

## **Grounded Theory: Application and Challenges in Investigating Emerging Christian Kinship Structures in African Urban Pentecostalism**

Dr. Paul N. Mwangi

St. Paul's University

### **Abstract**

*Despite the Covid-19 global pandemic, the expectations on research outputs still hold for universities and research institutions. From July 2021, myself and a team of five members, we embarked on a qualitative and ethnographic research to explore and understand the 'emerging Christian kinship structures in African Pentecostalism'. As a team we have been in the process of collecting non-numerical data such language, attitudes, feelings and human behaviours from three Christian communities (Christ is the Answer Ministries Valley Road, Jesus Celebration Centre Parklands, and Kenyatta University Christian Union). The purpose of the research is to understand how an individual subjectively perceives and gives meaning to their Pentecostal urban reality. In other words, we are out to study ordinary theology listen to it and looking for it in the words and lives of ordinary believers. Kinship has long been recognized as a foundational aspect of African religion and culture. Kinship forms the anchor of society upon which other elements hang. As often stated in reference to African communality, "I am because we are and because we are, therefore, I am." The maxim illustrates the centrality of social bonds in buttressing the communality intrinsic in the philosophical presuppositions of African society. However, urban life has been described as a centre of alienation, individuality and commercialization of human interactions. Thus, one wonders how communality as expressed in kinship has implications in the lived theology of urban African Pentecostalism. This research underscores the application and significance of grounded approach by bringing theology and social sciences together to investigate aspects of this communality within the lived theology of African urban Pentecostalism in the context of Covid-19 pandemic.*

**Keywords:** Kinship, Pentecostalism, Urban, Theology, Communality, Grounded Theory

## **Introduction**

From July 2021 to present, I have been in a team of six researchers who won a grant to carry out a qualitative and ethnographic research to explore and understand ‘*Emerging Christian Kinship Structures in African Urban Pentecostalism*’.<sup>1</sup> We have been collecting non-numerical data such as language, attitudes, feelings and human behaviours from three Christian communities (Christ is the Answer Ministries Valley Road, Jesus Celebration Centre Parklands, and Kenyatta University Christian Union). The purpose of the research is to understand how an individual subjectively perceives and gives meaning to their Pentecostal urban reality. In other words, we are out to study ordinary theology, listen to it and look for it in the words and lives of ordinary believers (Astley, 2017, p. 1).

We selected the theme of alternative kinship structures as our main focus. Kinship has long been recognized as a foundational aspect of African religion and culture (Grinker et al., 2019, p. 33). Kinship forms the anchor of the society upon which other elements hang. As often stated in reference to African communality, the maxim “I am because we are and because we are therefore, I am,” illustrates the centrality of kinship in buttressing the communality intrinsic in the philosophical presuppositions of African society. Thus, community as expressed in kinship has implications in the lived theology of African Christians. The research uses grounded theory approach to bring theology and social sciences together to investigate aspects of this communality within the lived theology of African urban Pentecostalism. Through the grounded theory we have sought to know the identified Christian communities intimately, to learn to recognize the common-sense meaning of behaviour, beliefs, strict rules of living (Lewis, 1969, p. vii).

We have used the grounded theory approach in order to use data to develop an explanation, model or theory that helps in understanding African urban Pentecostalism and how individuals and institutions involved create alternative kinship patterns that have an image of the communal African family. By so doing we will be offering a theology in context (Astley, 2017, p. 1). Each of the three Christian communities can be seen as case studies within the whole study. As case studies we have continued with in-depth study of each community using multiple data sources.

The research has elements of phenomenological approach since we endeavour to capture participants’ experiences, and examine how they make sense of their experiences. Aspects of ethnographic approach are also very observable as we explore urban Pentecostalism by studying the three Christian communities in their natural environment. With ethnography, there is the need of telling stories about experiences and observations accumulated by being there in the field with people (Grinker et al., 2019, p. 440).

## **Purpose**

The purpose of the research is to understand and interpret social interactions in the three communities. We have narrowed to alternative kinship patterns in these Christian communities

---

<sup>1</sup> The research is funded by Nagel Institute of Calvin University for a period of three years

and what they mean within the study of emerging Church patterns. Of the three communities, my focus has been CITAM Valley Road. At CITAM Valley Road my purpose has been and is seeking to understand social interactions that are related or are in themselves kinship patterns that inform being and becoming church in an urban context and in a mega church. The current paper seeks to explain how in spite of the initial Covid-19 restrictions, we have managed to keep on with the research.

