due to increased engagement with youth ministry. The Limitless Christian Youth Festival pioneered the ministry at New Life Church Centre near Birmingham, where pastor Tom Skelton clarifies that the continuous 45-year increase in young people in the church is attributed to relationships based on trust and consistency (New Life Publishing, 2023). The church, based in a rural area with fewer people, has encouraged young people to come to its functions and youth ministry through teachings that allow young people who do not have a high level of Christian literacy.

The Diocese of Winchester reported an increase in young people during the 2023 festival in Southampton. The Southampton Youth Festival of 2023 reported that 130 young people attended the event, including fun, games, worship, teaching, and ministry, bringing together church members as a family (Daulby, 2023). The event united nine churches from Shirley to Fair Oak and Eastleigh to Sholing (Daulby, 2023). The churches that organized the event included Highfield Church, Ascension, and St James' by the Park. The event became affordable and easier for young people to access because churches worked collaboratively in the churches in Southampton area. Young people engaged during the event because they had access to various games, water fights, and commitment to friendships (Daulby, 2023)

Focusing on youth activities can increase church growth and encourage young people to become congregants. The BH1 Elim Church Bournemouth has invented a new approach to involving young people in Sunday morning services, which has led to an increase in the number of young people from 12 to 30 members in addition to the 90 adults (Elim Pentecostal, 2021). The church

has successfully increased young people by creating programs that appeal to the group. For example, instead of giving young people a junk room for their service and activities, BH1 Elim Church Bournemouth restructured their space and created a youth lounge with kitted table tennis table, pool table, Xbox, and sofas (Elim Pentecostal, 2021). The revamped space is more appealing to the young people and represents their approach to life compared to the ordinary church building with pews and books. Young people can interact freely, play music, and grow their talent while worshipping without the strict procedures common in the traditional church. The management of the church has invented new ways that promote young-oriented activities that grow their numbers. For example, the management has allowed young people to act as pastors instead of a youth pastor working alone with the group. The church has teenage preachers, youth leaders, and senior ministers guiding them in identifying with the church events. Young people enjoy experiencing the positive effects of planning and executing their activities and encourage peers to join the events. Senior minister Mark Petrauskas indicates that giving young people the right to determine their theological learning activities and trajectories has helped shape the youth ministry (Elim Pentecostal, 2021). Allowing young people to determine the best activities fitting their generation has seen the church grow.

BH1's youth ministry program has also helped young people access social programs to rehabilitate them from drug and alcohol dependency issues. The church hosts a Tuesday Coffee morning ministry where young people offer friendship to older and lonely people to encourage them to engage actively in the community rather than living in isolation, which encourages the abuse of drugs (Elim Pentecostal, 2021). The recovery ministry has allowed the church to collaborate with local organizations to expand access to rehabilitation services that attract young people suffering from alcohol and drug dependency problems. The church organizes a monthly

café-style gathering on Sunday evenings, giving young people time to share testimonies, discuss interesting topics, and share professional knowledge. Young people identify problems affecting their peers or society and engage during such Sunday activities to find solutions, making them feel important as members of society. Leaders in the church have developed programs that expand young people's participation and allow them to work independently as individuals while following the church's overall vision.

Church leaders must create programs to increase church attendance while limiting conservative theological approaches that do not attract the demographic. Greco (2021) explains that local churches must change their programs to attract young people and keep them as congregants. First, the church has to empower young people by giving them opportunities to practice as leaders, staff, and volunteers in the ministry. Church leaders must invite young people to become leaders and ensure participation instead of neglecting them (Greco, 2021).

Similarly, the church must invest in young people and communicate with them as equals who understand God's guidance despite their age. Greco (2021) insists that young people have doubts and questions that require their attention before seeking mentoring services from adults. Leaving the activity to youth pastors and a few adult volunteers undermines the process of investing in the young generation. Greco (2021) clarifies that the church must equip young people with the necessary skills and competencies to live a Christian and virtuous life.

Similarly, youth ministry must focus on communication approaches that fit the young people's needs, which includes using the Internet, smartphones, and tablets to build a closer relationship with the group. Young people prefer screens and communicate faster when sent direct messages through social media instead of making calls or sending emails or letters. Instead of making

announcements in the church, young people respond faster when sent messages to their phones (Greco, 2021).

