

## Effects of House Fellowships on the Spiritual Growth of Members: A Case Study of Parklands Baptist Church, Westlands, Nairobi County

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### Abstract

**Purpose:** In Kenya, the lack of knowledge on the importance of house group fellowship on spiritual development and growth has become very prominent despite the increasing number of denominations in the country. Guided by the biblical learning from the book of Hosea 4:6 which expounds that, “People perish due to lack of knowledge”, individuals have been affected by spiritual ignorance leaving society in an unsafe spot where the devil can easily deceive and manipulate them. Despite this increasing growth of house fellowships, there is also a notable increase in cases of inconsistency, lack of commitment; fear, sin, individual relationships, busyness, and ignorance of the things of God that have continued to escalate from time to time. The purpose of this research work was to assess the effects of house group fellowship on the spiritual growth of members of Parkland Baptist Church Westlands-Nairobi County.

**Methods:** The study was conducted among various house groups within the church. The research employed both qualitative and quantitative research design. Primary data was collected using questionnaires and oral interviews with members and leaders of the various house groups as well as pastors. The interviews were guided by the research questions while secondary data was derived from online sources: Journals, books, and websites. The collected data was analyzed using a statistical package for social sciences.

**Results:** The findings from the analyzed data were displayed using frequency distribution, percentage tables, and pie charts. The results established a positive relationship between good leadership, interpersonal relationships, communal worship, and spiritual development. Results indicated that there was a positive relationship between spiritual growth and common shared interest between the house fellowship members as well as the member’s culture.

**Implication:** The study recommends that to boast spiritual growth, leaders in the house fellowship need to allow their members to express their views in a free environment. Further, house fellowship as well as church leadership should support and allow their members to use their talents, gifts, and skills to serve both in the church and house fellowship group’s gatherings. Also, the study recommends more emphasis to be given to the issues of culture and interpersonal growth as this will contribute to spiritual growth and development of the house fellowship church which will be a win for both the worshippers and the overall church at large.

**Keywords:** *House Fellowships, Spiritual Growth of Members, Parklands Baptist Church*

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## 1.0 Introduction

House fellowship is credited as instrumental in spearheading unity among church members as well as acting as an ingredient of enhancing spiritual values<sup>1</sup>. This kind of fellowship has given religion a unique role of bringing people together and allowing them to share matters affecting their lives as well as developing strategies to address their concerns and issues.

This study explored the role of house fellowship in enhancing spiritual development of church members at Parklands Baptist Church in Westlands- Nairobi County. The phenomenon of distractions, ignorance of the things of God, busyness lack of commitment, and inconsistency has been an issue affecting spiritual development for a long time. According to recent research on emerging trends and the persistence of conflicts within most Kenyan Communities, the majority of people have negative spiritual mindsets which have affected their development<sup>2</sup>.

House fellowships, often referred to as small groups or house groups, are associations of people who meet informally, usually in a person's home, to study the Bible, pray, and encourage one another on their spiritual journeys. These groups frequently seek to create a sense of belonging among their members, hold them accountable, and promote deeper relationships that give individuals the capacity to be able to mobilize as well as cultivate attitudes of forgiveness and reconciliation<sup>3</sup>. House fellowships can also provide several benefits in the context of spiritual development. Members in a house fellowship are carriers of ideas that play vital roles in peacebuilding and conflict resolution. These fellowships offer a forum for open and sincere discussions about faith, enabling people to pose queries, relate personal experiences, and have deep dialogues.

Sharing of scriptures has been the core business that guides house fellowship. This helps people to gain a greater knowledge of spiritual concepts and inspire self-analysis. Additionally, home fellowships' more intimate size and location foster stronger member relationships and support<sup>4</sup>. People can find encouragement, and receive prayer, and support from one another as they share their joys, sorrows, and spiritual journeys. This sense of accountability and community may help people grow spiritually and create a stronger faith.

## 1.1 Problem Statement

House fellowship is at the heart of many communities involving many people and plays a very important part. Christians in all occupations from different denominations have an important role to play in promoting peace, reconciliation, and welfare of members, which is a manifestation of their spiritual development. There have been increasing cases of power struggles in churches as well as internal conflicts among members, which have continued to escalate from time to time<sup>5</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Miller, Timothy E. "Enhancing Appreciation For Variety In Worship Styles Among Selected Group Members In The First Baptist Church Of Hohenwald, Tennessee." (n.d.). doi:10.2986/tren.053-0037

<sup>2</sup> "Emerging Trends and Persistence of Inter-Ethnic Conflicts in Kenya." *Research on Humanities and Social Sciences*, 2019. doi:10.7176/rhss/9-16-05

<sup>3</sup> Drummond, Ashwin. *The Beginning and End Time Church*. Ladder To Heaven, 2023.