As we explore each Christian community, we hope to generate data, then a new hypothesis and theory from the data collected. We note that human behaviour is dynamic, situational, social, and personal. Therefore, in each activity, and even each community has its own uniqueness that invites our research senses to be alert and active. In wanting to realize our purpose we have endeavoured at each level to take wide-angle lens and examine the breadth and depth of alternative kinship patterns in each of the research communities as we explore, discover, and construct the emerging realities in Pentecostal ecclesiology. In the process theology needs to be done from inside a particular framework of interest and concerns (Astley, 2017, p. 1). In this paper I demonstrate the application of grounded theory and the attendant challenges in investigating alternative kinship structures in CITAM Valley Road.

### **Data Collection: Unstructured Observation**

Gaining access to CITAM Valley Road is the third stage in grounded theory research (Creswell, 2012, p. 441). Since CITAM Valley Road like any other Christian community holds regular worship services and meetings, I decided to participate in their Sunday worship services and other meetings that would become available. At the initial stage of data collection, I opted for unstructured observation of Sunday worship services both in person and online. Sunday worship services are a natural Christian environment. Unstructured observation has been significant before embarking on more detailed methods of data collection. The unstructured observation entails attending church activities and observing any hints on kinship references in word, practices and behaviour. The method so far has helped to generate data in response to our research questions. In research, observation is defined as the watching of behaviour patterns of people in certain situations to obtain information about the phenomenon of interest. Observation method is used when the topic and the objectives are not well defined or the research population has a better description than what is available. Observation is an important way of collecting information about people because people do not always do what they say they do. Sometimes attitudes and behaviour are not congruent. In the unstructured observation, the reality at hand has multiple realities and also is very subjective. Specifically, I have been looking at the practice of the Christian faith as its practitioners experience it (Astley, 2017, p. 2). Attending and observing various church activities paints a broad picture of CITAM Valley Road. From the broad picture one is able to isolate the specifics that are in tune with kinship structures.

In using unstructured observation, I have endeavoured to look for anything and everything to observe that is relevant to kinship patterns in emerging urban Pentecostalism. Data collection comes with a committed to write down information about the various church activities at CITAM Valley Road, events as they taken place. This means observing all potentially relevant phenomena and taking extensive field notes without specifying in advance exactly what is to be observed. An advantage of observation method is the ability of the researcher to record actual behaviour rather than obtain reports of preferences or intended behaviour. Having done more

than a hundred and thirty hours of unstructured observation sessions I have a better idea of CITAM Valley Road in relation the research questions and purpose.

I started unstructured observation at CITAM Valley Road in September 2021. By February 2022 I joined a Bible Study group commonly known as Safari Group. Participating in the Safari Group activities moved from unstructured observation to participant observation. The difference between them is that unstructured observation can be participant or nonparticipant while participant observation as the name suggests one is a participant in what one is observing. In both of the methods the interest has been alternative kinship patterns in terms of language and social interactions. I have been taking into account the participants, behaviour, and environment where it will take place as well as any physical movements or symbols that are important to the research questions and purpose of the study.

When we started the research, Kenya and the world over was experiencing Covid-19 pandemic. The pandemic came with varied restriction. CITAM had online services on Facebook, You Tube and other social media platforms plus on Hope FM and Hope TV. One was expected to book online for a seat in the sanctuary for in person worship. In spite of the restrictions, the intention of selecting CITAM Valley Road was to study it as a whole and in depth. The following are some of the unstructured observation sessions that I have been involved:

- a. Attending Sunday worship services
- b. Attending Tuesday evening prayers
- c. Attending a wedding service and wedding reception
- d. Attending a Solemn Assembly
- e. Attending Online prayers with different themes
- f. Joint Men and Women Fellowship meeting

S/No	Event activity	Hours Session	Per	Number of Sessions	Total Hours
1.	Sunday worship Service	3hrs		26	78
2.	Tuesday evening prayers	2hrs		4	8
3.	Wedding Ceremony	3hrs		1	3
4.	Wedding reception	5hrs		1	5
5.	Solemn Assembly	4hrs		2	8
6.	Online prayers	1hr		15	15
7.	Spiritual emphasis	1hr		7	7
8.	Healing and restoration	1hr 30mins		3	4hrs 30min
9.	Revival online prayers	1hr		3	3hrs
10.	Joint Men and Women Fellowship meeting	4hrs		1	4hrs
Total hours					136