The Gloucester City deanery started a new mission of engaging secondary-aged young people and created a thriving club that connected the demographic to the church. The church started inviting children for activities outside of the Sunday service activities to engage them when developing into teenagers. The Senior Youth connector, Barrie Voyce, prioritized working closely with Year 6 children who attended church with their families for Monday evenings' games, chats, and doughnuts (Diocese of Gloucester, 2024). The plan worked within four weeks resulting in more children joining the activities that connected teenagers throughout the parishes, allowing them to grow into congregants. The church has successfully attained an ever-growing number of young people in the congregation because of prioritizing youth programs that allow teenagers to engage and learn outside of the ordinary Sunday service activities. During weekly programs, the diocese allows 11 to 14-year-olds to turn up in groups on Monday evenings to play games, make artistic things, chat, and volunteer in different activities (Diocese of Gloucester, 2024). Working with young people through programs outside the church's traditional way of presenting the Word of God has worked better for churches that want to increase youth involvement.

CHAPTER 3: Biblical Evaluation

Leaders, church members, and parents can provide direction that can influence young people's church attendance. Proverbs 22:6 clarifies the concept of growth, "Start children off on the way they should go, and even when they are old they will not turn from it." This verse encapsulates the central goal of specialized youth ministry in scripture, where parents and church leaders must train adolescents to identify with the institution while achieving spiritual development. Young

people can feel engaged when welcomed to participate before a church can nurture religious vibrancy, leadership, and sustainable community affiliation.

Changes have molded the Church's congregation, where leaders adapt to the prevailing cultural shifts to accommodate young people into the institution. 1 Timothy 4:12 insists, "Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith and in purity." As an early apostle, Timothy's young leadership indicates scriptural precedence for young people's unique gifts and roles in the faith community. We should therefore encourage young people to shine brightly while helping them to advance spiritually.

Proverbs 27:17 insists on engaging young people, "As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another." The metaphor in the verse captures the need to use inclusive approaches when preaching and training young people to become leaders. Youth ministry must help young people develop a trusting relationship with the church and attain mutual growth through fellowship that strengthens an individual's spiritual journey.

Real cross-generation collaboration would allow young people to negotiate, engage in decision-making, and sit with other elders to design their ministry pathways. Matthew 10:29-31 emphasizes the conceptualization of barriers and constraints and insists believers must believe in God, "Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground outside your Father's care... So do not be afraid." Christ reminds us that divine care transcends earthly barriers or constraints in nurturing spiritual development across life stages. The verse indicates the requirement for church leadership to consider including more young people in leadership positions. Likewise, 1 Corinthians 3:6-7 explains the consistent approach of God delivering on appointed plans, "One plants, another waters, but God gives the increase." Beyond human

metrics, growth arises from God's providence; while evaluation remains key, outcomes rest in divine hands using willing partners. Additionally, God used young people to lead and bring change in the bible like Samuel, Rebekah, Joseph, Mary, Daniel and many more.

CHAPTER 4: Methodology

4:1 Background

The research will utilize a systematic literature review to identify, select, and critically answer the formulated behaviour. The literature review will occur in three stages, starting with a search for articles relevant to answering the research questions (Briner & Denyer, 2012). The second stage entails appraising the quality of the identified themes. Finally, the review will synthesize critical findings to retrieve data that aligns with a study on the impacts of the youth ministry on the growth of the church. The precise, systematic review process will utilize critical terms in search of articles to identify relevant studies. After selecting the relevant articles based on their titles, the next step will be to read the abstracts to ensure the material chosen effectively answers the research questions. The systematic review follows five stages: planning, finding relevant study materials, appraising the identified literature, analyzing information, and synthesizing to identify the most suitable themes. Data analysis will summarize and interpret all the collected information. The study will summarize findings and utilize descriptive inquiry to show the different aspects of youth programs in the church's growth. Interpretation of the results will help identify the most effective initiatives by church leaders to enhance the participation of young

people in growth activities. A summary and in-depth analysis will present identified themes, revealing the impacts of youth ministry on church growth.

The research involved finding titles of articles and journals in several databases that contain information on the research questions. The systematic review pooled data to identify and critically appraise the information to synthesize key findings from recent studies related to the impacts of youth ministry on church growth. Young people's engagement is a critical component of the research, which seeks to understand how the involvement of the demographic can increase church membership. Briner and Denyer (2012) clarify that systematic review is an essential tool that supports evidence-based practice because the approach adopts a replicable, scientific, and transparent process that audits information. Reviewing information from replicable data generates confidence concerning the status of knowledge obtained from such sources. Briner and Denyer (2012) insist that systematic review focuses on “planning the review, locating studies, appraising contribution, analyzing and synthesizing information, and reporting best evidence” (p. 115). When conducting a systematic review, a researcher draws conclusions based on the consistent review of critical information about a topic.

