Church Organizational Structure Determining Men's Absenteeism at PCEA Nyeri Presbytery, Nyeri County, Kenya

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Abstract

Men's participation in church has raised concerns about the sustainability of congregational engagement, spiritual leadership, and community development efforts. In recent times, churches, researchers, and religious analysts have recorded absenteeism and a declining trend in the attendance of men in the church, both on Sundays and/or weekly church activities. This study thus sought to evaluate the contribution of church structure to men's absenteeism at the Nyeri Presbytery. The study was guided by classical secularization theory. The study employed a descriptive research design, using stratified sampling to select 131 respondents. Data was collected through questionnaires and interviews, then analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistical methods. Thematic analysis was applied to qualitative data. Quantitative data analysis entailed descriptive (percentages and means) and inferential (regression) statistical methods with the aid of Statistical Packages for Social Sciences. The qualitative data were analyzed through themes and patterns. Presentation of analyzed data was through charts, tables, and graphs alongside a discussion to enable inference, conclusion, and recommendations. The study findings indicated that the church organization structure has a positive and significant effect on the absenteeism of men in the church. Additionally, ineffective lay preaching and evangelistic approaches further contributed to disengagement. The study recommended that to address absenteeism, the church must restructure its evangelistic approach, incorporating more interactive and inclusive fellowship programs.

Keywords: *Church Organizational structure, men's absenteeism, PCEA Nyeri Presbytery*

1. Introduction

The Christian church is a moral compass for many nations all over the world. It lays the foundation of many laws that guide daily practice and societal interactions. It gives guidance to leadership and governance in politics, the economy, social structure, and in ensuring peace and a cohesive citizenry. Christianity is heralded to enhance family bond, healthy living, and a safe and secure community (Lusey, Sebastian, Christianson, & Edin, 2017). For the individual Christian, attending church is one of the practices that strengthen their faith, enhancing discipleship and the growth of the church.

The position of the man in the Christian religion is central, with the whole idea of religion and church being man's brainchild (Taylor, 2014). People give God male pronouns. According to Syombua, Kyalo, & Kinuthia (2020), the fact that Jesus was male is not in contention. All His disciples were men. Jesus founded Christianity. Men have been at the forefront in as far as propagating Christianity. All the New Testament books were authored by men. Notably, men make up the majority of pastors, priests, and church leaders today.

It is expected that men should be greatly involved in worship, more so in church attendance. Conversely, there is a declining rate of attendance in church by men, and this has become a serious concern for many churches today (Pew Research, 2018). In the last few decades, many denominations have experienced declining church attendance by men despite the increase in population during this period. Lucey et.al. (2017) noted that women attend church more than men globally. Inadvertently, women tend to be more committed to the church.

Research organizations in religious studies, including the Barna Group and Pew Research, have conducted surveys in the United States of America. The studies provide statistics ascertaining the causes for diminishing men's participation in the church as well as the reasons for people exiting churches. Notably, men are found to comprise a significant percentage of the declining group of Christians (Awuku-Gyampoh & Formijang et al, 2021). Further, even among the children, boys opt out when they become young men, increasing the challenge to the development of the church in the future.

The attendance of men in church is also worrying, according to reports from several churches. In every 30 countries in Africa, women are more likely to attend weekly services as compared to men in a large Christian population (Ferreira & Chipenyu, 2021). Regionally, a Ugandan 2014 study indicated that 37% of all Ugandan males attended church every week, but the trend declined by 0.3% compared with 2012 (Pew Research, 2016). In Kenya, similar sentiments were made by the National Council of Churches in Kenya (NCCK), acknowledging the skewed gender parity with women having a higher church attendance than men. The report gave a 2014 example where records showed a ratio of 3:7 in favour of women attending church in Kenya (NCCK, 2014).

Awuku-Gyampoh and Formijang et al (2021) noted that the gender gap in church attendance is imminent and, in recent times, exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic disruptions on social congregation. This has left the churches with low membership, a sign of decline, and a great concern for church leaders. Earlier, Omenya (2014) decried the declining rate of men attending church as having social and religious effects in that it has waned the moral scope of the men, which is well guarded through Christian values, and strengthened through church fellowship and worship. Further, it has had a societal effect on men's roles as ethical leaders in the family, church, and community.

