

Adoption of Online Church Services and Participation by Kenya Anglican Youth Organization in Cathedral Deanery, Thika Diocese, Kiambu County, Kenya

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Abstract

The Church has continued to embrace the use of online media platforms with a view of reaching out to a wider audience. The Anglican Church of Kenya (ACK) through her leadership has been on the forefront since 2017 in championing the use of online media platforms due to decreasing youth enrolment in church, which stood at 10% in 2017. This is happening at a time when the number of youth who have subscribed to online media platforms is also increasing. The study examined the adoption of online church platforms and participation of youth in an ACK deanery, the involvement of the youth in planning for online church service and the challenges encountered by the youth in online church service. The study employed Connectivism Learning Theory by George Siemens (2005) to understand how technology and innovations are adopted at ACK, St. Andrew's and St. Monica's Mugumo-ini parishes. The study reviewed empirical data on online church services, youth involvement and challenges of online platforms in enhancing participation among the youth. The study adopted a mixed approach method and utilized a descriptive research design. The target population was (1055) and a sample of 15% (159) which was proportionately and purposively selected. A semi-structured questionnaire was administered to members of Kenya Anglican Youth Organisation (KAYO) and parents/guardians, while FGD was carried out among church leadership, whereas the bishop was interviewed. A pilot study was conducted in Memorial Parish and was considered in the final study. This was done by calculating Pearson's correlation and Cronbach Alpha, which met the 0.7 threshold. Face validity was carried out to ensure the accuracy of the questionnaire and interview schedule. Data collected was then analysed descriptively and thematically. The findings of the study showed that the church adopted Facebook at (84.6%), Twitter (0%), YouTube (38.5%), and WhatsApp (61.5%). On the involvement of the youth, the study found that the church involved the youth in technical support 61.5%. Challenges faced by the youth in online church participation included distraction by other social media (61.6%), internet connectivity at 23% and cost of data at 15.4%. The study found that overall online church attendance among the youth stood at 38.5%. The study's overall recommendations were that; the church ought to utilize YouTube and Facebook for live streaming, run online church services for the youth for a maximum of 30 minutes, and use WhatsApp for online bible study services. Further, the study recommends that the church should offer meaningful involvement of the youth and its leadership rather than limiting them to technical support. These may include offering strategic training on innovative online technologies to church leadership and monitor online youth participation by assessing statistics after each online service/activity.

Key Words: Adoption, Youth, KAYO, Online, ACK, Church

Introduction

Online church service plays a great role in meeting the younger population's spiritual needs where and when they need them. In understanding the adoption of online church service, Williams (2008) in the study of Baptist local churches in the USA, found that there is a change in worship participation with the onset of online media platforms. In the US, there are over 800 mega-churches with over 2000 people attending terminus services. In these churches the sermon is translated via wireless headphones within the sanctuary power, data is provided, and worshippers download sermon notes, PowerPoint presentations, and Bible passages (Sim, 2009). Stetzer (2015) observed that most American Christian youth listen to sermons online, access online scriptures and have online access to biblical texts.

In the modern church, it can be noted that the youth find technology-based biblical teachings interesting and inspirational and offer an alternative to physical church (Campbell, 2020). Online media platform use has led to the expansion of Christian communities with the ability to reach a more youthful audience. The use of online media platforms is expected to remain in the 21st century among USA churches and beyond (Wyche, 2008). Further, Wyche showed that pastors used online media platforms to inform the congregation of upcoming events. However, despite the church adopting the use of online media platforms, the church is faced with the challenge of how to better engage the youth in online church service (The Lutheran World Federation, 2020).

Phillips, Lewis, and Bruce (2013) reported that in the United Kingdom (UK), advances in technology have fundamentally changed the communication mediums in the church. They noted that, among younger age groups, face-to-face communication is no longer their favourite means of communication. They further found that the Church ought to embrace online media platforms for communication and reaching out to its youthful faithful. The report also advises the church to identify challenges and change what is being used to enhance their online church services. This implies that, the young generation benefit more, when biblical teachings are availed and directed to them online. As a precaution, the study states that, if the Church does not choose to embrace the advances in online media platforms and the digital space, she would be ignoring one of the biggest communication spaces and opportunities that exist among the 21st-century youth. In Spain, and as a result of the COVID-19 effects, the Catholic Church had to take huge and unprecedented steps towards the digitalization of church services (Gauxachs et al., 2021).

In Africa, online media platforms are used to enhance worship by providing opportunities for online church service and drawing the youths to church activities (Kesia, 2019). Online church services take various forms in which Christians partake in learning, interacting with church sermons, singing, dancing, bible study, communing and praying. It is noted that Christianity has been one of the first religions to adopt and profit from technologies (Daniel, 2018). Jones (2020) notes that technology provides an alternative medium for sharing the word of God among the youth.