<sup>4</sup> Anonymous. Minutes of the General Conference of the Congregational Churches in Massachusetts. Norderstedt: BoD – Books on Demand, 2022.

<sup>5</sup> Adkins, Karen. "Failure to Communicate: Gossip as Institutional Conflict." *Gossip, Epistemology, and Power*, 2017, 77-106. doi:10.1007/978-3-319-47840-1\_4.

Despite the church playing a critical role in enhancing congregants with knowledge and wisdom of embracing love among themselves, there is a considerable knowledge gap regarding how house fellowships affect the spiritual growth of their participants, despite the fact that they are becoming more and more popular as alternate or complementary environments for spiritual development<sup>6</sup>. Personal experience points to the potential advantages of these tiny, close-knit communities, but a thorough study on the precise effect of house fellowships on members' spiritual development is lacking. This research gap poses a problem because it limits our capacity to evaluate how well house fellowships promote spiritual development and serve as spiritual mentors for members. Religious leaders, practitioners, and scholars are constrained in their ability to maximize the design and implementation of these small-group settings without a solid grasp of the possible advantages and difficulties connected with house fellowships.

This research work attempted to answer the following questions: why do people join house fellowships and their expectations concerning their spiritual growth? What are the challenges faced by members of house fellowship that hinder their spiritual growth? How might house fellowships help people grow spiritually? Finally, what is the effectiveness of the approaches employed by house fellowship members in expanding their faith?

### 1.2 Research Objectives

- i. To investigate reasons why people, join house fellowships and their expectations about their spiritual growth with Acts 2:41-47.
- ii. To examine challenges faced by members of the house fellowship that hinder their spiritual growth such as group dynamics, leadership styles, and cultural differences.
- iii. To explore how house fellowships help people grow spiritually as well as enhance church numerical growth.
- iv. To evaluate the effectiveness of the approaches employed by house fellowship in boosting participants' feelings of belonging and general well-being.
- v. To provide recommendations for enhancing house fellowships' capacity to promote spiritual development and human transformation.

## 2.0 Literature Review

### 2.1 Theoretical Review

#### *Social identity theory*

Individuals' opinions about themselves and their perception of others are influenced by the groups to which they belong as well as by the members of their house fellowship groups. Further, it is suggested that a person's social identity is dependent on how others consider him to be like other people in the group he belongs to<sup>7</sup>.

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<sup>6</sup> Chege, Moses N., and James N. Obrempong. "HOW SELF-DISCLOSURE FACTORS AFFECT INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS AND CHURCH GROWTH: THE STUDY OF PASTORS AND CONGREGANTS OF CITAM VALLEY ROAD." *American Journal of Psychology* 3, no. 1 (2021), 23-44. doi:10.47672/ajp.732.

<sup>7</sup> Corneille, Olivier, and Vincent Yzerbyt. "Dependence and the formation of stereotyped beliefs about groups: from interpersonal to intergroup perception." *Stereotypes as Explanations*, 2002, 111-126. doi:10.1017/cbo9780511489877.007.

Social identity theory helps to partially explain why Paul's description of the church in Colossians 3:11—"Here there is no Gentile or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all and is in all"—is so significant from a theological standpoint. Highlighting demographic group memberships promotes in-group prejudice and devalues out-group members, whereas highlighting the fact that following Christ is the core of our identity offers a foundation for genuine peace and unity with believers from other demographic groups (cf. Eph. 2:11–12, Gal. 3:26–29).

The foundation of house fellowship is the social identity theory, which explains the connections between different people in the context of the church. People's opinions about who they are, their demographics, values, hobbies, or pretty much anything else related to identity. Since human behavior varies so widely, it is frequently impossible to tell how one house group fellowship differs from another within the same church. According to this theory, identity varies among individuals. Additionally, commitment levels among members of different house fellowships can vary; some have extremely high commitment levels, while others have low commitment levels<sup>8</sup>.

In line with social identity theory, lack of knowledge of biblical teachings and leadership characteristics like extraversion, humility, and integrity have made the issue of church commitment a source of concern. Additionally, pastoral attitudes towards different church ministries have been prominent in small home fellowship group Bible studies, reflecting or affecting people's views, feelings, and behaviors in house churches<sup>9</sup>.

Commitment to the house fellowship can be interpreted in many different ways. Since the church is the body of Christ, it could be described as devotion to Christ on the part of an individual. Definitions focusing on the organizational aspect of commitment could be used in place of this because house fellowships are also examples of human organizations. It centers on the degree to which a believer feels a moral obligation to remain in a house group, the fear of loss associated with leaving a house fellowship, and the degree to which a person feels emotionally tied to a house church. All of these commitments are crucial because they have an impact on how believers behave and think when they engage in house fellowship church ministries<sup>10</sup>.