Table 1: Unstructured observed sessions against time between September 2021 and September 11<sup>th</sup> 2022

### **Data Collection: Participant Observation**

After attending the above CITAM Valley Road activities, it became apparent that in spite of the huge congregation CITAM Valley Road has different small ministry groups such as, Hospitality Team, Praise and Worship Team, the CITAM Choir, Men Fellowship, Protocol Team, Christian Education Department, Women Fellowship, Sunday School, Youth Church, Teens Church, and Safari Groups. The assumption is that in the small ministry groups one will find more kinship structures, practices and language compared to the huge congregation. Even with unstructured observation going on, it became apparent that it would be significant to gain access and become a participant observer in few of the small ministry groups. When I thought about the different ministry groups and the best one to join, I picked Safari Groups and Membership Class 101 because they are ministry groups that are open to everyone. I would become a participant observer in a Safari Group and in the Men Fellowship. The other ministry groups have some natural restriction of some kind, mainly on age and gender.

The role of the observer can be divided into participant observer and observer participant (Scribano & Zacarias, 2013). To be a participant observer is to be part of the community and feel and live what the target population goes through. In other words, the observer becomes part of the community members and enjoys all the rights the community members have. In so doing one would be involved in an interactive and dialogical process of mutual change. (Astley, 2017, p. 2) On the other hand, an observer participant is the one that carries the role of a visitor with the only right to observe their behaviour and environment without participating in their activities. As previously said the observer participant can only take notes of the activities she observes. In the Safari Group and Men Fellowship I would become a participant observer since in so doing I would enjoy all the rights the members of each group enjoy.

On Sunday 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2022 during the first worship serves, the programmer of the service asked for visitors to raise their hands and to stand for them to be acknowledged. I stood and identified myself as a visitor at CITAM Valley Road. After the service, the visitors were welcomed to the visitors' room for tea. Since the congregation was in 21 days of prayer and fasting, snacks were not available that Sunday. However, we were informed that the snacks would be available the next Sunday since the prayer and fasting was ending on the Saturday the 29<sup>th</sup> January 2022 with a Solemn Assembly.

We were nine visitors in the visitors' room. A brief orientation on what CITAM Valley Road is was given to us by one of the elders as we enjoyed a cup of hot Kenyan tea. The emphasis was on discipleship and membership. The Safari Groups were introduced as part of CITAM discipleship program that aims at having church in a persons' neighbourhood. The Safari Groups also provide a structure to administer different services and benefits to individual members in spite of the size of membership at CITAM Valley Road. The elder also mentioned that CITAM Valley Road is an urban ministry and a members' organization. He outlined how one becomes a member, and mainly after one year attendance at CITAM Valley Road. We were informed that "When one is a member there are various benefits that one enjoys." Such benefits include:

- Church involvement in a member's life situation such as wedding, burial of a departed member
- Voting during annual general meetings
- Hiring of halls and wedding grounds is cheaper for CITAM Valley Road members

Standing as a visitor was the first step in joining the CITAM Valley Road family. It is an important step into the study of kinship structures in an urban Pentecostal Church that has a 4000-seater sanctuary and holds two Sunday worship services. At the visitors' room the nine of us recorded our personal details as was required by the welcome team. Part of the details requested in the visitor's form is the period that one was to be at CITAM Valley Road. The time period may indicate to the administration how to deal with visitors on case-by-case basis. It was noted that one does not wait for one year to join a Safari Group. We were directed to the adjacent office which coordinates Safari Groups.

The office that houses materials and staff for the Safari Groups was at that time occupied by four administrative staff members. I introduced myself and asked on how I can join a Safari Group. My details were also taken; name and phone number. The staff asked me my residence so that they are able to connect me with the Safari Group Coordinator from the region that would be convenient for me to attend. I was given a name and a number to call.

During the week after I had indicated my desire to join a Safari Group, I was expecting a call or a message on what to do. However, when that did not happen, I text the person and I was given another number and name to contact. At this time the name and the number were of a Safari Group leader. I was able to contact the Safari Group leader who then added me into the WhatsApp group that is used for all communications on Church Matters and group matters. The name of the group is Happy Church, Valley Road.