However, there is a need for the church to appraise the use of online media platforms and identify better ways of engaging the youth. Paul (2019) showed that churches in Nigeria have adopted the use of modern communication media.

This explains why in the 21st century, there are new worship practices compared to the past. There are mobile and computer applications, which allow believers to access and download scriptures, music, and prayers using smartphones, tablets, and personal computers. The church may need to review its approaches on usage of online media platforms, to attract more youth to online church service (Adaja and Ayodele, 2013).

In their study, Chukwudi, et al (2016) observed that online media platforms facilitate networking and are the pillars of evangelism and gospel dissemination in the 21st Century. They note that the youth have shown more interest in the adoption and the use of online media platforms in the church.

According to Lawton (2021), the generational gap might be the skewed representation of the youth in favour of the older church participants. To this, Lawton opines that alternative medium such as use of social media platforms may offer alternative options for youth in participating in church activities remotely. In addition, he found that majority of pastors interviewed suggested that social media platforms contribute to a decline of in-person attendance for younger generations but increases flexibility for online church participation.

Kenya on the other hand is leading the continent in smartphone penetration and internet usage (Namunwa, 2019). Most churches in Kenya have adopted the use of online media platforms for

organizing online church services, organizing prayer groups, bible studies, tithes, and offerings. Some bishops of leading urban churches rely on an Android mobile application to communicate with their members (Mungai, 2018). This provides the church with opportunities to share the gospel with the youth using online platforms. Mungai (2018) observed that in Kenya, several churches stream their activities over the Internet. This has gained acceptance among many conservative churches, especially with the Covid-19 pandemic. Despite this shift, the church has not been able to address the challenge posed by other non-church social content, which is considered a distraction to the young congregants from and during online church services (Suleiman, 2016).

During the COVID-19 period, most churches around the world were forced to close in-person services due to the need for social distancing as a way of mitigating the spread of the virus. This implied that traditional churches had to decide on the adoption of technologically driven forms of church attendance. This phenomenon rebirthed the need for scholars and theologians to assess the provisions of how church worship can be done online (Campbell, 2020). Further, as a way of understanding the role of the church in accommodating its congregants, Oliver (2022) noted that the church needed to accommodate its congregants now and to prepare new ways of church participation (Oliver, 2022). This unique moment has revealed the central role played by online church platforms, which afford flexibility and comfort, especially among the youth.

The Covid-19 pandemic has also made most churches to be innovative in streaming their sermons through Facebook, Podcast, WhatsApp, and YouTube.

The Anglican Church of Kenya, ACK through her Archbishop Jackson Ole Sapit in 2017 announced the decision to use online media platforms and launch online church services for its youthful adherents (Mureithi, 2017). Current studies reveal only around 40% of the youth participated in church activities, and even fewer attended services regularly (Njoroge, 2019).

At ACK, KAYO engages the youth in church-driven activities, both online and physically. KAYO has been at the forefront in reaching out to her members through several activities such as bible studies, music, posting church sermons, daily readings and prayers to the official church Facebook page to enable the youth who may not have attended the church physically. In addition, KAYO's

online media pages show an iterative process of reaching out to her members, albeit with low response from the youth. However, according to Canon Omondi, COVID-19 has seen increased levels of online media usage by the church to preach and share prayers with her congregations. Considering that most of the youth have smartphones and are predominantly on social media (Anglican Board of Mission, 2018), the biggest beneficiaries of online church services are the youth. The church opines that attempts to keep the church in fellowship, despite COVID-19 restrictions, enabled the church to explore alternative ways of online media use (Omondi, 2020). KAYO is a youth ministry for the ACK church. The main aim of KAYO is to help young people acquire Christian principles and apply them in their lives, advise, motivate and encourage the youth and seek ways and means of reaching young people in schools and colleges within the diocese (ACK-Thika Diocese). This is done by organizing fellowships, conferences and workshops for the youth to guide them on responsible Christian living (Wanyoike, 2020). The KAYO department is driven by the motto “Be strong in the Lord”, Ephesians 6:10. KAYO is found in every diocese and has a full-time youth or pastor to oversee the youth activities.

In view of all this, the study opines that, ACK through KAYO can better reach out to the youth, by adopting the abundant online media, to promote responsible Christian living. It became important for the study to examine utilization of online media in enhancing youth participation in church service.

