

Church's Response to the Sponsor Phenomenon in Nakurus Catholic Sponsored Schools

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Abstract: *This study explores the Church's response to the sponsor phenomenon in schools sponsored by the Catholic Diocese of Nakuru, Kenya. It investigates the causes and effects of sexual immorality among Christian female students and the Church's strategies to curb this issue. The study concludes with recommendations for parents, government, and the Church as follows; Parents/guardians should take special interest in curbing moral decadence among their children. This is because; failure respond to it would contribute negatively to the growth of their children. The recommendations given include parents/guardians should keep a close watch on the type of friends their daughter's keep and video films they watch at home. The government should improve the economy and censor magazines and video films that come into the country.*

Keywords: Church Response, Sponsor phenomenon, High school Girls, Moral uprightness, Catholic Diocese of Nakuru

1. Introduction

Adolescence is a crucial stage in life that is often challenging to girls because of the physiological and psychological changes they undergo. The impact of sexual moral decadence amongst students in high school is growing day by day as compared to the social trends of the early 1990s. Taylor and Francis (2010) posit that it was evident that there was a drastic change in values surrounding sexual uprightness, especially among the youth. A British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) Africa correspondent, Kadandara (2018) asserted that these transactional relationships are easily identifiable by the criminal activities and records filed in different police stations in different countries. Young women who hail from humble backgrounds are lured into overnight successes enjoying costly lifestyles but, often through unclear circumstances, they end up losing their lives (Nnko & Pool, 2007).

BBC Africa (2018) study released a provocative lifestyle feature titled "Sex and The Sugar Daddy" (sponsor) by Busara Centre for Behavioral Economics. It profiled three young Kenyan women as a window into a transactional sex culture that has become pervasive yet the society is silent about it. The BBC feature tracks the three young women talking openly about their pursuit of happiness financed by wealthy sponsors. Similarly, Robinson (2011) revealed that trans - generational relationship has long been identified as crucial for the spread of HIV/AIDS amongst young girls who are still in school, the nature of the sex - for - money market remains poorly understood. Robinson found out that young girls who engage in transactional sex substantially increase their risk for unexpected health problems

Pastoral programs

The ministry of the youth and young Catholic Adults where by it is stated simply: To help young people fall in love with Jesus Christ, for only those who are in relationship with Jesus will, in turn, follow Jesus. Knowledge leads to discipleship. Evangelization leads to catechesis. Relationship leads to wanting to know more and this would keep the youth on their feet to read more of the spiritual

materials (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops 2010)

The Ministry of Education in Kenya through the Education Act (1968 revised 1980; and 2013) gives provision for 'special syllabuses' for the programme pastoral instruction (PPI) with the goal of providing instruction for different faith traditions (Catholic, Protestant, SDAs, Islam, Hindu, etc. in public primary schools and this has been adopted in the secondary schools sponsored by the Catholic Church in Nakuru (Ministry of Education in Kenya 2013).

The aim is to give churches / religions an opportunity to develop the primary school students in knowledge and practice of their faith, to grow as mature, morally upright and responsible members of society. PPI consists of 1 - hour block sessions per week, during which a pastor, community leader or teacher teaches children about God and spirituality. Awour (2009) posit that, the Programme of Pastoral Instruction for Catholics students provides materials for teachers of the catholic pastoral programme. The series supplements the common Christian religious Education syllabus in use in learning institutions in Kenya. The series uses a life based method, learner centered approach and a spiral syllabus which can be repeated again and again through the lives of the young people.