It's crucial to assess believers' loyalty to a house fellowship church. He argued that to prevent exceptions, a believer in a house fellowship should complete a survey one week to obtain a conceptualization that does not significantly differ from week to week. His commitment score should not differ significantly from what he would indicate if he were surveyed a week or a month later<sup>11</sup>.

According to the social identity theory, a house fellowship fosters social behavior that is influenced by the members' traits and goals. House group believers typically try to keep a favorable perception of the groups to which they belong. People are prone to seek out highly

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<sup>8</sup> Tucker, J. B. "Paul and Christianity as a new ethnic identity in which previous identities may continue?" *Journal of Beliefs & Values* 32, no. 1 (2011), 95-98. doi:10.1080/13617672.2011.549313.

<sup>9</sup> Canatella, Frank. *Reclaiming Religion from the Church*. Trafford Publishing, 2003

<sup>10</sup> "The Escape from Organizational Commitment by Employing Organizations." *Organizational Commitment*, 2019, 35-36. doi:10.1142/9789813232167\_0006.

<sup>11</sup> Covarrubias, Anna, David R. Dunaetz, and Wendi D. McGehee. "Innovativeness and Church Commitment: What Innovations Were Most Important During the Pandemic?" 2021. doi:10.31219/osf.io/cgmwb.

regarded qualities, attitudes, and behaviors that might be considered as defining their in-groups as a result of social identity processes<sup>12</sup>.

House fellowship enables participants to develop a good social identity as a means of enhancing their group's status and reputation in society. According to this hypothesis, the individual-mobility belief system is one of the major obstacles to house fellowship growth. Believers have the freedom to switch between different house groups<sup>13</sup>.

## 2.2 Empirical Review

### *Reasons people join house fellowships and their expectations concerning their spiritual growth about Acts 2:41-47*

The daily routine of the first Christian congregation in Jerusalem is summed up in Acts 2:42–47. For House fellowships, this passage serves as an example of Christian living in the modern era. The narrative immediately follows the episode of Pentecost, when many people in Jerusalem experienced a strong outpouring of the Holy Spirit (2:1-13). The people experienced the end-time gift of God's Spirit, which had been promised by the prophet Joel and was now being poured out on them by the resurrected and exalted Christ (2:14–36). Three thousand turned from their sins were baptized and became part of Jerusalem.

These communities had the following common activities: teaching, fellowship, mealtimes together, and prayer. The two most important ones are sharing meals and fellowships (koinonia is the Greek term for both concepts). While prayer and teaching are perhaps more evident as Christian endeavors, a reminder of their importance would nonetheless benefit many churches. The term "breaking of bread" can apply to shared regular meals or, more broadly, to the Lord's Supper. This makes sense in light of 1 Corinthians 11:17–34. The Lord's Supper observed as part of regular meals in the early church (Acts 2:46–47) offers an additional account of the community's existence which enhances fellowship and the spirit of sharing.

### *Challenges faced by house fellowship members*

According to Alessi et al.'s research, there is a stark contrast between the approaches of our Lord and what is occasionally observed in many churches nowadays. Leadership ideas adapted from the business sector have a negative impact on local churches. Through this process, some leadership strengths have been discovered. In addition, several undesirable outcomes have emerged, including manipulation, disregard for biblical principles, cultural differences, and power struggles. Some congregations at the other end of the spectrum have decided that seniority, control, and status quo are the stifling qualities they most want in lay leaders. However, during his ministry, Jesus gave the people the answers to all of their difficult situations by informing them that the secret to long-lasting fulfillment is to be a servant in the kingdom of God.

In addition, Ken Chant in his book entitled 'Faith Dynamics, Vision International University, U.S.A, and Vision Publishing House expounds on the importance of prayer as a vital key to spiritual growth in fellowship<sup>14</sup>. In his research work, he explains that the most underlying

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<sup>12</sup> Anderson, Ian A., and Wendy Wood. "Social Motivations' Limited Influence on Habitual Behavior: Tests from Social Media Engagement." 2022. doi:10.31234/osf.io/q9268.

<sup>13</sup> "Why do religious believers and non-believers see one another as irrational?" *Religion and Atheism*, 2016, 68-80. doi:10.4324/9781315521497-12.

<sup>14</sup> Chant, Ken. *Faith Dynamics*. Vision Publishing (Ramona, CA), 2013.



reason why individuals fail to grow spiritually is failure to put prayer as a vital key to possession. He adds that for a house fellowship to enrich its members with spiritual maturity and to reach their goals, prayer is the key to their success.