4:2 Advantages of Systematic Review

The systematic review is critical when researching because the approach allows individuals to make conclusions based on a high level of certainty based on consistent information. The approach is specific to the question, evaluates judgments, and seeks evidence to explain a phenomenon. Turk (2021) clarifies that systematic review allows a researcher to extract and interpret selective studies relevant to a topic of choice (p. 433). The method is critical in handling scientific studies and information about a phenomenon. Turk (2021) insists that systematic review is a highly standardized procedure that collects, analyzes, and reviews evidence within a

structured methodological perspective. The approach is critical because a researcher focuses on known procedures of identifying, collecting, and critically appraising other studies. A systematic review is a transparent method that summarizes existing research findings without worrying about the differences in design, sample, interventions, and context (Turk, 2021, p. 434).

Likewise, when working with interlinked studies, systematic review reduces bias and random errors by focusing on evidence and highlighting shortcomings. A systematic study reduces biases by assessing dominant literature findings concerning the subject matter.

Measures that reduce biases include inclusion and exclusion criteria, which avoid subjectivity. A systematic review must have explicit inclusion and exclusion criteria that allow proper evaluation of presuppositions, procedures, and conclusions. The study procedure includes forming a research question, registering the protocol, determining the inclusion and exclusion criteria for studies, finding and reviewing the literature, and selecting the studies for critical assessment and detailed description and analysis (Turk, 2021, p. 435). The protocol includes the hypothesis, goals, planned methods, and extraction strategy. Woldegeorgis et al. (2023) clarify that the data extraction must include the author's details, study setting, and research outcome (p. 5). Collecting data from existing studies makes understanding a phenomenon easier and integrating potential solutions that others suggest can work in real-world experience.

4:3 Limitations of Systematic Review

Although systematic reviewing can encounter problems such as cherry-picking instances, where a researcher accepts minimum evidence to explain a phenomenon, the approach entails evidence (Briner & Denyer, 2012, p. 116). Limitation of the procedure includes the potential of most publications focusing on a specific problem without providing solutions, limiting the effectiveness of identified recommendations. Garg et al. (2008) indicate that the reliability of

systematic review depends on the methods used to estimate the results. The systematic review process must address the challenges inherent in the design and execution of the primary sources. For example, a wrong selection of the materials and primary studies will undermine the results. Likewise, the systematic review does not correct biases associated with biased publication selection (Garg et al., 2008). A researcher is prone to select only reports that contain specific keywords before summarizing and pooling the data. Garg et al. (2008) insist that potential conflicts arise when interpreting the summarized results, especially from discordant studies. A researcher experiences heightened subjectivity when selecting studies with similar content, the same type of interventions, or the type of participants. At the top of the problem associated with the approach are methodological flaws in the peer-reviewed journals integrated into a study.

4:4 Eligibility Criteria

The researcher indexed the inclusion criteria to obtain the most relevant studies that fit the research interests. The inclusion depended on 3 main factors: studies covering youth ministry, studies from the UK and other the Western world, and studies conducted at the turn of the century 2000 to date. First, studies covering topics related to youth ministry growth in the UK and other countries were considered before obtaining a more comprehensive selection of relevant studies. Second, the index covered studies from 2010 until now, providing a more exhaustive overview of what has happened to the youth ministry in 14 years. The focus can reveal changes that influence the youth ministry and provide potential recommendations that can help churches grow their congregation. The exclusion will include studies not touching the current study's interests in youth ministry, studies published outside of the Western world, and those published before 2000. This is to capture the latest strategies these churches are using in attracting and keeping young people in the church.

4:5 Search Strategy

The research uses the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Review and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) statement to guide the process of selecting scientific publishers and removing biases. The search protocol adhered to the PRISMA-P to ensure the selection of relevant sources for the systematic review. The PRISMA-P checklist contains 17 critical items that provide the minimum components when conducting a systematic review (Shamseer et al., 2016). The tool provides 26 sub-items divided into administrative information, introduction, and methods, including eligibility criteria, outcomes, and prioritization that facilitate a transparent, systematic review process with future reproducibility.

The review used a search strategy that utilized specific keywords and targeted databases containing the most relevant articles for the study (Briner & Denyer, 2012). The researcher searched using critical keywords in several databases to obtain articles. The databases included Ebsco, JSTOR, Project MUSE, Wiley, Sage, Scopus, ProQuest Dissertation and Theses, Open Access Digital Theological Library, Religious & Theological Abstracts, ATLA Religious Index, British Humanities Index, and Christian and other news websites and magazines. The researcher used a combination of keywords and terms in obtaining relevant articles, including “youth ministry,” “church growth,” “program impacts,” “adolescent engagement,” “young adult spirituality,” and related concepts. After obtaining the articles, the researcher focused on abstracts to determine whether the articles addressed the study’s questions.