The importance of men in the church cannot be overemphasized. Men have led the growth of churches by establishing support systems like institutions of learning and healthcare, progress that may diminish in many churches with men's absenteeism. They have been the custodians of Christian traditions and culture since the medieval churches (Pew Research, 2016). Historically, men are recorded to be regular church attendants, practicing discipleship, which led to the growth of the church in terms of spirituality and geographical scope. The spread of Christianity over continents was heralded by men.

Men are called by God to worship, with the congregation being a critical pillar in Christian faith. According to the Scriptures' teaching, the Christian way is to follow the teachings of Jesus Christ as pronounced to the early Christians and recorded by various authors in the New Testament (Kuert, 2018). Devotion to the word of God, grace, humility, service to God and mankind are Christian beliefs that shape the healthy Christian life (Sumpter, 2019). Generally, most Christian men consider an affiliation with the church, but many find it impractical (Pew Research, 2016). Attendance in church activities like baptism, fellowship, prayer vigils, and choir shows a decline in men's regular attendance.

Notably, in today's church, belief and practice for Christian's worldviews have been inconsistent, motivated by the influence of other worldviews and new thoughts of new Christians joining the church. Studies have been conducted in the past assessing the declining attendance of men in churches. Empirical evidence by Sumpter (2019) and Syombua (2020) shows a depressing situation of men's attendance at church, though there is little focus on the actual drivers of men's abstinence from church attendance.

According to Taylor (2014), some factors relating to absenteeism of men in church may be individualistic/intrinsic, based on religious commitment, perceptions, and beliefs for each man. They vary with demographic aspects of age, family, education, and economic endowment. Generally, men agree with Christian beliefs but lowly regard church attendance. Other extrinsic drivers to men's absenteeism in church are related to people, environment, social, political, cultural, and economic, as well as institutional (Ferreira & Chipenyu, 2021). Irrespective, the factors have negatively impacted men's affiliation with the church, family, and societal stability.

There are several theories put forward for why, comparatively, there are so few men attending church in the African context. One is that most African men were reared by fathers who did not attend church services and so have no role model for masculine involvement in a church (Awakuru et al, 2020). Other studies contextualize the influence of modern society, with the advent of technology that has revolutionized communication, enabling church service at any place on mobile phones, changing the perceptions of men of modern times (like Generation X) on the significance of worship and church attendance (Ferreira & Chipenyu, 2021).

Church related factors have been linked to the failure of men to attend church in scholarly articles. According to Rainer (2001), the organizational structure of the church indicates its organizational strategy and programmes in its Christian mission. The organizational, cultural, and missionary structure of the church is critical in ensuring discipleship and a committed Christian community. Further, governance structures and leadership need to embrace gender diversity and enshrine inclusive strategies for Christ Mission. Studies like Awuku-Gyampoh et al. (2021) argue that the church structure has an effect on men's inclusivity in attendance and governance, and to some extent, distracts their commitment and regular church attendance. Further, Rainer (2001) notes that the name of the church/denomination has an effect on reaching the unchurched, affecting the latter's decision-making process. Other related factors include: splinter factions and doctrines, poor leadership, structural separation from the state, and emerging churches with confusing doctrinal structures.

The church, however, was slated to be one where all men and women may commune with God. According to St. Paul in his letter to the Ephesians (4:13), all men are called to the unity of faith and knowledge of Jesus and to live according to His ways. Thus, disunity should not be

a situation in the church, as there is only one God, faith, and baptism. Unity of the church is founded on knowledge of Christ, forming a formidable foundation of church programmes and strategies (Bawa, Ayim & Bastimi, 2022).

1.1 Problem Statement

Men have been affiliated with religion irrespective of ethnic diversity all over the world. In the Islamic world, men are publicly and unashamedly religious. In Judaism, Buddhism, and Hinduism, the same case applies where men lead the worship in their places of gathering. However, in Christian churches, church attendance by men is declining (Pew Research, 2016). Ideally, church attendance is expected of every committed Christian, irrespective of gender (Lusey, 2017).