Statement of the Problem

The ACK in 2017 decried decreasing youth participation, through her Archbishop Jackson Ole Sapit. The church leadership further recommended training of her clergy in preparation for online church services in 2018. The church noted that the youth had smart mobile devices and the introduction of online church services was a better way to involve the youth (Mureithi, 2017). However, the availability of other social content creates distraction during online church service. It was also considered that there was Low Church sensitization on the use of online service platforms making it a challenge for the church to monitor youth participation. In addition, how the church utilizes online media platforms to better engage the young congregants remains a challenge to online church service participation (The Lutheran World Federation - LWF, 2020). The use of online media platforms by the church may transcend geographical spaces and provide flexibility

for the youth to choose their preferred mode of engagement in online church service. It is on this premise, that the study assessed the application of online church service on youth participation, at St. Andrew's and St. Monica's Mugumo-ini parishes, Thika Diocese.

Objectives

- a. To examine the adoption of online services and youth participation at the Cathedral Deanery of Thika Diocese.
- b. To evaluate the involvement of the youth in online church participation at the Cathedral Deanery of Thika Diocese.

Justification and Significance of the Study

The adoption of online media platforms may play a pivotal role in fostering online church services, especially among the youth. ACK is one of the leading churches in Kenya to have publicly declared their decision to have an online church, to attract more youth to their services. St. Andrews and St. Monica's Mugumo-ini parishes in Cathedral Deanery are chosen due to their centrality in Thika Diocese considering the number of institutions of higher learning, technology availability and internet access. This provides a high population for the study. Most KAYO youths are also considered to own smartphones, iPads, Tablets, and/or Laptops. Hence, the church can adequately share church sermons and teachings using online media platforms. The COVID-19 period has also provided an increased need for adoption of online church services, not just as a measure to combat the virus spread, but also to provide flexibility among those who may not be present physically.

The findings of the study may promote the improvement of online church services and promote youth participation. Further, it may also benefit the education sector by enabling the allocation of resources for online worship among institutions with chaplaincy. The findings may assist the government in scrutinizing and implementing legislation that regulates the use of online media platforms available to the youth and promotes responsible digital use.

Review of Related Literature

Online Church Services and Youth Participation

The use of online media by KAYO has gained prominence with the onset of Covid-19. Omondi (2020) opines that ACK church had to upscale its online media reach by enhancing its online

Facebook church service. As such, ACK has utilized several internet platforms to preach the gospel to all her congregants. During such pandemics, church members worshipped virtually. More so, the KAYO youth stood as the largest beneficiaries due to their strong online presence, especially in online media platforms (Omondi, 2020). In pursuing her mission, which is nurturing Anglican students, contributing to their holistic growth and setting them on the path to becoming agents of change on campus, within the church and in the communities around them, KAYO leadership has continued to keep in close contact with her members, through Facebook, Twitter, and WhatsApp. However, despite the online presence, most of the members seem distracted by the presence of other media content.

The rise of online media platforms also has heralded new opportunities for people, governments, and organizations to reach out to their audience with speed and flexibility. In his study, Wiseman (2015) noted that church services in the USA are already utilizing YouTube, Twitter, and Facebook pages for online prayers, blogging, and live-streaming sermons. He further stated that the adoption of online church services through Facebook streaming enables interaction in worship through texting and group chats. According to Wiseman, the use of online media platforms complements physical church services. Despite technological advancement, both Alvin (2021) and Earls (2019) noted that most youth prefer not to attend church services when they go to college and/or as a result of being judged differently by the older congregation.

Russel (2016) in his study of the elderly online church participation concurs with Wiseman that online church services create flexibility and convenience for the older church congregants. He, however, noted that online church service can be more beneficial to the young congregation. This is a result of annual surveys in the USA which showed some decline in physical church participation and religious affiliations among the youth ages 30 and younger group, as opposed to the adult congregation. The study, however, was qualitative and focused on elderly church participants, whereas the current study explored the participation of youth in online church service. Kolapo (2019) asserts that the use of online media platforms such as Facebook and WhatsApp enables churches to keep in touch with the younger generation and enables them to look up to the church for moral direction, motivation, and acceptance when in need or facing challenges through its blog sites or private chat rooms. However, the study fails to demonstrate the ideal means of promoting worship among the youth as suggested by Wiseman (2015) who suggested that for the

church to enrich its online service, there is a need to involve the youth in content development such as videos, and songs, to enrich democratization of worship and not by merely allocating responsibilities. The current study, therefore explored how ACK church involves the youth in its online church service, content development and participation.