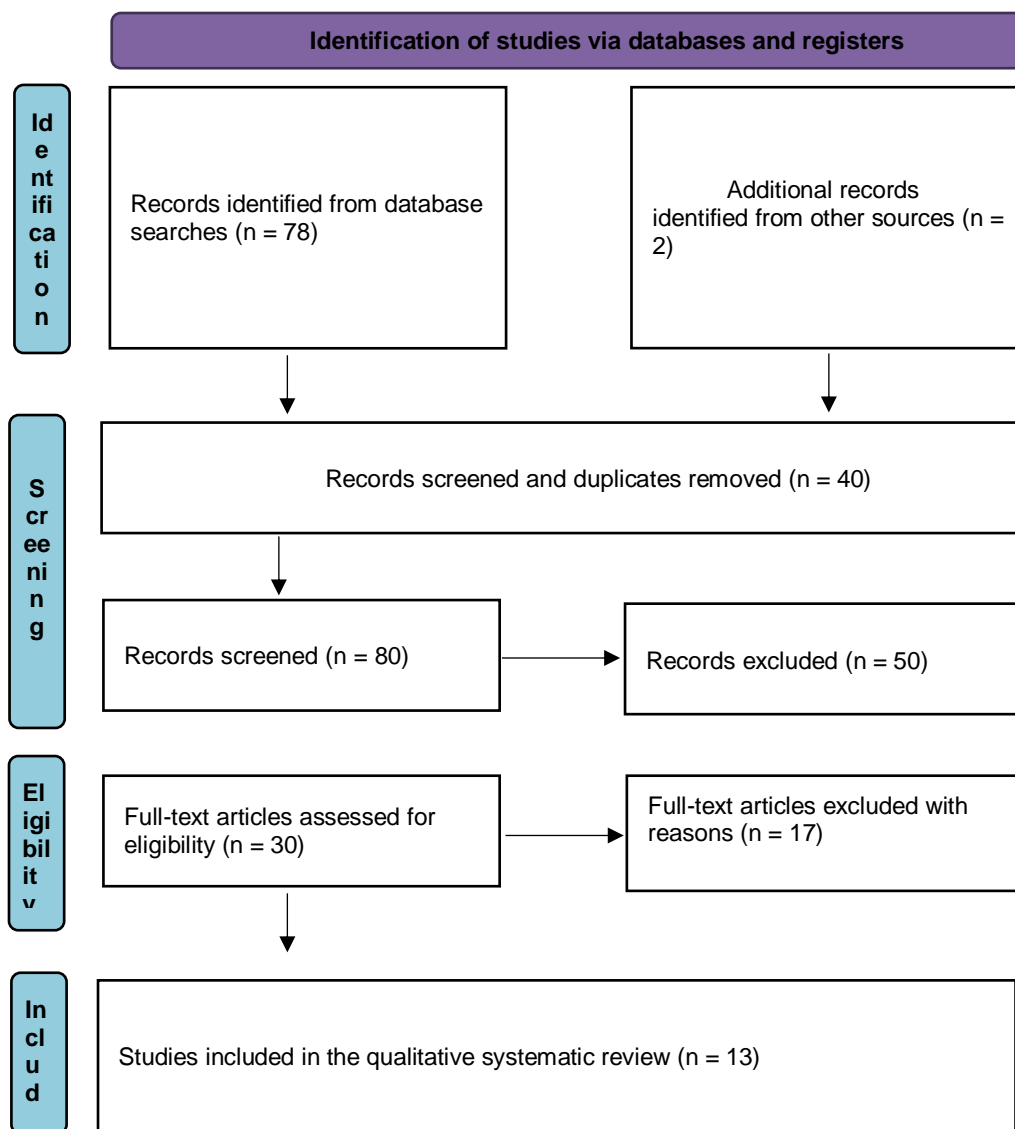


Fig. 1: The PRISMA-P Chart

4:6 Screening and Selection Process

The screening will apply filters for qualitative and mixed methods studies from 2000 to the present based on the focus on recent cultural shifts and lived experiences. Figure 1 above shows the PRISMA chart's screening process. Shamseer et al. (2016) explain how to use the PRISMA

flowchart to identify records from databases before undertaking the screening process. Uttley et al. (2023) assert that articles must undergo title/abstract screening to determine inclusion or exclusion. In the screening stage, the researcher decided which records to include and exclude, reducing the number of articles from 80 to 30. The articles were assessed for eligibility, where out of the 30 articles, 17 were excluded for reasons that included not meeting the minimum criteria of focusing on the study's objective. Eventually, 13 studies were included in a qualitative systematic review according to PRISMA guidelines. Based on the selection protocols and the screening of articles according to topical alignment and youth ministry growth factor, the selection process focuses on evaluating the depth of the studies in addressing the research interests.