Men's absence from church has become a global concern in religious discourse due to the effect on church development and growth, and the need to change the status quo (Syombua, 2020). The low representation of men in the church congregation has left a weak church without gender balance in administration. Diminishing masculine leadership that attracted men in today's church has contributed to men keeping away. Further, socioeconomic pursuits have driven men away from the church, weakening membership and growth prospects (Ferreira & Chipenyu, 2021). Critically, the spiritual development of men is weakened, leading to a weak moral fabric in society and the rise of evil. If the church is to grow, it must equip and train all its members to reach other people. The church grows best when every member participates.

Despite being active participants in church activities, there is a noticeable trend of absenteeism among men in Nyeri Presbytery as revealed by the recent baseline survey. Other studies seeking to unravel the reasons for men's absence in church have noted the gender disparity (Lusey et al, 2017; Kinuthia, 2003). The www.uscongregations.org. (2020) reports church attendance in America of 61% women compared to 39% men, showing a significant gender gap. The decline in men's attendance has been noted among many churches, and studies confirm this situation (Syombua, Kyalo & Kinuthia, 2020). As accorded by Ferreira and Chipenyu (2021), the churches' concern should not only be on the declining numbers, but also the reasons for the decline.

Notably, there is a paucity of information on Kenya's church attendance dynamics today. Considering the various environmental dynamics like culture, religions, economic and geographic disparities, a need for more region-centric studies is critical. Considering the varied factors that are regional, personal, and contextual, it is critical to evaluate the Kenyan context, especially in Nyeri County churches, while establishing implications on spiritual engagement and community involvement of men. The study would add critical knowledge for the growth strategies of the Christian church, while providing data on evaluating the church's organizational structure, determining men's absenteeism at the PCEA Nyeri Presbytery.

1.2 Research Objective

To evaluate the church organizational structure, determining men's absenteeism at the PCEA Nyeri Presbytery.

1.3 Research Hypothesis

H_{o1} There is no significant relationship between the church organizational structure and men's absenteeism at the PCEA Nyeri Presbytery.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Theoretical Review

The study was based on classical secularization theory**.** The classical secularization theory was developed by Chaves (1994) and Stark (1999). The theory propounds that modernization trends result in a decline in community religious commitment at the personal and group level. The trend is a reduction in personal piety and worship as a group in churches (Louis, 2013). Thus, in modern society, aspects of diminishing religious experience are a reality.

According to Stark (1999), modernization leads to differentiation in the social realm, creating subsystems and a wider rationalization of human life. Religion ceases to drive social existence in that the social structures (political, legal, economic, and educational) do not require religion. Thus, religion becomes one of the subsystems, becoming indispensable regarding social welfare and the insurance of life. Secularization, therefore, emerges as the social significance of Christianity.

In perspective, Stolz (2020) contends that upward mobility, like family income, education, is negatively associated with religious commitment. The elite find little inner strength in the church/religion as they pursue economic and social gains. As a result, commitment to the church and Christian values and principles wanes, and is evident in failure to attend Sunday worship services and other church programmes. Further, as churches seek to compete in the religious field, Christians are confused by the secular appeal, especially in emerging churches, swaying belief from tradition to more modern teachings that are more appealing. On the other hand, technology development has enabled Christians to avoid worship service in the church but attend through televangelism and other modern technological means (Pickel, 2009). All these factors are post-modernization aspects diminishing commitment to the church.

The development of this theory has not been without criticism. Pickel (2017) noted an assumption of the necessary link between decreasing social significance and subjective religiosity. The theory does not convincingly associate religiosity decline to church attendance. It assumes a linear decline of religion due to modernization, but does not directly explain individual decision-making, gender differences, or specific church-related factors influencing absenteeism.

The theory is, however, critical in the deconstruction of the independent and intervening variables. It can aid in the conceptualization of the intrinsic and extrinsic factors, such as men's religious commitment, socio-economic influences, and church organizational structures. It is therefore adopted in this study to help link church organizational structures with absenteeism from the PCEA church.