Negative individual influence within house fellowship has been a critical problem challenging the spiritual growth of members. John Maxwell an international speaker in his book entitled 'Becoming a Person of Influence emphasized the need to work together in teamwork to achieve better results<sup>15</sup>. In his findings, he argues that it's not always true that working together will produce good results. This is because not every team member that works together is a team player. In his argument, a person may be together as a team but lack common commitment which makes the group operate as an individual. He supports that, at times people in fellowship may have different views as well understanding towards the similar process.

### *How house fellowship helps members grow spiritually*

#### **House Fellowship and Spiritual Growth**

Allotey, Emmanuel in his book, "101 Prayer Points for Church Growth" explains that people in house fellowship church grow spiritually when their activities are in line with the purpose for which it was established<sup>16</sup>. He is of the argument that a church should attain the growth of its members and must also grow in other avenues of life such as financially, emotionally, etc. The focus of most churches in Kenya is to grow quantitatively. This is so because they believe when people are many, they will contribute enough money. Again, there are churches where growth in membership does not matter. In these churches, they believe growth should be spiritual and not numerical.

Spiritual growth takes place in stages in every local church. This is so because believers have to be taught the Word, thereafter; this word will transform them to be vessels of change, peace builders, and individuals who can foster personal relationships with God. A believer in house fellowship after attaining certain spiritual growth will preach to other people the Word of God which strengthens their spiritual disciplines such as Prayer, worship, fellowship, confession, fasting, service, and submission<sup>17</sup>. Some are even able to go the extra mile in reaching out to societies that need to be reconciled back to each other after disagreements or tribal conflicts. Further indication shows that: spiritual growth promotes positive human relations, physical wealth, and other crucial perspectives from which the growth of the house fellowship church can be viewed.

#### **House fellowship and church growth.**

Biblically, in the situations of Priscilla and Aquila (Rom. 16:3, 5), Nymphas (Col. 4:15), and Philemon (Philemon 1, 2), the first Christian congregations began as simple house fellowships. After several home groups settled in a city, they finally built a house of worship. The cornerstones of evangelism and church development initiatives are house fellowships. The majority of people attend church, according to a study, mostly because of the Christian support network that originated in house fellowships. In addition, the laid-back and casual settings of

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<sup>15</sup> Edition, Shortcut. *SUMMARY - Becoming A Person Of Influence: How To Positively Impact The Lives Of Others* By John C. Maxwell. Shortcut Edition, 2021

<sup>16</sup> Allotey, Emmanuel. *101 Prayer Points for Church Growth - How to Pray for Church Growth*. Matador, 2022.

<sup>17</sup> ORTBERG, JOHN. "RETHINKING THE KINGDOM OF GOD:" *Until Christ Is Formed in You*, 2018, 217-234. doi:10.2307/j.ctv310vm8p.13.

the home fellowship encourage participation and unrestricted dialogue among members. Furthermore, people who would be uneasy in a church environment frequently feel more at ease in a home fellowship situation.

House fellowships have been instrumental in enhancing church growth since they provide individual ways of identifying members who come to fellowship with need, thus they provide a setting where people are taught the Word. Members are thus able to reach other people through outreaches and share prayers and the word of God, which forms the basis of the Church's growth.

House fellowship characterized by the exchange of happiness, blessings, and disappointments is a common practice. In addition, house fellowship fosters empathy among the group members and serves as a release valve for feelings and stress. Group members learn more about God's Word teachings on how to respond to their actual circumstances by spending time together. Thus, according to Galatians 6:2, NKJV, members "share one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ." All this expands members' capacity for knowledge of spiritual growth, which in return leads to the establishment of the Church.

### ***Effectiveness of the approaches employed***

Spore, Roy L. in his book, "Productive Leadership: *A Guide for Ministry in the Small Church*". He argues that team ministry is always effective in small churches because of strong relationship ties that exist among members. He adds that, if the same factors applied within the small church can produce good results, then these can as well work for the big church. According to him, what is important is to have a successful team of well-mentored members who possess influence, character, and competencies. Further, he expounds that house fellowship leaders can be equipped to handle the pressure coming from growing bigger churches<sup>18</sup>. A good example is found in Acts 6:1-7 where the disciples had to increase the leaders for them to handle pressure as the number of new converts continued to rise.

In his articles, Michael Mawson emphasized the value of teamwork. He lays forth the right procedures and concepts for creating a team. The necessity of creating teams of Spirit-filled and ministry-gifted individuals to serve God and others should be a primary goal of believers in a local church. Again, he argues that it is not fair to only target Spirit-infused and ministry-gifted people. He adds that there are individuals inside the congregation who when allowed to serve can become good leaders in future<sup>19</sup>.