The spiritual growth of young people ought to be passed on through a plan that builds spiritual relationship with God (Trent et al., 2000). Packer (1975) states that "the Bible is the word of God –119:105a lamp to our feet, and a light to our path" (Ps 119:105). In the current age of internet access, online media platforms can be effectively used as the most accessible and flexible means of spreading the gospel among the youth.

Ebenezer (2015) further asserts that more churches in the last decade have continually improved their presence on the web, but his study did not address the need for the church to continuously monitor youth participation online. Arasa et al. (2010) on the other hand recommended that online media platforms such as Twitter can be used to educate and inform the youth on religious issues among other educational initiatives for other members of the congregation (Gauxachs et al., 2021).

Youth Involvement in Online Church Service

The church is expected to listen to the youth, show interest in their activities, and patiently understand their needs to build the future church (Chang-Ho and Tameifuna, 2011). Online media platforms are an important tool for advancing religious issues and religious information can be prepared to suit different groups of audiences such as the youth. The youth also have access to the latest mobile gadgets that can be used to access spiritual guidance through online media platforms available on modern devices (Dyikuk, 2017). However, Njoroge (2019) is concerned that older church members, thus denying the youth the opportunity for involvement, lead most of the church services. The current study, therefore, explored the best ways in which the youth can be involved in planning for online church services.

The church that keeps pace with technological innovation is likely to draw more attendance and provide flexibility to existing members without losing them altogether (Mateus, 2017). Online media platforms can assist overcome barriers faced by church members such as limited and costly transport, time, and safety since online media platforms are accessible regardless of location and with the use of alternative technologies. Smit (2020) concurs with the need for online church service but observes that in his study in Canada, parents recommended that church service

organizers should keep online service simple and that 30 minutes was ideal for online church service, especially among young children below 15 years.

As society continues to socialize with emerging technologies and development, Mugambi (2010) asserts that such process-change is positive and constructive for religion to influence society and hence social transformation among the youth. It can thus be inferred that online media platforms as a product of technological advancement can contribute immensely to the spread of the gospel if the youth are involved in planning and organization. Online church services are effective if the youth have a voice in the church and are allowed to express their creativity and opinions (Clarke, 2014).

The use of online media platforms in worship at Christ is the Answer Ministries (CITAM) is considered to have improved church attendance among all faithful, thus benefiting them spiritually as well as reaching the global Christian community. (Mungai, 2018). Muchuki (2017) further notes that online media platforms have been embraced by the modern church to promote growth and improvement. It is, therefore, important to consider that the adoption of online media platforms to promote church attendance among the youth, as promoted by the ACK is timely and can be beneficial in encouraging youth participation.

In one study, Dankasa (2010) states that 83% of Catholic youth prefer the use of internet sites such as Facebook, YouTube, and Weblogs to watch video webcasts or clips. The study concluded that the modern church has enormous online media platform opportunities that can be considered to appeal to the young audience. His study, however, did not discuss the strategies the church used to enhance youth engagement in online church services. Dunaetz (2019) states that the use of online media platforms is a preferred medium of communication because of anonymity. He opines that the use of online media platforms as a medium helps reach out to church members with unrestrained criticism associated with the sharing of the word of God among Christians and unbelievers. In concluding the study, Dunaetz (2019) recommends that due to the dynamic nature of technology and culture, the youth ought to be consulted. Sytsma and Vogel (2020) suggest that for such endeavour to be successful there is need to discuss with the youth on common ground for making choices about what content to include in the service.

Theoretical Framework

Connectivism-A Learning Theory for the Digital Age

Connectivism theory explains how learning in a digital age can be better understood. It shows how internet technologies such as social networks contribute to new ways of learning. It was first introduced in 2005 by George Siemens and Stephen Downes. The theory is premised on the following principles: that learning rests on diversity of opinions; it is a process of connecting specialized information sources and that learning may reside in non-human appliances. Further, the theory states that for learning to be perceived successful, it is important to also ensure up-to-date knowledge is acquired.

According to Downes (2021) one way in which instructors implement connectivism is through the use of social media. In such cases, Facebook or Twitter accounts can be used to share information, engage in discussions or announce events and activities. This can boost learner engagement and open the lines of discussion among the learner and instructors. Similarly, the theory is consistent with the needs of the twenty-first century church, where learning involves the use of technology and networks, so as to improve communication speed and meet the needs of its users. In online church service, sharing biblical teachings among the youth needs to be connected with the right people and in the right context in order for learning to take effect. (Underwood, 2016).

Conceptual Model

In the modern church, online church service among the youth needs to be connected with the right people to sustain and attract more youth. The modern church can take advantage of the varied online media platforms to promote online church participation among its youth and nurturing a responsible youth amid uncensored information and massive online content (MOC). Information flow in the church is an important element that can assist create, preserve, and utilize such information by reaching out to the youth regardless of time and space (Underwood, 2016).