2.2 Empirical Review

The church structure comprises the leadership/governance, operative structures, mission structures, and gender issues. In recent decades, structural separation of church and state has resulted in the secularization of the church. For example, the issue of abortion has caused a deep divide in the nation and has stimulated division in the church, especially the Protestant church (Hubbard, 2016). Today religious environment shows a rise in splinter churches, giving rise to evangelical, apostolic, and many more sects, all preaching the same message but with differing versions/strategies.

The divergent approach to Christian mission embedded in the denominational structures is at times confusing, deluding men from the actual, truthful church, hence reasons for abstinence from attendance (Jones, 2015). Further, the rise in false prophets in especially new churches has made the church repugnant to many men of good faith. Notably, the state takes a critical step in the registration of these churches while allowing for freedom of worship.

Theological studies have tried to relate church structure and the abstinence /attendance of men in church. Chaves' (2017) study found that the flexibility of the church governance that allows women leadership, which to some extent has a relative negative influence on men's attendance, especially those from traditional Christian foundations where men were meant to lead the congregation. How this manifests in the PCEA church is of contextual significance in this current study.

Taylor (2014), in his books, relates structural leadership weakness to spiritual weakness evident in the church in the building of churches for personal purposes rather than for that of God. There has been a lot of attention to building churches rather than souls, as required in Christian churches. Church leaders tend to raise funds by any means to build big churches, many churches, or the most beautiful churches. According to Adelaja (2008), they forget the power they receive from Jesus Christ and focus on building churches. To them, building churches seems more manageable than transforming the nation. They thus forget to reach out to men who are not attending church, who are supposed to comprise the church itself. However, whether this is the case in PCEA is a contextual gap evaluated under this current study.

Murrow's (2005) book on why men hate going to church noted that many churches, knowingly or unknowingly, create a feminine atmosphere with their décor, distracting men. Floral arrangements, pastel colors, frilly curtains, and pictures of passive, pastoral scenes make for a peaceful ambiance, but they tend to make men feel a disconnect. Some churches attempt to appeal to masculine sensibilities by changing their décor to something edgier, darker, more robust, and less nurturing. However, if the church critically evaluates the ambience and its effect on members effectively, it can reintegrate the men in the church congregation as regular attendees. Whether this is strategically undertaken in Kenya is the concern of this current study.

Several empirical studies evaluate the church structures and their possible effect on attendance by the congregation. Immel's (2020) study evaluated the declining situation of the Assembly of God churches within the PennDel Ministry Network. Church's pastor and board participated in the interview, focusing on: the church leadership's perception regarding their church's present state of plateau or decline, contributing factors of plateau or decline, needs for change, and future partnerships between the PennDel Ministry Network and the sample churches. Findings show that a combination of a compelling vision and a spiritually-toned strategic plan seemed to be absent in all the churches that participated in the research.

Murrow Media Inc. (2016) USA study found that most employees in the church were female, apart from the ordained priests. Sadly, over 70 percent of the boys raised in church abandon it during their teenage years. Also noted was that more than 90 percent of American men believe in religion, and five out of six view themselves as Christian. However, only one out of six attends church on a given Sunday. This showed low inclusion of men in church processes, a factor requiring a contextual examination of the Kenyan church environment.

Lawton (2021) notes that churches are failing to reshape their leadership for ministry and mission in response to the changing landscape and needs of their congregations. For instance,

most churches have accepted the need for a full-time and full-salaried clergy, without questioning whether such a financial arrangement is an asset or a liability from the congregation's perspective. Such churches cause the congregation to conform to the needs and practices of the ministry rather than to the needs of the congregation. This structure is not conducive to change-oriented organizations.

According to Immel (2020), the church's structural setting does not allow men to participate in its activities. Mostly, Sunday worship services are led by women, and this may display a lot of emotions that may make men uncomfortable. Men will have a hard time or no time in submitting to a feminine leader in a church setting. Their ego is often provoked. Men are not recognized in church leadership, as well as their gifts. Only when it comes to funding the projects initiated by the local church will you find male participation. They will therefore occasionally attend church, limiting their spiritual growth.

Hegy (2021) related religion and culture in the catholic churches of the United States of America. The study established that rotation of priests was a common practice. The rotation of the priests was too frequent (5 years), and building a strong bond and trust with the men in the church through initiated programmes may be short-lived. This, to some extent, distracts men continuous attendance at the church.