On 30<sup>th</sup> January 2022, as I went for unstructured observation of the Sunday first worship service, I was looking forward to the meeting at the visitors' room for tea and snacks and the briefs from one of the Elders. The visitors introduced themselves. As for me I said I was in for the snacks that I did not take the Sunday when there was prayer and fasting. The Elder took the visitors through the short brief and this helped me to understand some of the issues that I had missed during the previous briefing. The CITAM Valley Road Welcome Team with the assistance of the Elders play a vital role in helping visitors find their bearing at CITAM Valley Road.

At about 2:00pm and after the worship service on 30<sup>th</sup> January, the Safari Group leader called me. The leader had tried to contact me the day before but I was not available. During our conversation I was informed on the various aspects of the Safari Group:

- There is a WhatsApp group for the Safari Group members
- Meets online for Bible Study every Sunday from 7:00pm to 8:00pm
- The group has a monthly contribution of 200 for the welfare of the group members
- Has various items that they consider for welfare; bereavement, baby showers

From 30<sup>th</sup> January, I have been attending online Bible Study meetings from 7:00pm to 8:30pm as a participant observer. This means that I am part of the Safari Group; I feel and live what they go through. As Participant observer, I am part of the Safari Group and I enjoy all the rights the members have. In the words of Bellard and Pritchard, I am involved in the Christian life and practice within the church and in relation to the wider society that the members of the

Safari Group share (Astley, 2017, p. 2). I perform all duties and responsibilities assigned to me by the Safari Group leader. Such responsibilities and duties include; leading Bible Study, leading prayers. I am also active in welfare contribution and in the WhatsApp group for the group. As Part of the welfare, I have been involved in in person visitation of a group member who had been attacked by thugs, contributions towards the hospital bill of a member, and contribution towards a family that had a new born child.

On 6<sup>th</sup> January 2022, the Bible Study was to be in person in the house of the Safari Group leader. The notice of the in-person meeting had been given early enough and on 5<sup>th</sup> January, members were asked to confirm their attendance. Three members confirmed and one couple sent their apologies. The leader sent the Google map pin for directions to me and I was able to get to the place of the meeting at Kikuyu on time. We had agreed during the last Bible Study that we would start at 4:00pm and end by 5:30pm so that members would travel back to their homes before dusk.

Together as a member of a Safari Group, I have been a member of the CITAM Men Fellowship and I have attended Membership Class 101. I joined the Men Fellowship after I came across the Chairman of the group in a joint meeting for Men Fellowship and Women Fellowship. The joint meeting was on a Saturday from 8:00am to 12:00 noon. Before the meeting started, the participants were invited for a cup of hot Kenyan tea and snacks. Since I was in the meeting room ahead of time, I greeting a man who is in his late 50s. After introducing myself I hinted that I was new and I am trying to find my way around at CITAM Valley Road. On hearing that I am finding my way around the other gentleman that they were with informed me that I am in the right hands since I am speaking with the Chairman of the Men Fellowship. The joint meeting helped me to gain access to the Men Fellowship as a participant observer. The table bellow indicates the various sessions where I have been a participant observer. In total, by 11<sup>th</sup> September 2022, I have had 47hours of participant observation of CITAM Valley Road Safari Group and Men Fellowship.

S/No	Activity	Hours per session	No. of sessions	Total
1.	Safari Grp Online Bible Study	1	24	24
2.	Safari Grp in person Bible Study	2	4	8
3.	Safari Grp in person visits	2	2	4
4.	Men Fellowship Evening Meetings	2	4	8
5.	Attended CITAM Membership Class 101	1	3	3
<b>Total hours</b>				47

Table 2: Participant Observer Events Activities from Sept 2021 to 11<sup>th</sup> Sept 2022

Access to a Safari Group, Men Fellowship and the Membership Class 101 as a participant observer has continued to yield data that is significant for the research questions, objectives and purpose. The application of the grounded theory in ethnographical research means that one has deep access to the community or group under investigation. Being a participant observer has helped in immersing myself in the community without the erosion of my identity as a researcher. As a participant observer, the researcher may be portrayed as being involved in a dialogue and in a dance that the group under investigation (Safari Group, Membership Class 101 or Men Fellowship) is at the centre. As a participant observer I take note of the conversations that takes place during the embrace between the dancers present, contextualized, experienced practice and their partners from the dancing school of the past tradition as guided by the CITAM leadership (Astley, 2017, p. 3). The conversation and dance are a strong metaphor in participant observation that the research becomes a participant:

The conversation they engage in, as they go backwards and forwards, circles around some concern or another, but always returns to the point from which the dance began. It is real conversation, for the partners speak during the dance; and as with all authentic conversation, critical freedom and receptivity are equally important in allowing the subject matter to take over in the back-and-forth movements between text and interpreter (Astley, 2017, p. 3).

I shall return to the metaphor during the data analysis. But both the unstructured observation and participant observation methods have yielded different data types and data forms. For better results, application of grounded theory requires constant shining of the research senses so that one is not carried away by the dance or the conversation and forget the purpose for which one is in so involved. As a research team, we have continued to have fortnight meetings even as we proceed with the research project. During the meetings we share our experiences and ask each other questions based on the purpose and objective of the study. The sessions assist in clarifying our research questions as we continue with the research and help in refocussing our attention on the data that is related to the research questions and research objectives. The current presentation is part of the process of shining my research senses and refocusing the research lenses.

### **Type and Form of Data Collected**

In the words of Jeff Astley, I have been involved in looking, listening and learning in theology (Astley, 2017). In other words looking at structures at CITAM Valley Road which enable persons to live together and co-operate with one another in an orderly social life akin to African kinship (Reginald and Daryll, 1950, p. 3). As at 11<sup>th</sup> September 2022, I had done 136 hours of unstructured observation and 47 hours being a participant observer. The total is 183 hours. The hours have made it possible for me to collect data in different types and forms. From unstructured observation and from participant observation I have continued to collect data that is different types mainly; words, images, or objects. I have also obtained different secondary materials used for Bible Study and a guide for the membership class 101. The materials help in identifying how CITAM links persons together by convergence of interest and sentiment and how it controls and limits conflicts that are always possible as a result of divergence of sentiment and interest (Reginald and Daryll, 1950, p. 3).



The forms of qualitative data collected include participant observation notes, field notes, photos, videos and reflections on various activities observed. The data point to how social links, and social capital at CITAM Valley Road are nurtured and maintained. The data point to how the web of deep-seated longings of fluctuating variability are fulfilled for the individual, group and the congregation. During data analysis, grounded theory allows more research for clarity on issues that will be identified that need more investigation. More research will bring more data and sufficient data will lead to more interpretation that leads to theory and the writeup of the research outcomes for the project.

### **Challenges in Applying Grounded Theory**

The application of ground theory is hoped will help us identify social structure and social function that help to stabilize CITAM Valley Road a Pentecostal urban church. The components of social structures are human beings, and a structure is an arrangement of persons in relationship institutionally defined and regulated (Reginald and Daryll, 1950, p. 82). When carrying out the unstructured observation and participant observation, there are various challenges that I have encountered. The challenges are related to the social structures and their attendant functions. Dealing with the challenges is a step in the right direction in the quality of the research process and the outputs that we have listed as our targets. The following are some of the challenges:

#### **1. Missing the History of the Community or Group**

A community is a dynamic entity with past experiences that shape the present and the future. Listening and observing the various activities I have noted that there is a history of CITAM Valley Road that informs the present that I am involved in. For instance, in joining a Safari Group and participation in the Bible Study, I also become party to the decisions that have been made in the past and that apply to the members. For this reason, I have researched on the history of CITAM that is significant to the current study. The objective is to be as neutral and as informed as possible as a participant observer without raising eye brows of the other Bible Study members. This study into the history of CITAM has helped in making me an informed participant observer. The knowledge keeps one at the same level with the other members and one does not become a stranger to the activities of the group.

Being a participant observer and also carrying out unstructured observation means that I am tied to the history CITAM Valley Road and the groups that I attend. For the Safari Group I abide by all the requirements of a group member and for the wider congregation I have had to look for historical information that is significant in understanding the present. Such information is in the website, You Tube and in text. I have bought a critical book on the history of CITAM (Mugambi, 2009). The author the book is the current senior Pastor at CITAM Valley Road. For the Safari Group contribute monthly to the welfare kitty. Sometimes the members of the Safari Group are called to contribute to the welfare of members who are no longer in the group but are known by some of the members. Even at such points I give my contribution.