### **2.3 Conceptual framework**

The study suggested the following relationships based on the review of previous literature: According to the framework below, house fellowship is the independent variable and spiritual growth is the dependent variable. The main purpose of this research was to investigate the effects of house fellowship on the spiritual growth of members of Parklands Baptist Church in Westlands, Nairobi County.

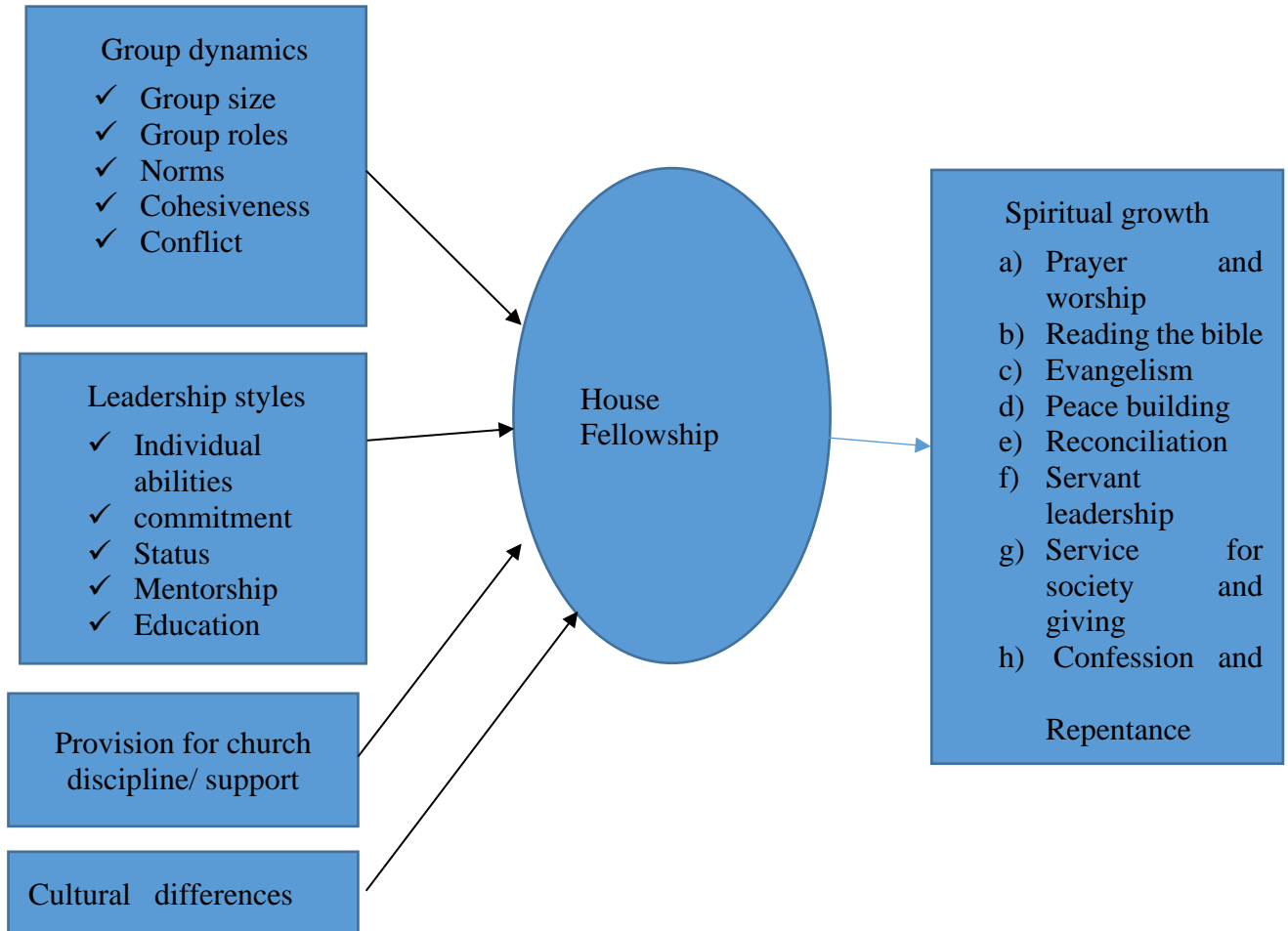
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<sup>18</sup> Spore, Roy L. *Productive Leadership: A Guide for Ministry in the Small Church*. Eugene: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2021.

<sup>19</sup> Mawson, Michael. "Christ, Spirit, and Church." *Oxford Scholarship Online*, 2018. doi:10.1093/oso/9780198826460.003.0007.