4:7 Data Extraction

Selected studies become instrumental in the next step of data extraction, which focuses on obtaining and making graphical data entries of the articles. The researcher entered information into a spreadsheet containing abstracted data, allowing easier information coding from multiple problems. Uttley et al. (2023) insist on including the following items during data extraction: first author affiliation, country, article type, complete list of authors, and article aim. Petersson-Bloom and Holmqvist (2022) emphasize the requirement to create a table with similar arrangements depending on a study's interests and goals to support the thematic analysis of the coded information.

In the current study, the research focuses on the following during data extraction. First, the researcher entered the author(s) and publication year of the articles as fundamental elements that identify the articles and are critical when citing information. Second, the country where the study was conducted is essential in revealing information about the target participants and following

the inclusion criteria requirements. Third, the researcher revealed the content's reference to youth ministry in the title. Other elements in the data extraction table included methods, participants, research focus, and result or outcome. Each column in the table contains descriptive coding of critical items during the synthesis process.

4:8 Quality Assessment

The researcher utilized the Critical Appraisal Skills Program (CASP) Qualitative Checklist and the PRISMA checklist to check the credibility and trustworthiness of the studies integrated into the systematic review. PRISMA checklist is critical in providing 27 items for reporting in systematic reviews where all articles selected successfully satisfied at least 75% of the requirements in the guidelines (Smires et al., 2021). PRISMA endorses studies with evidence-based sections that are critical in understanding the research question. The checklist became critical during the screening process, determining the inclusion and exclusion of articles in the study.

Likewise, the trustworthiness of the studies included in the research achieved the requirements of CASP. Long et al. (2020) found that the CASP tool extracts evidence when appraising qualitative evidence during the synthesis process to grasp the general theoretical framework that guides the procedure of answering questions. The application of CASP started with assessing the quality of studies to determine whether they contained a clear statement of research, a credible qualitative methodology, and the appropriateness of conducting a study. The tool asserts the requirement of assessing the quality of studies by probing the appropriateness of the data collection approaches and ethical considerations.

4:9 Data Synthesis

The review and assessment of the included articles consisted of categorizing the descriptive characteristics of the highlighted problems during the thematic analysis. The reviewer generated themes from the articles based on the categories of the ideas from the eligible articles. The inductive process generated an initial thematic framework before expanding to the deductive approach to code all the included articles against the themes identified in the framework (Uttley et al., 2023). Besides the codes, systematic review advocates for observing emerging themes while conducting thematic synthesis.

Chapter 5: Results and Discussion

Author(s) and Year	Publication Type	Design	Programs or Themes that Promote Youth Ministry
Hand (2023)	Article	N/A	Creating a safe space, building relationships, partnering with other agencies, community service
New Life Publishing (2023)	Article	N/A	Building relationships, trust, consistency, introducing God, helping youth encounter Jesus
Elim Pentecostal (2021)	Article	N/A	Integrating youth into church life, discipleship, fostering youth leadership
Daulby (2023)	Report	N/A	Youth conference/camp, worship, teaching, ministry times, uniting churches
Greco (2021)	Article	N/A	Empowering youth, investing in youth, communicating effectively with youth
Diocese of Gloucester (2024)	Article	N/A	Transitioning youth from children's ministry, providing a safe space, personal invitation
Church of England (2023)	Article	N/A	Community organizing, renewing congregations, developing youth leaders, school partnerships, youth worship, leadership training
Thrive Youth Ministry (2023)	Article	Review	Assessing current reality, exploring opportunities, seeking God's guidance, developing new strategies
White (2022)	Opinion Piece	N/A	Long-term investment, training pathways for youth ministers, changing attitudes toward youth ministry
CTBI (2023)	Event Description	N/A	Recruiting and training more youth ministers, better compensation, vision casting, intentional leadership development
Williams (2023)	News Article	N/A	Grant funding for youth ministry projects across dioceses
Etheridge (2023)	Website	N/A	Youth discipleship training, support for new leaders, Youth Catalyst program, Young Leaders Forum
Vanco (2024)	Article	N/A	Interactive activities, creating welcoming environments, integrating technology like apps and social media, mazes, and games.