#### **2. Authenticity and Going Native**

Grounded theory and ethnographic research allow the researcher to gather authentic information from the group or community under study. All the encounters are to be authentic human interactions both for the unstructured observation and participant observation

sessions. For instance, when meeting the Bible Study members in person for the first time and for the consequent meetings I need to be as neutral as possible be an authentic member of the group like any other. This requires patience with the group and readiness to learn attitude and accommodating the group so that one is able to gel with the group activities and learn from participating in the activities of the group. Using participant observation method, one is able to access information that is only meant for members. Such information is authentic since it is accessed from a neutral and natural context.

The grounded theory approach that employs ethnographical perspective to research, entails getting to know a certain community by living with it (Lewis, 1969, p. vii). The process has the challenge of going native and getting lost into the life of the community or group. As a participant observer in the Bible Study, I am struggling with the level of participation that is moderate for a participant observer. Sometimes I get dismayed by some of the responses that I give in response to the Bible Study question. At one point I said something and the leader that day said, “That may require a higher authority to verify.” In another incidence one of the participants in the Bible Study referred to me as ‘Paul the Bible scholar’. I did not enquire where she got that from but I assumed it is because of my level of participation.<sup>2</sup> The regular meetings for the research team, help to moderate my participation and avoid biases informed by my experiences and knowledge.

### 3. Objectivity and Subjectivity

In qualitative and ethnographic research that is using grounded theory the subjectivity of the researcher is expected. For instance, my religious studies background, my role as a theological educator poses some biases to what I hear, see and how I interpret it in any given social context given my social location. However, working in a team has helped to identify some of these biases and make an attempt to see even what I would not see and notice because of my social location. The subjectivity if not checked may create what anthropologists call an educational shock (Lewis, 1969, p. vii). The corporate business model of Church at CITAM Valley Road is not what I am used to. For instance, a church that has a one-year attendance requirement for one to be a member, the language of benefits when one is a member is not common. In seeking objectivity, I am to seek to see and interpret kinship from the perspective of CITAM Valley Road.

In the Bible Study my biases may come out when responding to the Bible Study questions. The characteristics or their response are known to me as the researcher. Yet at this point I am not a researcher to the other Bible Study members, but a member to the team (kin group) who to them should be made welcome and allowed to participate like any other member. The challenge is to maintain the character of an authentic Bible Study group member even where instances arise and I am tempted to ask a question as research or to ask it without blowing the cover of a researcher.<sup>3</sup> Spending more time at CITAM Valley Road and exercising much

---

<sup>2</sup> In a group of 14 members, I am one of the regular members of the Bible Study be it online or in person. Since I joined, I have only missed three sessions. I have also been given the privilege to lead different sessions.

<sup>3</sup> During the in-person Bible Study, the members started to talk about the Churches they fellowship back at home and how one member travelled from upcountry that day to attend the Bible Study. Another one mentioned the Kingdom Seekers of Apostle Kimani at Nakuru. At the back of my mind, I was wondering should I mention my home church also.

patience; attending Sunday worship services, attending online prayers, attending Safari Group activities and attending Men Fellowship meetings has helped in unravelling the complexity of CITAM Valley Road in matters kinship structures. The time in the field has continued to bring out new aspects of kinship that would not be notable by a simple visit of by reading their books.

#### **4. Vulnerability and Confidentiality**

Among Pentecostals in Kenya, when people (brethren) meet, the first item is to share what God has done in their lives and give specific areas where they have witnessed the hand of God. At CITAM Valley Road this has been witnessed during the Tuesday evening prayer meetings and in the Safari Group. In the Safari Group, after the Bible study, each member is expected to share on how the week has been. This has been a challenge to me as researcher, since the Safari Group members know me as fellow brethren and therefore, I to choose what to say and what not to say. The habit of sharing makes each member vulnerable. The feeling requires lot of trust for the members to share their lives with others just the way a kin group function. The ethical requirement to maintain confidentiality of the persons that participate in research is very critical in this situation.