Scripture teachings

The Church relies on biblical scriptures that teach about sexuality. For example, the book of Leviticus provides over 75 verses that informed sexual conduct among the Israelites and which should be emulated by modern Christians. The book of Genesis also narrates the story of Onan who was killed by God because of his sexual misconduct. However, it is notable that some churches especially the most recent ones, interpret different bible verses differently. For example, in Genesis 1: 18, God blessed man and woman and told them to increase in number, fill the earth and subdue it. The verse has been used to infer that God created sex for purposes of procreation. However, Genesis 1: 14 - 15, indicates that man shall leave his parent and unite with his wife to become one flesh. Similarly, when Adam and Eve

were created, they were naked but did not feel ashamed; which insinuates that God created marriage and sex but does not mention procreation and thus recreational sex. Such texts and others from the Bible are often used to discuss sexuality with different interpretations. Noteworthy, some influential people in the society whom the youth tend to emulate have not been equipped with the necessary knowledge to link the interpretations from the Bible to the prevailing sexual relationships (Lusey *et al.*, 2014).

The church therefore is an assembly of regenerated people; the people of God who are obedient to His teachings and commandments and live in the society; people who have covenanted to fellowship and worship Christ and serve Him as their Lord and Savior. It is a community of those who acknowledge Jesus Christ as Lord (1Cor.12: 3), it is a fellowship where Holy Spirit lives (1Cor.3: 16) directs and energizes its communal life. The church was established to fulfill two main purposes according to Getz (2011), first, to minister to the body of Christ that gather to worship Him and, second, to minister to the entire world. The church has the responsibility of ministering to its members and the whole world through the church ministers who make the body of believers (members) through teaching, fellowship and worship together. Also, it ministers to the world through her evangelistic strategies which are beyond the four walls of the church. Ministering to the world may be in form of meeting the physical needs through social gospel, proclamation of the word, action/life style evangelism and the like. Agha (2019) viewed Materialism as the acquisition of material wealth at the expense of others through any means including selling one's body. He noted that it has been treated as an enemy by the church and the moralists. The church must be involved in matters that pertain to common concerns and existence in the society. Through this, the word of God would be established in the hearts of the people and adhering to the teaching of the church will make the world peaceful and pleasant to stay

In Kenya, the church has developed programs that educate young people on sex, relationships and related issues. In collaboration with the Kenya Alliance for the Advancement of Children's Rights (KAACR), the church encourages and supports the formation of children's rights clubs in schools which can be facilitated by the teachers. Such clubs organize discussions with young people on puberty, sexually transmitted diseases, and relationships among others. In 2000, churches, led by the African Inland Church endorsed the establishment of HIV/AIDs lessons in Kenyan primary and secondary schools. The argument was that church involvement in sexuality education constitutes an important step towards empowering youth to fight both the undesired relationships and their outcomes (Lusey *et al.*, 2014). Their influence impacts the overall attitude and behavior toward sexuality. With such differences in views of sexuality, cross - generational relationship gains negligible focus, and are even blessed into marriages in some churches. In recent times, all the prohibitions that aided the maintenance of high moral and disciplined society have deteriorated, somehow neglected and even abandoned due to the influence of western culture and many other factors. This calls for moral reorientation anchored on Christian ethical principles. In 1 Corinthians 6: 19 - 20 St Paul says: "Do you not know that

your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, which you have from God? You are not your own; you were bought with a price. So, glorify God in your body" The church's role in teaching matters concerning sexuality cannot be overlooked since it is considered a special facet of society. In response to the "sponsor" phenomenon, the Catholic Church through her leaders has imparted the society knowledge that is both of theological as well as a practical concern. According to Hope (2007), all church leaders agree that the church shares a similar or even broader role in teaching sexuality as the school, parents and community members. Teachings by the church are expected to influence the sex behaviors and attitudes of its members in accordance to the guidelines of the bible as well as its canon law. The church accepts the teaching that sexual relationships should only happen in marriage as strongly supported by one of the Ten Commandments in Exodus 20: 14 "You shall not commit adultery". The seventh commandment prohibits Adultery (Ex.20: 14, Deut.5: 18). This law can be regarded as standard for all marriages. Adultery is fundamentally an act of unfaithfulness displayed by a spouse against his/her partner and it happens through "sponsor" practice. When married partner engages in sexual relationship outside his or her matrimonial home, it becomes an adulterous act. The seventh commandment totally condemns adultery and upholds the sacredness of marriage. It is no longer news today that marriage is terribly abused and many couples indulge in the act of adultery. In the Christian moral code, this law includes, prohibitions on lustful looks, motions, and verbal insinuations, mode of dressing, nude and pornographic films which provoke passions and incite one to this shameful act.