**Independent variables**

**Dependent Variable**



**Figure 1: Proposed Model of Study**

**3.0 Methodology**

The study was conducted at Parklands Baptist Church in Westland, Nairobi County. The population of this study consisted of the entire leadership of various house fellowships within the church and members of house fellowships who are active and have stayed within the group for more than 2 years. The total number of house groups within Parklands Baptist church is 150 groups each having a rationale of 10-15 members. This population constituted the senior pastor of Parkland Baptist Church, associate pastor, the pastor in charge of house fellowships, house fellowship group leaders, and house fellowship members. The research employed both qualitative and quantitative research design. Primary data was collected using questionnaires and oral interviews with members and leaders of the various house groups as well as pastors. The interviews were guided by the research questions while secondary data was derived from online sources: Journals, books, and websites. The collected data was analyzed using a statistical package for social sciences (SPSS).



## **4.0 Results and Discussion**

### **4.1 Reasons why people join house fellowships and their expectations about their spiritual growth with Acts 2:41-47.**

The first theme sought to investigate reasons why people, join house fellowships and their expectations about their spiritual growth with Acts 2:41-47. The data showed that in the understanding of the house fellowship members, People join house fellowship to be able to have communal worship, encourage one another, spread love of God, and harvest lost souls back to Christ through teaching of biblical principles. Most respondents represented by a score of 69.7 percent agreed to the above reasons for joining house fellowship. They claimed that house fellowship is characterized by prayer sessions which are accompanied by testimonies of answered prayers from members and this has motivated them to bring their neighbors as well as their friends to house fellowships. Further, the respondents supported that house fellowship has been their means of getting people to come for prayers that encourage them. This reason was voted as compared to other reasons such as those arguing that people join house fellowship as a way of identifying, recruiting, and training new church leaders through mentorship programs which received a fair voting with a 48.7 percent response rate. However, other reasons justifying why people join house fellowship such as seeking shelter against crisis and reaching out to crying souls received a limited response from the respondents with a response rate of 19.7 percent and 21.1 percent respectively.

### **4.2 Challenges faced by members of the house fellowship that hinder their spiritual growth such as group dynamics, leadership styles, and cultural differences.**

The second theme sought to examine challenges faced by members of the house fellowship that hinder their spiritual growth such as group dynamics, leadership styles, and cultural differences.

Based on the data, the most underlying reason why individuals fail to grow spiritually is failure to put prayer as a vital key possession. Performance of house fellowship members depends on the ability to effectively enhance interaction with God through Prayers. This would enable them to grow spiritually. Prayer therefore is a very important aspect of house fellowship. Most house fellowships have people with different spiritual problems. These problems are due to failure to make prayer an important key possession and this leads to attainment of maturity in spiritual growth which now acts as a barrier to spiritual maturity.<sup>20</sup> Some bad experiences in the house fellowship may be experienced such as cases of discrimination, ethnic differences within house fellowship, political differences, and differences in religious doctrines.

On the challenges faced by members of the house fellowship that hinder their spiritual growth, 50.0 percent agreed that spiritual growth is limited by members' inability to put prayer as a key possession. Other members given a response rate of 39.5 percent agreed to the fact that engagement in activities that do not fulfill the great commission also limits an individual's spiritual growth. Further, a considerable number of individuals agree to the fact that spiritual growth is limited by negative individual influence within house fellowship given by a response of 31.6 percent. However, some respondents were indifferent to the contributions of leadership ideas adapted from the business sector as having a negative impact on house fellowship as well as several undesirable outcomes such as manipulation, disregard for biblical principles, cultural

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<sup>20</sup> Parvis Ghassem-Fachandi, "Mimetic failure: Politics, prayer and possession," *Prayer and Politics*, 2018, 25, doi:10.4324/9781315267289-5.

differences, and power struggles given by the response rate 39.5percent and 35.5percent respectively.

#### **4.3 How house fellowships help people grow spiritually as well as enhance church growth**

The third theme sought to explore how house fellowships help people grow spiritually as well as enhance church numerical growth. The study findings revealed that house fellowship group engages in activities that enhance each member's fairness to the opportunity to share their views. This assists it in aligning with the purpose of its establishment which enhances the value of each house fellowship member to feel that they have something to offer. Further, engagement in such activities helps in nurturing member's talents as well as vigorous leaders who have skills and gifts to serve.

In addition, an individual may join a house fellowship group to be supported in using their time as well as resources for the welfare of the house fellowship group. It is from these house fellowship meetings that individuals discover and grow their talents as they serve together. Huisman argues that some people with the same issues may join house fellowship groups not for financial support but to seek emotional support<sup>21</sup>.

In the same way apart from house fellowship members serving together, they are taught the word of God which transforms them to be vessels of change where they support, encourage one another, and share their life experiences. This facilitates member openness to share their needs in a free environment and able to help each other.