#### **5. Data Storage and Safety**

As I continue with the unstructured observation and participant observation, the volume of data in different types and forms continue to grow. One advantage of participant observation as a research technique is that I have access to lots of information and data. From the interactions I am able to understand the experiences and habits of the Safari Group, Men Fellowship and Membership Class 101 from the other participants' point of view. So far, my data storage gadgets (laptop and tablet) are almost full and I have to keep on transferring or deleting old files to create room for the Nagel data that will continue to grow. Coupled with the increased volume of data, is its security so that I do not loose data along the way. In response to the challenge, I have bought more space for the cloud space like Google drive and Dropbox.

#### **6. Technical and Network Challenges**

The research project kicked off when Covid-19 restriction were in place. In response to the restrictions online church activities became common. I have found myself attending CITAM church online, the three Bible Study meetings in a month are online. At times online prayers have been organised some for CITAM family country wide and some specifically for CITAM Valley Road. For one to participate in the online church sessions and activities, reliable and dependable network is very important. On several occasions, members are not able to be logged in for a long period of time. For instance, when I was leading the Bible Study, the network interruptions were too much. The leader was not able to host so she requested that I lead and host. I agreed to host and lead the bible study. One has to invest on a good smart phone and data from a reliable service provider. Most of the times I have data from Airtel, Safaricom and Telkom just in case one fails I am able to continue with the online activity.

### **Data Analysis and Interpretation**

As we continue with the research, we continue to accumulate photos, field notes, WhatsApp messages and interactions, and secondary data on the three communities. Our research so far is yielding more of qualitative data than quantitative data. The data is multi-layered and open to a variety of interpretations. Qualitative data analysis involves organizing, accounting for and explaining the data. At some point we will need to start making sense of the data in terms of the participants' definitions of the situations, noting patterns, themes, categories and regularities. This type of data Analysis will involve coding the patterns, themes then analysing, and interpreting the codes of the non-numerical data, such as language, attitudes, feelings and human behaviour and interactions. Both the variety of encounters or incidences and the number of encounters will enrich the analysis and the results.

Our research has employed the grounded theory approach with elements of case study and ethnography. The analysis will therefore be suitably written as descriptive narrative, often chronologically, with issues raised throughout and interpretation and explanation of the key features of CITAM Valley Road in relation to our research purpose and objectives. In grounded theory, data analysis and interpretation are juxtaposed with a conceptual and theoretical work. We are to compare our findings with what has been documented by others to see just what is particular about each of the research areas (CITAM Valley Road, JCC Parklands and KUCU) and what they have in common with what is already documented about other related cases.

### **Final Report**

The outcome of the study will be a narrative report with contextual description and direct quotations from research participants. The report will be fed from data analysis and interpretation of the results. The results will be particular or specialized findings that is less generalizable. The final report will be captured in the various research outputs that will come from the research project. The report will reveal uniformities and regularities of social life at CITAM Valley Road. The report will document how CITAM Valley Road, an urban Pentecostal church in Kenya responds to the need for social relations in an urban context. The report will perhaps reach conclusions that are valid for all urban Pentecostals in Africa.

In conclusion, in spite of the Covid-19 restrictions, we have managed to carry out research and we are almost at the stage of data analysis and interpretation. Using the grounded theory, we have interacted with three communities in trying to find out how kinship structures are developed and maintained in urban Pentecostalism in Kenya. The current research at CITAM Valley Road will yield massive data from which data analysis will be done. As part of the process, we are advocating for grounded research that yields grounded theology as a process of engagement between theory and practice. Online ethnography is demonstrated to be a valid research method especially with covid-19 restrictions.

## References

- Astley, J. (2017). *Ordinary Theology: Looking, Listening and Learning Theology, Explorations in Practical, Pastoral and Empirical Theology*. Routledge, London.
- Creswell, J. W. (2012). *Educational Research, Fourth. ed.* Pearson, Boston.
- Grinker, R. R., Lubkemann, S. C., Steiner, & C. B., Gonclaves, E. (Eds.) (2019). *A Companion to the Anthropology of Africa*. John Wiley and Sons, Oxford.
- Lewis, J. (1969). *Anthropology Made Simple*. W. H. Allen Company, New York.
- Mugambi, J. (2009). *Five Decades of God's Faithfulness: The Amazing Story of Christ is the Answer Ministries*. Evangel, Nairobi.
- Reginald, R. B. A., Daryll, F.C. (1950). *Africa Systems of Kinship and Marriage*. Oxford University Press, London.