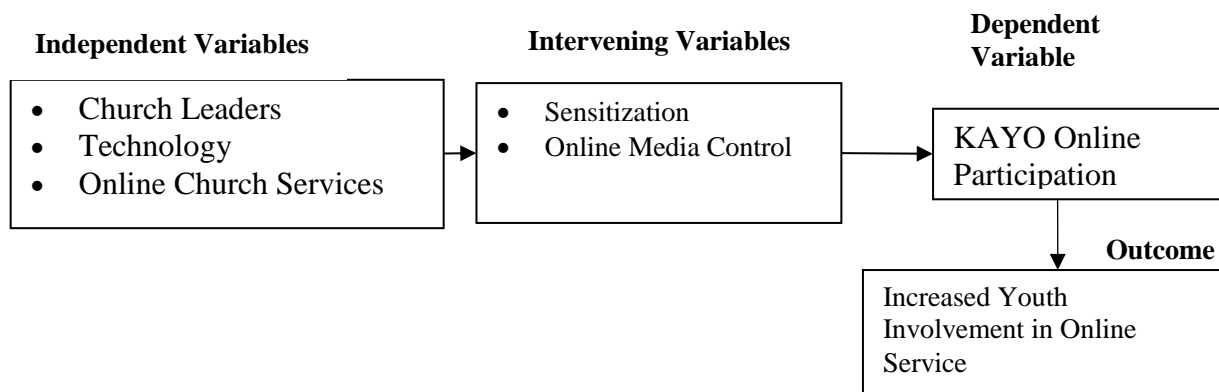


Figure 1: Conceptual Model

Methodology

Research Design

The study utilized a descriptive survey research design. But mixed method approach was considered only where quantitative data analysis was necessary. For example, I used a mixed methods study to analyse convergent qualitative and quantitative data collection using concurrent triangulation mixed method design which integrated both methods to determine factors that influenced the youth adoption of online services in the church. The questionnaire facilitated the application of this mixed method.

The data collected enabled the study to comprehend better the study problem. Further, it enabled the study to make generalizations of the study findings, ensure better contextualization and make the study results more credible. The research design was preferred due to the ability to collect both quantitative data and qualitative data which was the primary research method for the study to gather accurate information regarding the research problem.

The context of the study was St. Andrews and St. Monica’s Mugumo-ini Parishes, Cathedral Deanery, Thika Diocese. The researcher sampled participants within the age bracket of 18-35 years and owned a smart device. For the leadership of the church, the researcher considered those who were in charge of policy implementation and worked directly with KAYO.

Purposive sampling was used since the target population had similar characteristics required for the study. It also enabled the researcher to choose specific participants that helped meet the study

objectives and questions. The researcher chose a sample size of 159 (15%) respondents, being a good representative of the target population. With a sample of 159 respondents. Twelve (23%) respondents were purposively selected (church leadership and technical staff). This distribution of respondents is shown in Table 2.

Table 1:Sample Distribution

Particulars	Target	Sample	% of target
Bishop	1	1	100
Vicar	2	2	100
Youth Curate	2	2	100
Children Curate	2	2	100
Evangelist	2	2	100
Lay-Leader	2	2	100
KAYO Secretary	2	2	100
KAYO Treasurer	2	2	100
KAYO Youth Leader	2	2	100
Technical Staff	6	6	100
KAYO Guardians/Parents	516	68	13.2
KAYO Youth-St. Andrew's and St.	516	68	13.2
TOTALS	1055	159	15

Source: St. Andrew's and St. Monica's Mugumo-ini Parishes, Thika

Research Instruments

The section highlights the research protocols utilized by the study for the different categories of respondents sampled by the study.

Questionnaire

The study utilized semi-structured questions to collect data from KAYO youth, parents/guardians. The questionnaires had both closed-ended and open-ended questions which allowed collection of both quantitative and qualitative data. Malusi (2018) and Kothari (2009), describe a questionnaire as a series of questions that are intended to prompt responses from respondents for the study. It is most often used in descriptive studies that involve human respondents. The advantage of semi-structured questions enable ease of data analysis, it is economical and easily administered (Mugenda and

Interview Schedule

Unstructured interview schedule was used to collect qualitative responses from the key respondents in Fig. 3.1 above. This was administered in person at the church premise. The interview enabled the study to better understand opinions and experiences on online media platforms in promoting online church participation at ACK church. Interview questions used were open-ended questions and it enabled the study to collect in-depth information on the objectives of the study as a means of comparing the youth and parents/guardian's responses (Mugenda and Mugenda, 2013).