Guidance and Counselling

It has been observed that even with the changes in ways of life, influence by media, the internet, peer pressure and foreign practices, the church remains the best organ to address sex and sex matter directly or openly for it is the authority acceptable by most people to handle social matters. Therefore, sex education especially for the youth remains largely an area in need of more deep and open discussion through guidance and counselling ministry. Kaufman (2013) observed in the young people's relationships with sugar daddies and sugar mummies: "what do we know and what do we need to know?" He found out that without adequate sexual education from the church, youth face risks of being overwhelmed by the prevailing cultures such as "sponsor" relationships. The young girls face a risk of being swallowed up by a culture that does not rhyme with the doctrine they receive in religious institutions. Over and over again, young people have been told that they don't know what they need. That's why parents choose their friends and career paths, while the church provides them with "relevant" spiritual guidance. Even though all this is done with good intentions, The Church risk providing them with only things they should know and not what they need to advance to the next step in their Christian journey (Salgong 2015)

While the Catholic Church teaches the need to preserve the sanctity of the human body as seen in their discouragement of contraceptives and insistence of total abstinence, such an objective can only be attained if the youth possess adequate knowledge of their sexuality and how to express it in a

changing society. Therefore, as noted by Hope (2007) the teachings from the church need to influence positively the mind of teenagers about sex through guidance and counselling sessions. The study concluded that other factor such as material needs which seems to take first priority as opposed to abstinence for these young girls should be provided by the parents or the guardians.

Youth Programs

The communication around sex has also been depicted as reactive instead of proactive and it often takes a negative approach. According to Hope (2007), communicating with teenagers on sexual matters intending to make them morally upright does not always lead to the desired behavior. It is thus evident that several approaches have been adopted to curb the sponsor relationship, the intentions of which are to not only prevent this morally wrong trend but also diminish its prevalence and repercussions. The Church through various organizations like youth camps, youth challenge week or weekends has programs focusing on the cross - generational sexual relationship. While much has been done, a lacuna exists with regard to this issue. Conversely, such behaviors are still eminent among young girls in the church and even church - sponsored schools as evidenced by a big number of girls dropping out of school due to pregnancies, as a report by UNFPA, UNICEF, and PAHO/WHO (2021). Approach that focuses on changing context and therefore requires diverse partners to assist inspire a societal response, communicating the interventions, developing human behavior and implementing monitoring and evaluation for the young people who still need close monitoring and guidance. The sexuality of young people, which is often the basis for moral panics around sugar daddies (Sponsor), is especially vexing for adults as Stein (2013) contributed that, moral champions, despite the fact that it is known that youngest people begin to experiment sex in their teenage years, Massaut (2004) added that, in spite of moral and other injunctions not to engage in sexual activity. Most societies have developed elaborate and coded ways of talking about sex and sexuality as attempts to protect the dignity, avoid embarrassment and limit sexual practice among the youth who are yet to mature. They have also tried to use the law to address the few cases of sexual abuse reported as many go unattended or swept under the carpet Kenyan sexual Offence Act 62 (2003). A number of local Non - Governmental Organizations (NGOs) have been on the frontline in fighting against the cross - generational sexual relationship through campaigns that communicate to school - going girls about the risks of sponsor relationships both in churches and community Barraza's. In this approach, vulnerable schools are selected and different communication methods are used to pass across the information (Decosas & Davies, 2006). Among these are videos on the risks of contracting HIV/AIDs and other STIs as well as pregnancies resulting from sexual relations with older men. Hunter (2014) examination of the materiality of love relationships casts a cold and clear light on personal and social fantasies about love and sex, allowing us to examine, with a certain amount of dispassion, the nature of these intimacies and their socio - psychological underpinnings.