Reviewing the literature of churches that have seen success has led to the development of 5 key themes mostly listed on the table above. The selected codes encompass most of the key ideas and strategies discussed across the various sources in the table, demonstrating a comprehensive

coverage of the themes and approaches related to promoting effective youth ministry within Christian communities.

5:1 Building Relationships and Creating Safe Spaces

The question of the most effective elements of the youth ministry that promote church growth is critical in understanding strategies local churches can use to attract young people as congregants. Faith-based activities must develop meaningful relationships and establish safe spaces for young people to experience their autonomous activities. As Mark Hand from High Street Methodist Church in Lurgan emphasizes, "Our heart is to build deep trust-filled relationships with young people so that God's kingdom is made known" (Hand, 2023). New Life Publishing (2023) shares the same sentiment concerning the importance of building relationships, fostering trust, and providing consistency to help youth encounter Jesus in their ways. Local churches can learn and implement similar programs to increase youth participation in the activities that build positive relationships and create safe spaces that attract young people.

The process of creating safe spaces starts with leaders actively listening to young people and taking their concerns seriously as part of the youth ministry's objective. John Greco (2021) advises church leaders to "Talk to them, not at them" and to "Be authentic" in their interactions, as young people can easily detect insincerity. The Diocese of Gloucester (2024) exemplifies the approach of allowing young people to share their thoughts in a safe space where they become "themselves and know that there's always someone here to listen." Churches must invite young people into the church and give them the freedom to control their structured programs.

Building relationships is a long-term strategy that demands the church leadership structure to invest more time and resources. As the Church of England (2023) demonstrates through its grant funding program, churches have to form partnerships with schools and community organizations

where they can connect with the demographic at the place where they are and feel safe being. The Elim Pentecostal Church (2021) also highlights the importance of collaborating with local youth agencies and offering mentoring programs directly to the group within where they are to create that sense of identity without interfering with their established safe space. As Vanco (2024) advises, local churches have to determine the essential element of making "Our youth feel valued and heard," as "modern society already does a great job of making young people feel isolated and unheard." Local churches must create safe spaces and build relationships demonstrated by genuine care and concern for young people's well-being.

5:2 Integrating Youth into the Life of the Church

Local churches must determine how young people are integrated into the broader ministry by providing programs that resonate with their needs. The Elim Pentecostal Church (2021) provides a powerful example of this approach, where youth from their church in Bournemouth actively participate as worship leaders, preachers, and servers during Sunday services. The rationale behind the engagement is to empower young people and foster intergenerational connection without forcing the demographic into accepting the lesson-based preaching approach. John Greco (2021) states, "Invite the young people in your church to step up... God's people are to be ministers, and there's no age requirement." The sentiment reinforces the Church of England's grant funding approach that supports initiatives like leadership training and youth worship gatherings (Williams, 2023).

However, successful integration requires a cultural shift within the church. Peter White (2022) emphasizes the need for "changing attitudes toward youth ministry," where young people are not merely seen as the "future" but as active participants in the present. The Diocese of Guildford's Youth Catalyst program exemplifies this mindset, aiming to "put the needs and wants of young

people at the center" (Etheridge, 2023). Integrating youth into church life creates opportunities for intergenerational mentorship and discipleship where young people can interact with older people and access role models who can mold their perspectives about Christianity. Thrive Youth Ministries (2023) initiative highlights that the whole church community must dedicate more resources to "reaching out to teenagers with the Good News of Jesus," not just a few dedicated leaders.

5:3 Training and Development for Youth Leaders

After recognizing the essential role of young leaders, preachers, worship teams, and other youth-oriented groups in the community, local churches have to implement training and development programs to equip the teams with realistic skills. Several sources emphasize the importance of providing comprehensive training and development opportunities for young people before they can feel engaged in their local churches. Peter White (2022) advocates for "long-term investment" and "formalized training pathways," which include apprenticeships customized to equip young people with skills to handle their youth ministry. The Church of England's grant funding program exemplifies this commitment, supporting initiatives like recruiting and training youth ministers and apprentices (Williams, 2023). Similarly, the Diocese of Guildford's Youth Catalyst program also includes plans for "equipping and empowering four church-based apprentice youth leaders and four existing youth ministers" (Etheridge, 2023). Training and development opportunities can keep young people at their local churches because they already feel a sense of ownership and belongingness.