In Kenya, Syombua, Kyalo, and Kinuthia (2020) examined factors influencing church membership and attendance. Specifically, the study assessed the theological foundation behind church membership, leadership roles for congregation growth, and church attendance among men in Mbooni West Sub-County, Kenya. Adopting a quantitative survey, five churches were purposively selected and one branch randomly sampled, including: African Inland Church (A.I.C), the Roman Catholic church (R.C), the Africa Brotherhood Church (A.B.C), the Seventh-day Adventist Church (SDA), and the Salvation Army (S.A). It was established that fewer men attended church than men in the study area, with contributing reasons being cultural, economic, religious, and natural attributes. However, a methodological gap exists in the selection to study churches, with the current study focusing specifically on PCEA Nyeri County. Also, church related influencers were overlooked, and a critical contextual gap is focused on by this current study.

Njoroge's (2015) study examined the factors affecting youth participation in PCEA Kajiado Presbytery, Kajiado County. The study adopted both qualitative and quantitative research designs, targeting the youth and church elders, and research instruments were administered to 258 randomly sampled respondents. The study established that leadership composition influenced youth engagement in church programmes, as the elderly were not mentoring the youth to take up church responsibilities. Though good leadership is vital in the church, it is of interest in this study to evaluate the contextual link to men's attendance in church.

Omenya's (2014) study evaluated men's participation at CITAM Church in Nairobi City County. Using questionnaires, in-depth interviews, and focus group discussions, data were collected among male adults of eighteen years and above drawn from the church attendance register. It was established that ministering to men's spiritual, emotional, and socioeconomic needs by the church, mainly through relevant Christian Education programs, could result in spiritual growth. The study also revealed that men need mentors whom they can look to in the church setting. Notably, the study elicits a contextual gap in that it focuses on attendance

assessment, with the current study delving deeper into the reasons for men's absenteeism in church.

3. Methodology

The study employed a descriptive research design, using stratified sampling to select 131 respondents. Data was collected through questionnaires and interviews, then analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistical methods. Thematic analysis was applied to qualitative data. Quantitative data analysis entailed descriptive (percentages and means) and inferential (regression) statistical methods with the aid of Statistical Packages for Social Sciences. The qualitative data were analyzed through themes and patterns. Presentation of analyzed data was through charts, tables, and graphs alongside discussion to enable inference, conclusion, and recommendations.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Descriptive Analysis

Descriptive statistics evaluated the relationship between church organizational structure and the absenteeism of men in church through the Likert scale: 5-Strongly Disagree, 4-Disagree, 3-Neutral, 2-Agree, 1-Strongly Agree.

Table 1: Church Organizational Structure and Men's Absenteeism in Church

Statement	5	4	3	2	1	Mean	Std Dev.
Church organizational structure encourages men's church attendance through inclusive strategies like leadership, roles, attractive activities, and programs.	32 (29.3%)	60 (55.0%)	0 (0%)	25 (22.9%)	2 (1.8%)	2.74	1.062
The church is overly feminine with clergy, elders, programmes, and ambience, discouraging men's attendance in church.	1 (1.0%)	20 (18.3%)	0 (0%)	76 (69.7%)	12 (11.0%)	2.67	1.204
Church flexibility has allowed the rise of many factions that confuse and discourage men from attending.	20 (18.3%)	31 (28.4%)	0 (0%)	60 (55.0%)	8 (7.3%)	2.65	1.211
Church leadership does not provide church commitment mentorship for the boy child.	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	109 (100%)	0 (0%)	2.98	0.900
Governance wrangles have led to the splintering of churches and loss of men's followers in the church.	3 (2.8%)	45 (41.3%)	0 (0%)	59 (54.1%)	2 (1.8%)	2.59	1.243
Aggregate						**2.73**	**1.059**

Results in Table 1 show that the church organizational structure did not encourage men's attendance in church, according to 84.3% of the respondents. Thus, there were poorly structured programmes with inclusive strategies like leadership, roles, attractive activities, and programs. Adelaja (2008) also decried the lack of leadership focus on inclusivity, and it forgets the power received from Jesus Christ and focuses on building churches rather than the souls of

men. Further, Immel (2020) decried that a combination of a compelling vision and a spiritually-toned strategic plan seemed to be absent in many churches.