Focus Group Discussion Guide (FGD)

Unstructured FGD schedule was used to collect responses from the church leadership. This was administered through a meeting with sampled leaders in respective church premises. FGD as a qualitative approach was used to gain an in-depth understanding from vicar, youth curate, children curate, evangelist, lay-leader, KAYO secretary, treasurer, youth leader and technical staff on the use of online media platforms by ACK in promoting youth participation in church activities. It enabled the study to obtain in-depth data from the church leaders at ACK Cathedral Deanery who oversaw the running of various church services (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2013; Eeuwijk & Angehrn, 2017). FGD allowed the researcher to assess participants' shared narrative as well as their differences in terms of experiences, and opinions.

Data Analysis and Presentation

The data collected was then organized by grouping them into categories. It was also checked for completeness to ensure data quality. Quantitative data was cleaned and, keyed into SPSS software (Version 20), analyzed and interpreted for the study (Mugenda & Mugenda, 1999). Descriptive analysis was also cross tabulated to obtain comparative mean, frequencies, and percentages. Qualitative data was processed by coding in SPSS and summarized in themes using Ms-Word. Detailed information, patterns, trends, and relationships between independent and dependent variables were obtained (Mugenda & Mugenda, 1999) and (Orodho, 2009). Consequently, the results of the qualitative analysis were placed in themes and reported thematically following the study objectives. Data presentation was done using tables, and diagrams.

Data Presentation and Interpretation

Introduction

This section presents data collected, and analysis as per the study's objectives. It discusses the data analysis, findings and discussions along the study's three objective thematic areas which includes, extent of adaption of online service and youth participation, involvement of the youth in online church participation and challenges of online church participation among the youth. Discussions of the study's thematic areas in comparison with previous empirical studies was also made in the chapter.

Table 2: Response Rate

	Frequency	Percent
Male	45	43.7
Female	58	56.3
Total	103	100.0

Source: Primary Data, 2022

Table 3: Gender of Parents Respondents

Gender	Frequency	Percent
Male	55	53.4
Female	48	46.6
Total	103	100.0

Source: Primary Data, 2022

Table 4: Gender Distribution-Youth

	Frequency	Percent
Male	30	51.7
Female	28	48.3
Total	58	100.0

Source: Primary Data, 2022

The analysis on gender (Table 4.2) showed that more men 53.4% were likely to attend to church activities as opposed to the women participants 46.6%. This is an interesting phenomenon considering that Robbins et al. (2021) noted that more women were more likely to attend church service. However, the finding in Table 4.3 agrees with the arguments of Burge (2022) who noted that with generation Z, we are witnessing a change in church participation with more young women (51.7%) likely not to attend church service than young men (48.3%).

Analysis of extent of adaption of online church medium

Table 5: Use of Online Church Mediums among the Youth

Measures	Number of Youth	Mean Responses	Standard Deviation
The church uses online Facebook service	58	2.5	1.1
The church uses Twitter service	58	2.7	1.3
The church uses YouTube service	58	2.9	1.2
The church uses WhatsApp service	58	3.3	1.3
Overall Mean Score	58	2.9	1.23

Source: Primary Data 2022

Kolapo (2019) that the church ought to utilize online media platforms to engage with the youth. On the contrary, Facebook use for online church services had a standard deviation of 1.1 respectively indicating high congruence of responses that the church utilizes this medium for online church service.

Bishop (O.I. 17th /5/2022) noted that from the church leadership, the use of online medium was mostly for social purposes. The bishop noted that twitter had never been used by the church. Further, the KAYO leader, Arthur, (O.I. 17th /5/2022) stated that, we often use WhatsApp for cell group organization and social communication,

Whereas the provost (O.I. 17th /5/2022) noted that, “YouTube is mostly used for sharing recorded sermons, and religious videos.” This shows that Facebook is mostly preferred for online church services at ACK church.