In addition to formal training, ongoing professional development is crucial in empowering young people to become independent decision-makers in their individual lives. The Churches Together in Britain and Ireland (CTBI, 2023) event description highlights the need for "support from

experienced youth workers in charity contexts in how to lead youth ministries." Different authors emphasize the importance of funding leadership development and succession planning. The Thrive Youth Ministries (2023) initiative provides a classic example of what local churches can do to help start new youth initiatives and develop strategies that sustain the long-term expansion of the youth ministry. The Diocese of Guildford's Young Leaders Forum provides a platform for nurturing potential youth leaders, seeking "the voice of young people on key issues that impact the life of the church" (Etheridge, 2023). As Peter White (2022) argues, "Growing younger will start to happen when the Church ensures that all ministers, ordained and lay, are equipped for the task." Providing young people with training resources can help them achieve the desired youth ministry objectives instead of forcing adult leaders on them.

5:4 Innovative Approaches and Technology Integration

Local churches must integrate innovative communication approaches to help young people interact and socialize. Vanco (2024) provides numerous examples of interactive activities, such as Bible-themed mazes, trivia games, and creative projects that engage young people in meaningful and relevant ways. Technology integration is also a recurring theme in the sources. The Elim Pentecostal Church (2021) in Bournemouth leverages technology by providing a dedicated youth lounge equipped with gaming consoles and other digital amenities to engage young people. The approach uses technology and allows young people to interact while involved in activities in which they feel comfortable. Vanco (2024) suggests developing church apps, maintaining an active social media presence, and creating online communities to connect with tech-savvy youth more effectively. Thrive Youth Ministries (2023) initiative emphasizes embracing innovation and technology as an adaptive approach to "Evolving to meet young people where they are." The Church of England's grant funding supports initiatives like the

"Every Good Work" project, which seeks to establish a training center for church interns, combining traditional discipleship with innovative approaches (Williams, 2023). Local churches can integrate technology to address practical challenges that youth ministries face when working with young people. As Vanco (2024) suggests, using apps for dynamic scheduling and event promotion can help churches overcome logistical hurdles and increase engagement.

5:5 Collaborative Efforts and Uniting Churches

Several sources emphasize the power of collaborative efforts and uniting churches to promote effective youth ministry rather than working as a lone wolf to spread the gospel. Daulby (2023) explains that Southampton Youth Fest exemplifies the approach whereby nine churches from various regions united to create an impactful event for over 130 young people. The event fostered a sense of community and shared purpose while uniting churches and connecting young people to their journey in Christianity. The collaborative effort pools resources and expertise, demonstrating unity within the broader Body of Christ while helping young people see the essence of connecting. As the Church of England's grant funding illustrates, supporting initiatives like the Children Changing Places project in Bolton allows churches to leverage collective resources and reach more young people effectively (Williams, 2023). Local churches can achieve high youth congregant numbers by implementing collaborative programs that brings several young people from many churches together to learn. This is well summarized in (psalms 133:1) "How good and precious it is when God's people live together in unity".

In addition, collaboration addresses complex societal challenges that young people face from a multi-denominational approach. The Church of England's funding for an "anti-racist and faith project" in Bolton demonstrates how churches can unite to tackle racial injustice (Williams, 2023). The approach improves partnerships with non-church organizations that equip young people with skills in different sectors. The Diocese of Guildford's Youth Catalyst program includes plans to "work with three Church of England secondary schools and one state secondary school" (Etheridge, 2023). The partnership highlights the importance of engaging with secular institutions to reach more young people. As the Churches Together in Britain and Ireland (CTBI, 2023) event description emphasizes, addressing the declining numbers in youth ministry requires a collective effort, "inviting a group of leaders to gather" and "inspire, mobilize and train more youth ministers across the church in the UK." The process of churches joining forces, collective resources, and expertise creates a more significant impact that quickly addresses young people's unique challenges. This is well highlighted in the early church history where it was hard to miss the immense sense of togetherness.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

Findings from the study give valuable insights into contemporary churches' challenges in growing and maintaining youth ministries (RQ1). Second, the literature review and results provide the reasons behind the declining effectiveness of youth ministry with changing generations (RQ2). Last, the findings provide a deep insight into the most effective strategies to promote church growth through youth ministry (RQ3).