The study further established that the church is overly feminine with clergy, elders, programmes, and ambience, discouraging men's attendance in church, as concurred by 80.7% of the respondents. In concurrence, Chaves' (2017) study found that the flexibility of the church governance that allows women leadership discourages men from attending church. The patriarchal and leadership character in men makes these factors a demotivation to church attendance, hence absenteeism. Immel (2020) also contends that the church's structural setting does not allow men to participate in its activities, with Sunday worship services led by women, and this may display a lot of emotions that may make men uncomfortable, and their ego provoked.

In regards to whether church flexibility allowed the rise in many factions that confuse and discourage men from attendance, 62% agreed. These splinter factions lead to diminishing trust and belief in the church among men. All the respondents (100%) agreed that the church leadership did not provide church commitment mentorship for the boy child. Thus, boys are not moulded to be committed Christians and hence opt out of church as they grow up. The effect of governance wrangles leading to the splintering of churches and loss of men's followers in the church was averagely rated, with just over fifty percent (55.9%) concurring. Thus, leadership wrangles did not form a priority in church perceptions and attendance among men in the study area.

4.2 Qualitative Analysis

Qualitative analysis was conducted on interviews conducted to establish the relationship between church organizational structure and the absenteeism of men in the church. Participants were requested to describe whether the name of the church/denomination affects the willingness of men to attend church. Results were 60% on the affirmative and 40% against, meaning that the name of the church influenced attracting men to attend church and vice versa. The study also evaluated whether the men's mentorship programs in the church affected attendance levels. Results were 100% on the affirmative, meaning the organization and execution of church programmes could be a determinant to the low attendance of men in church service and programmes.

The interviews also sought to establish whether there were programmes that enhanced men's inclusivity in church activities. The results showed that membership to PCMF was the main programme with inclusivity for men, though it is just for one gender. Notably, leadership duties were the highly cited (72%) as the activity with high inclusivity in the church. The leadership role and PCMF membership did not generally increase the attendance of men in church, and did not attract the unchurched men to church. Interviewee (6, 24) cited, *" the requirements to become a PCMF member were stringent, requiring men to be officially married in church, and this locks out those not married in church, and hence their disinterest."*

It was agreed that the many factions in churches affected men's church attendance and that the age of men influenced the frequency of church attendance. Interviewee (3, 24) cited, "*most of the church going men were elderly, with younger men tending to exit as they grow from teenage to adulthood."*

Summarily, church organizational aspects of leadership challenges, poor mentorship, and inclusive programmes determined the absenteeism of men in the church. Results show a strong effect of poor mentorship for boys on church attendance, followed by programme offerings and high feminine leadership, programmes, and physical structures and facilities. The aggregate mean (M, 2.73; SD, 1.059) shows that church organization structure has a significant determination of absenteeism of men in the church.

4.3 Regression Analysis

To establish the relationship between church organizational structure and men's absenteeism, regression coefficients were applied.

Table 2: Model Coefficients

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Df	Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig
1	B	St. Error				
				Beta		
Constant	1.511					
Church Organizational Structure	0.347	0.107		0.223	2.733	0.033

a. Dependent Variable: Absenteeism of men in church

According to the results in Table 2 above, there was a significant relationship between church organizational structure and men's absenteeism; regression coefficients were applied at a 95% confidence level. The strength of the determination of the independent variable on the dependent variable showed that church organizational structure has a positive and significant effect on men's absenteeism (p. 0.347). Thus 34.7% change in absenteeism of men in the church would be experienced upon a unit change in the church organizational structure. The resultant regression model was therefore:

$Y = 1.511 + .347X_1$

5. Conclusion

It was concluded that the church organizational structure has a positive relationship with the absenteeism of men in the church.

6. Recommendations

The church should re-evaluate its organizational structure to ensure programmes offered encourage men to attend church. This entails re-evaluating leadership styles, church service programmes, training of lay community, and easing engagement of men in member groups like PCMF and women's guild.

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