2. Methodology

In this study, the researcher used mixed method research design specifically the explanatory sequential design. This design has two phases. The first one was collection of quantitative data and the second was collecting qualitative data to explain on the quantitative results. The study utilized qualitative approach, specifically individual interviews and focus group discussions with various education stakeholders in order to discover and understand the underlying motivation of the young girls who engage in the practice of "sponsor". The use of quantitative research gave the study the quality of measurement in getting to know the general picture and extent to which girls are engaging in the sponsor practice. The data was integrated during interpretation phase although it occurred during analysis and this helped in noting either a lack of convergence or convergence that strengthened the knowledge claim. This design therefore helped the researcher to access the ways in which the Church is responding to the "sponsor" factor in the Catholic sponsored Schools within Catholic Diocese of Nakuru.

Target Population

Orodho (2008) described target population constitutes all the items or people under consideration in a study while Kombo and Tromp (2009), define population as a group of individuals, objects or items, which have one thing in common, from which samples are taken for measurement. The target population for this study consisted of the girls in secondary school from form one to form four in Catholic sponsored secondary schools in Catholic Diocese of Nakuru, the teachers, parents/guardians and community representatives of these schools. Also targeted are the Catholic Diocesan Priests and Religious men and women serving in these Institutions. The rationale behind choice of the group of population is that, they are in their prime youthful stage of their lives where crucial life decisions are determined and these choices impacted on them for the longest part of their active life. Therefore, they are familiar with morals and virtues of life of which they are part of the discussion in this research work.

Data Collection Instruments

Data collection instruments are measurement tools designed to obtain data from respondents on the topic under study (Kasomo 2007). The instruments used in this study were the primary sources which include questionnaires, interview guides, and observation guides. The secondary sources were also used and this were from the school records, Bible, other Church documents like pastoral letters from the Bishop, encyclicals from the pope and Diocesan strategic plans, documents from the government and non - governmental publications.

Questionnaire

This is an instrument for research, which consists of a list of questions, along with the choice of answers, printed or typed in a sequence on a form used for acquiring specific information from the respondents. Questionnaires can also be used for an interview that is face to face. When questionnaires are used, the researcher can be present or not as D'Cruz & Jones (2014) asserts that questionnaires are questions in papers which may be used face to face

interviews, mailed or distributed electronically. 42 questionnaires will be distributed 30 for the students and 12 for the teachers in the 10 schools in the Catholic Diocese of Nakuru. They were randomly distributed to the 30 sampled girls in each secondary school who only live in Catholic Diocese of Nakuru and the rest of the selected respondents that is the teachers. The questionnaires contained both closed and open - ended questions were generated from the four main objectives of this study.

Interview Guides

The interview guides consisted of structured open - ended questions of which one to one (person to person) interactions were administered by the researcher. Respondents comprised of 12 parents, 5 clergy, 10 nuns and 12 community representatives for interviews. The respondents the researcher will use purposive sampling so as to select the principles and the teachers in charge of boarding section. The community representatives and the teachers assisted the researcher to point out the significant parents who have good knowledge of the girls both at home and while at school and so the snow ball approach will be used here. Interview guides were help in obtaining data on the real situation about girls who are already involved with the “sponsors” From the clergy, the researcher found out how many cases they have handling in terms of counselling these students.