Additionally, a house fellowship group with a proper leadership structure promotes timely communication which boosts participants' level of understanding as well as collaboration. On the other hand, good and timely communication within the house fellowship group boosts feeling of belonging and members feel included in the decision-making, this meets a member's interpersonal needs. Further, having a sound leadership structure allows members to share opinions and thus able to influence others. Leaders from the various house fellows who are perceived to be good listeners are associated with members feeling a sense of togetherness, spiritual significance, belonging as well as inclusion.

The finding from this research indicates a strong positive level of agreement on every aspect of how house fellowship group helps people to grow spiritually and enhance growth in the main church. Most respondents strongly agreed to the fact that believers have to be taught the Word of God which transforms them to be vessels of change given by a higher response rate of 71.1 percent. Other respondents strongly agreed to the fact that house fellowship has helped in nurturing people's talent as well as good leaders who are vigorous which was represented by a response rate of 60.5percent. It was also strongly agreed by the respondents that commitment by house fellowship in activities that are in line with the purpose of its establishment is vital given a response rate of 60.5 percent. It was also strongly agreed that positive human relations and sound organizational structure are instrumental for spiritual growth given by response rates of 59.2 percent and 46.1 percent respectively.

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<sup>21</sup> Dena M. Huisman, *Social Power and Communicating Social Support: How Stigma and Marginalization Affect Our Ability to Help* (Oxfordshire: Taylor & Francis, 2022), 18

#### **4.4 Effectiveness of the approaches employed by house fellowship in boosting participants' feelings of belonging and general well-being**

The fourth theme sought to evaluate the effectiveness of the approaches employed by house fellowship in boosting participants' feelings of belonging and general well-being. Based on the results; Sound leadership, team spirit, and Participation by members of house fellowship in activities that enhance bonding and create a space where members can open their hearts to one another, share honestly, and ultimately learn to trust and confide in each other are vital in creating a strong lasting relationship. This is because house fellowship members feel a sense of belonging. Team ministry ensures people work smoothly on projects and can participate fully in them. Further, when families and friends participate in house fellowship, they can share the same values systems, providing for each other, caring, and loving. This strengthens each member for the benefit of the group. In addition, this brings about unity and harmony in the fellowship groups. Being part of a small group helps in reducing stress since members share their needs in a free environment and help each other<sup>22</sup>.

Respondents strongly agreed to the fact that Participation by house fellowship members has enhanced bonding and created space where members can open their hearts to one another given a response rate of 69.7 percent. Further, 56.6 percent of respondents strongly agreed to the fact that a Sound leadership structure and using the best talent available by each member of household through wise delegation assist members to boost their feeling of belonging within the group. In addition, it was evident that team spirit and the creation of spirit-filled teams are instrumental for house fellowship members as they help them to be effective in the service of God as supported by a positive level of agreement of 57.9 percent and 48.7 percent respectively.

#### **4.5 Factors enhancing house fellowship capacity to promote church development and growth**

In answering the last theme on factors enhancing house fellowship capacity to promote church development and growth. Most respondents supported the contribution of the following factors towards church growth. Social commitment and business interactions within house fellowship have enhanced development of good governing principles. A higher percentage of people believe that house fellowship helps in the establishment of the larger church by helping in the development of a set of guiding principles that outlines its spiritual mandate. This was supported by a positive response rate of 42.1 percent. House fellowships enhance ministry growth in the main church. Similarly, it is through house fellowship unit that enhances self-disclosure that impacts church growth positively. This was represented by a mean of 1.92 indicating a strong agreement to the contribution of interpersonal relations. Further, fellowship values have the effect of building unity among members and can influence members and enable them to agree. This was represented by a mean of 2.04 showing a positive level of agreement. In addition, the respondents showed a positive level of agreement on the contribution of common shared interest and financial resources as having a great impact in affecting church growth and development which is represented by mean of 1.86 and 2.13 respectively. However, respondents showed a level of indifference to the fact that fellowship customs and traditions affect church growth given a higher response rate of not sure of 43.4 percent and a mean of 2.86.

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<sup>22</sup> Claire Mallette et al., Arnold and Boggs's Interpersonal Relationships - E-Book: Arnold and Boggs's Interpersonal Relationships - E-Book (St. Louis: Elsevier Health Sciences, 2021), 29.

Consequently, in answering the question on their thoughts on how leadership of House Fellowship contributes towards the development of the church some respondents supported that leadership contributes to church growth and development through:

1. “Allowing their neighbors to join the house group and ultimately join the church” supported by questionnaire No.5. In addition to the support of similar questions.
2. “Strategic planning, reaching out of those who are out of the reach by the leadership of the church and representative of the church at the grassroots” supported by Q. No 52.
3. “Updating members on the upcoming activities that require their participation. Reaching out to the members especially when they are going through difficult circumstances, the members draw closer to the church more” supported by Q. No 7.