Analysis of Involvement and Participation in Online Church Service

Table 6: Online Church Service Participation among the Youth (Y) and Parents (P)

Measures	N=			M	SD	
	Y	M=Y	SD=Y	N=P	=P	=P
I attend online church services	58	3.27	1.3	45	2.5	1.53
I “comment” on online church service streamed/posted	58	3.51	1.15	45	2.5	1.47
I “share” online church service links among my fellow youth members	58	3.53	1.15	45	2.2	1.25
I “like” online church service when participating online	58	3.51	1.22	45	2.4	1.42
I have enrolled with the online church media platforms	58	3.35	1.46	45	2.1	1.32
I always receive church communication through church online media platforms	58	3.70	1.38	45	2.6	1.55
I attend online church fellowships/workshops/conferences organized by the church	58	3.64	1.24	45	2.2	1.27
I respond to online church service activities and instructions	58	3.90	1.31	45	2.6	1.6
Mean Score		3.55	1.28		2.4	1.42
					4	

N=Number of respondents, Y=Youth, M=Mean, SD. = Standard Deviation, P=Parents/Guardians

The study also assessed the level of youth involvement in planning and executing online church services. There was agreement among the respondents that the church provides youth training. This is also evident with church consultation, appreciation of youth participation and sharing of church content on online platforms. The analysis on this dimension indicated that the majority of the youth had a positive response on the involvement of the youth in organizing online church

services (mean response of 3.55). However, in considering the standard deviation, the youth responses (1.19-1.35) varied greatly. This shows that, the youth disagreed greatly on the church involving them in planning and executing online church services. The findings by Wiseman (2015) concur with the youth responses, and that there is a need for the church to involve the youth. This is a desirable way and the church's engagement with the youth in actual planning and not by allocating them tasks, enhances their participation in online church service. In as much as Mungai (2018) showed that there the young generation embraces technology faster than the older generation; Wiseman (2015) blames this slow uptake on the generational gap between church leadership and the youth in the church. Bishop (O.I. 17th/5/2022) noted that "...the youth mostly help in the technical operation of technology equipment such as camera and video support"

This is an indication that the youth may not be involved in planning for online church services, which would have enabled their participation. This suggests that the level and type of youth involvement in the church are limited to technical support involvement. This explains the concurrency in the findings (Maina, 2015) that the church ought to be more flexible to listen and accept the youth's contribution to church activities. This implies that, with an inadequate level of involvement owing to a mismatch of the youths' expectations and the church's expectations (Jones, 2019), the youth continue to shy away from attending church services, since their voice in making decisions and contributing to planning online church activities is restricted to technical support only. In the findings (Systema & Vogel, 2020) meaningful involvement in realistic roles of the youth can go a long way to enhance their participation in online church activities.

Responses, mean scores and standard deviation are used to present results in figure 2.