Regarding RQ1, the codes "Building Relationships and Creating Safe Spaces" and "Integrating Youth into the Life of the Church" highlight churches' challenges in fostering genuine

connections with young people and making them feel valued within the church community. Sources like Hand (2023) and New Life Publishing (2023) emphasize the importance of building trustworthy relationships with emotionally supporting and spiritually safe environments that foster a sense of belonging. The code "Training and Development for Youth Leaders" directly addresses the challenge of equipping and retaining skilled youth ministers and leaders. However, the strategy requires dedicated training, professional development opportunities, and proper compensation that is resource-intensive for most churches. The code "Innovative Approaches and Technology Integration" identifies the requirement for churches to adapt to the ever-changing world where technology and digital platforms influence young people. Sources like Vanco (2024) and the Church of England (2023) highlight the need for churches to embrace creative methods, interactive activities, and technology integration to transform the youth ministry. Churches should therefore be willing to adapt to changes to attract young people's needs.

Addressing RQ2, the codes "Building Relationships and Creating Safe Spaces" and "Integrating Youth into the Life of the Church" suggest that the declining effectiveness of youth ministry stems from the failure to understand and connect with the unique perspectives and needs of the young people. As Greco (2021) advises, authenticity and a willingness to listen without judgment can foster trust and nurture lasting relationships with young people. Similarly, the code "Innovative Approaches and Technology Integration" further highlights the disconnection between traditional church practices and the digital mindset among the younger generations. Vanco (2024) articulates the perspective and demands that churches adapt to technology. Concerning RQ3, the codes "Building Relationships and Creating Safe Spaces," "Integrating Youth into the Life of the Church," and "Collaborative Efforts and Uniting Churches" identify

practical elements that promote church growth through youth ministry. Building meaningful relationships, creating safe spaces, and fostering a sense of belonging and ownership are crucial in nurturing faith and discipleship among young people. Initiatives like the Diocese of Gloucester's youth club success story (Diocese of Gloucester, 2024) and the BH1 Church's integration of youth into various aspects of church life (Elim Pentecostal, 2021) represent a positive change. The code "Training and Development for Youth Leaders" highlights the importance of investing in skilled and dedicated youth ministers and leaders who can inspire, equip, and disciple young people. The Church of England's grant funding for training pathways and the CTBI's emphasis on better compensation and intentional leadership development (CTBI, 2023) highlights the recognition of this critical element for church growth. Finally, the code "Innovative Approaches and Technology Integration" suggests that embracing creativity, interactive activities, and technology incorporation can resonate with youth's needs and promote church growth. Examples like the Vanco (2024) article's ideas for Bible-themed games and the Church of England's Youth Catalyst program (Etheridge, 2023) demonstrate the potential impact of these innovative approaches.

Overall, the codes and themes findings highlight the multifaceted challenges churches face in growing and maintaining effective youth ministries. My research and literature review identified the 5 themes as mentioned previously crucial strategies that will help grow youth ministry.

6:1 Generalizability

The findings and conclusions derived from the codes and themes identified in the sources can be helpful and applicable to a broader context within Christian ministry and youth work. Therefore, while the findings provide a solid foundation and valuable insights, their practical implementation may require contextual adjustments and consideration of local circumstances.

6:2 Reliability and Validity

Validity refers to the extent to which the research truly measures what it intended to measure. In this case, the codes and themes identified directly addressed these research questions, suggesting high validity. Similarly, reliability refers to the consistency and replicability of the research findings. The research contains clear documentation of qualitative research methods so that other researchers can replicate the analysis and arrive at similar conclusions.

6:3 Researcher Bias

Researcher bias is an inherent factor in qualitative research attributed to individual experiences and preconceptions that influence data interpretation and conclusions. Potential biases stem from selecting, analyzing the sources, identifying, and interpreting the codes and themes. Using multiple sources validates findings together with clear documentation of the research process.

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APPENDIX 1: Ethical Clearance**APPLICATION FOR RESEARCH ETHICS APPROVAL**

Name: **Rachel Shegela**

Title of investigation: **Impact/ Effect of Youth Ministry on Church Growth**

Following consideration of your research proposal, the following statement should be noted:

Please indicate as appropriate

1. **Approved** YES

2. **Approved subject to amendments**, please see comments


3. **Not approved**, please see comments

Supervisor comments:

The expectation was that you would be submitting ethical approval for an empirical study, however as this was not explicitly stated this is sufficient. If you do decide to do a systematic review or other desk-based research project – with no-human participants - there is actually a different ethical approval form you use, also available on MyCYM.

In that we would expect much more information about how your data collection will provide the answers you need without speaking to young people, youth leaders or church leaders. It is of course possible but it needs much more theoretical work at this stage before I could recommend you use this methodology.

NOTE – I am not failing this submission, and you do not need to make any amendments to this form as all of this will be worked out with your supervisor next year.

Signed: 

Date: 10/5/23

To be included as an appendix in your CYU505 assessment