Further in answering the questions on how house group fellowship has utilized the resources within themselves to enhance development of the church, the respondents supported the following arguments. According to them, the church develops due to the following:

- i. “Most of the resources are used to spread love through sharing and reaching members who are in need in the church. This includes contributing to food bank which is a project used by the church to reach needy society” Supported by Q. No 2.
- ii. “Delegation, sharing responsibilities, contributing to supporting a common course e.g. School fees for needy, food, clothing and medical bills support”. Supported by Qn. No 23.
- iii. “The church has given us bible study books which we study during our fellowship. The church also organizes workshops which equip us spiritually, physically and even emotionally, with all these members feel free to support the church as a way of giving back by providing services, gifts, etc.” Supported by Q. No 26.
- iv. “Mobilizing funds for church projects” Supported by Q. No 32.

In addition, in responding to questions on other ways in which group resources contribute towards the overall development of the church, the respondents supported the following argument. They supported that group resources:

- a. “They have contributed in (CSR) activities we attended as a church” Supported by Q. No 26.
- b. “Members offering voluntary services to help run church programs” Supported by Q. No 32.
- c. “Construction of church facilities” Supported by Q. No 36

Further, on the question of how house fellowship group’s ways of doing things have impacted the overall church development, the respondents supported the following arguments:

- 1) “Planting of new churches” Supported by Q. No 1
- 2) “Evangelism” Supported by Q. No 4
- 3) “Through Leadership Development” Supported by Q. No 12
- 4) “In growth of gifts and talents” Supported by Q. No 14

On the question of how interpersonal relationships between house group members affect church development, the respondents supported the following suggestions:

- 1) “Interactions create positive relationships which includes interactions among church members thus creating positive relationships in the church”. Supported by Q. No 2.

- 2) “Positive relationship creates strong bonds that are good for church growth and development” Supported by Q. No 5.
- 3) “Cordial relationships enable group work as a team for overall growth”. Supported by Q. No 11.
- 4) “A member who feels part of the house group can maintain the same status in the larger congregation. In the same way, if a member falls out in the house group, they may find it difficult to keep up with the larger church”. Supported by Q. No 18.

On the argument on respondents’ opinion on how interpersonal relations between house group members affect church development, the respondents supported the following opinions:

- a. “There is unity of purpose”. Supported by Q. No 1
- b. “Common desire to move the church forward, putting aside sideshows. Genuine love and respect for one another in carrying out tasks/duties” Supported by Q. No 27.
- c. “Creation of harmony among the various departments in the church” Supported by Q. No 39.
- d. “Members always being present when called upon for any developmental project in the church. There is always very strong support from members willing to be involved in church activities” Supported by Q. No 53.

## 5.0 Conclusion

The study findings from the research established that people join house fellowship to be able to have communal worship, encourage one another, spread love of God, and harvest souls back to Christ through teachings of biblical principles. Further, the findings of this study also noted that the most underlying challenge that hinders members’ spiritual growth is failure to make prayer a vital key possession.

Moreover, the study concludes that people grow spiritually in house fellowship through being taught the word, which transforms them to be vessels of change, peacebuilders, and individuals who can foster personal relationships with God. Further, the study found participation by members of house fellowship in activities that enhance bonding and create a space where people can open their hearts to one another, share honestly, and ultimately learn to trust and confide in each other which is instrumental in creating strong lasting relationships. This was found an effective approach. In addition, common shared interest was found to positively affect the overall church growth and development as well as numerical church growth.

The members in house fellowship groups involvement can blend more easily and form trust among them since is small enough to manage. The benefits of teamwork are significant for all those who participate in the group's endeavors.

Regarding the facet of group culture is that when different aspects are incorporated, e.g. values, leadership, and a set of norms will then be established rewarding how things ought to be working and the expected conduct of people.

Depending on distinct groups, some characteristics of group culture are likely to boost performance while others may act as a barrier to performance. For example, a believer with strong cultural values towards spiritual growth tends to develop behaviors and processes that aid spiritual growth and thus becomes very productive in growth.

The house fellowship groups have values, that direct the way they employ where each house member has the chance to share their views. Members feel that they have something to share; they are thus able to use their skills to serve. It is in the house fellowship engagements where



the members discover and grow their talents as they serve together. House fellowship group aids in reducing stress since members share their needs in a free environment and assist each other.

## 6.0 Recommendations

The study has established that to boast spiritual growth, leaders in house fellowship need to allow their members to express their views in a free environment. House fellowship as well as church leadership should support and allow their members to use their talents, gifts, and skills to serve both in the church and house fellowship groups gatherings. Also, more emphasis should be given to the issues of culture and interpersonal growth as this will contribute to spiritual growth and development of the house fellowship church which will be a win for both the worshippers and the overall church at large.

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