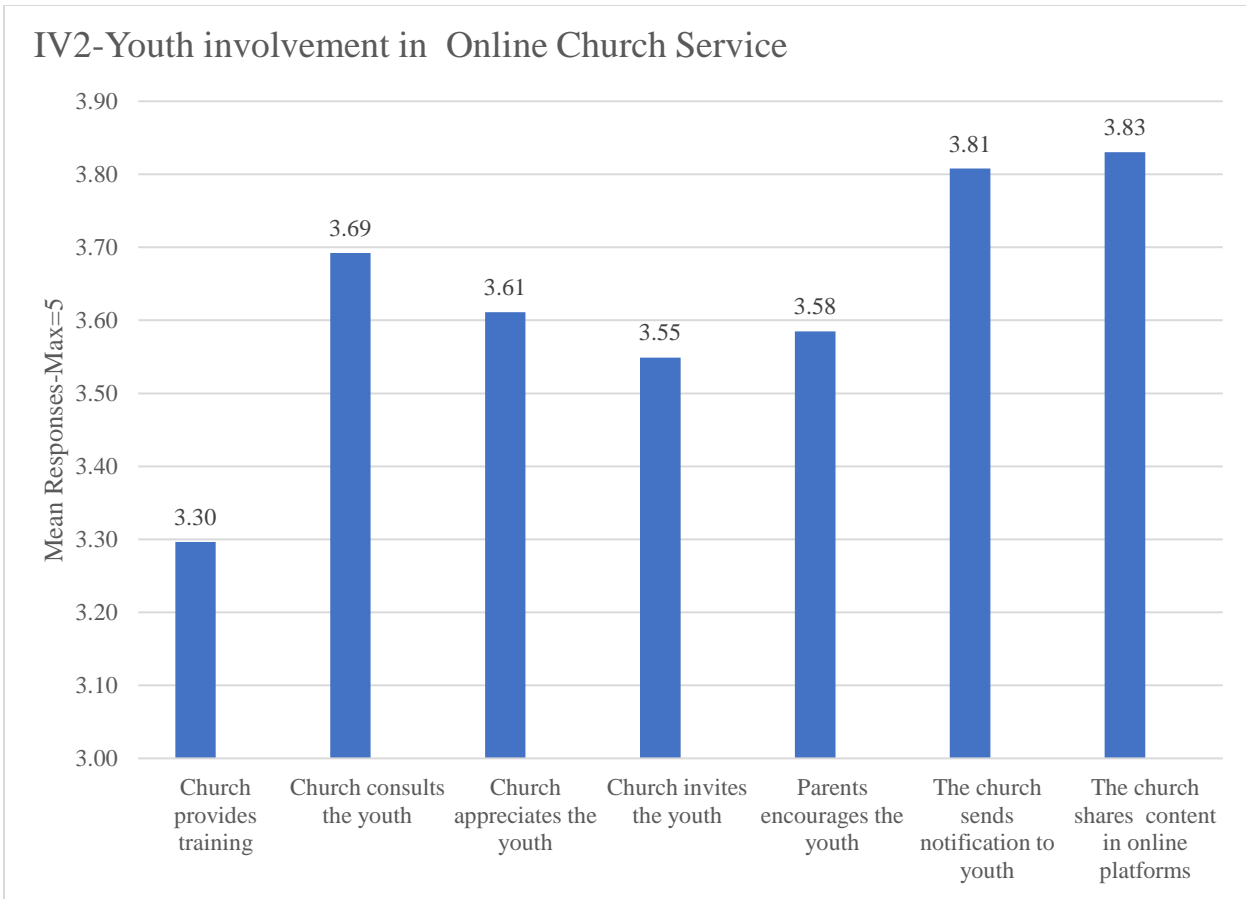


Figure 2: Youth involvement in Online Church Service

Source: Primary Data 2022

Analysis of Online Church Service Participation

In considering the standard deviations, it is notable that the responses from the youth ranged from “rarely to very often” response on online church participation, while the parents’/guardians feedback ranged from, “never to sometimes.” This indicates that, in as much as the youth showed great affinity for online church participation, parents and guardians disagreed to a great extent with the youth’s view. The youth’s finding is supported by Anglican Board of Mission (2018) and Dyikuk (2017) who asserted that majority of the modern youth own or have access to smart phones and that with this result, an opportunity is provided for the church to reach out to the youth on spiritual matters (Kolapo, 2019). According to Table 3.1, the parish had about 516 youth but during Covid -19, the attendance went down below 300 because of the lockdown. By the time this research was being done, full capacity attendance had not been realized.

Summary of Findings, Conclusions and Recommendations

According to the study's first objective, on adoption of online services by church leadership, the study purposed to examine the adoption of online church services at ACK Deanery and the study examined the use of Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and WhatsApp in carrying out online church activities. The results in Table 4.4 showed that the youth agreed to some great extent Mean. 2.9, SD 1.23 while parents fairly agreed on the church adoption of online church activities MS 2.1 SD 2.1.

According to the study's second objective, on youth involvement in online services the study findings showed that the youth were not involved in planning and executing online church services, but rather involved in technical support involvement only 61.5%, figure 3. In addition, the church leadership noted that this was primarily when the church required the youth expertise in video, camera or machine support.

Conclusions

Meaningful participative leadership enables the youth to feel involved and improve their online church attendance. This is in addition to enabling the youth to take ownership of church activities and decisions necessary for more participation in online church activities. As such, the church is able to enhance effectiveness of church teams, increase engagement in decision-making processes, provided meaningful joint activities, promote shared information, deliberate on issues jointly and agree before implementation of online church activities to enhance participation in online church activities.

Analysis of the first study objective, showed a high level of variation in responses among respondents. This is a strong indicator of the low adoption of online technologies by ACK church in promoting church participation among the youth. Hence, the need by the church to embrace innovative technologies in reaching out to the young people who are currently considered to have the highest level of presence online.

On the second objective, the study found that the church was not meaningfully involving the youth in online church activities planning and implementation. The primary benefit of participative leadership is to bring all members of the church on board so that all members are involved through constant consultation, planning, organizing and implementing online church activities. Failure to involve the youth can lead to apathy.

From the study findings, there is strong evidence to suggest that online church participation among the youth at ACK is still low at 38.5%. The finding shows that the low level of youth involvement is a key contributor challenge, generation gap, and mismatch of the older church members and the young congregation contributed to the Low Church participation. Due to this, the youth lacked ownership of the church activities, especially in managing their own affairs.

Recommendations of the Study

These recommendations emanate from` study findings and conclusions.

- i The church leadership need to seek private public partnership (PPPs) agreements with Telco's in providing internet subsidy to its youthful congregation to boost data purchases and attendance in online church service and activities.
- ii The church leadership may also offer meaningful youth involvement and not just seeking the youth on technical support activities.
- iii The church leadership may also consider enrolling for online based pedagogies and strategies on utilization of online technologies to provide a better and youth-based church experience, that allows for their input either by way of contributing or being seen online when the online church is ongoing.

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