Observation Guides

Observation method enables the researcher to collect data by observing the phenomena as it occurs naturally within the environment. Observation is a purposeful, systematic and selective way of watching and listening to an interaction or phenomenon as it takes place Taylor - P. E, Steele S. (1996) and Jae W. Song, Kevin C. Chung (2010) . It is appropriate in situations where full and or accurate information cannot be elicited by questioning, because respondents either are not cooperative or are unaware of the answers because it is difficult for them to detach themselves from the interaction. Taylor, P. (1996) adds that when subjects are so involved in interaction that they are unable to provide objective information about it, observation is the best approach to collecting the required information. The researcher employed the verbal and nonverbal expressions observations as she carries out her face to face interviews on the

participants. The researcher also visited the town and observe what happens after school hours and carry out naturalistic observation on the behavior of girls. This observation occurs directly in the environment where the “sponsor” phenomenon occurs which is around some specific hotels within Nakuru town. The observations were being made as unobtrusively as possible with the researcher not directly interacting with the participants in any way so as to capture their true behavior (young girls) and what they are as opposed to what they say they do. The researcher also used participatory observation by visiting the girls in schools and even at their homes within the estates in Nakuru town.

3. Data Analysis

The researcher summarized and presented the data using the pie - charts, tables and bar - crafts. Qualitative data collected from the field was be analyzed using thematic framework. Thematic analysis will go beyond the count of explicit words and phrases. Clarke, V. & Braun, V. (2013) suggest that it is the first qualitative method that should be learned as it provides core skills that were useful for conducting many other kinds of analysis. It was identified and described implicit and explicit ideas within the data (Bernard & Ryan, 2009). The researcher first familiarized herself with the data by doing some transcription of the entire collected data, taking short notes on a printed transcript retaining the information needed while keeping to its original nature. This marked preliminary ideas that describe the content. The researcher then engaged in assigning codes of agree and disagree to the data for the purposes of organizing them into manageable groups. Collation of the codes into broader themes that said something interesting about the data was done by arranging and annotating related information. This was followed by reviewing and refining the themes so that they were coherent and distinctive. Thereafter, the themes were named and described. In Braun and Clarke’s words, “you define the essence that each theme is about”. Finally, the final report was written with enough information about the study, giving clear account of what was done both when the research was carried out and the analysis was done.

4. Results and Discussions

Table 1: Church Response to sponsor phenomenon in secondary schools

Response of the Church in dealing with the issue of the “sponsor” phenomenon	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total
Avail spiritual nourishment by providing pastoral instruction and scripture reading.	7 (25%)	15 (53.6%)	3 (10.7%)	2 (7.1%)	1 (3.6%)	28 (100%)
Institute rehabilitation centers for the runaway girls and providing guidance and counselling services, youth programs	13 (46.9%)	5 (7.9%)	5 (7.9%)	4 (14.3%)	1 (3.6%)	28 (100%)
They excommunicate them from the church	4 (14.3%)	13 (46.9%)	10 (35.7%)	1 (3.6%)	0	28 (100%)

From table 1, it showed the responses of the statements that the church responded by availing spiritual nourishment through giving various sacraments. From the statistics it showed that 7 (25%) strongly agreed, 15 (53.6%) agreed, 3 (10.7%) were neutral 2 (7.1%) disagreed (3.6%) strongly agreed. It is clear that majority over 80% of the respondents agreed that the church is availing spiritual nourishment to the young girls while in school with sacraments like Baptisms and confirmation for the Catholics while for the

Non - Catholics the church sponsoring the schools would allow pastors to visit the students and even carry out weekend Challenge or crusades. However there is a group of about 35.7% which indicated neutral, this means that a big number of girls out there are either confused or are just lazy to be spiritually active and therefore the church needs to look out for this group because as it was indicated earlier on, this could be the group influencing the other girls to backslide and go against the church teachings and the

instructions from the elders and their parents hence the continuous existence of “sponsor” phenomenon in the society. This finding was in agreement with what Kaufman (2013) observed that, young girl's relationships with sugar daddies in his question (what do we know and what do we need to know?) In his quest to understand more on “sponsor” Phenomenon. Without adequate sexual education from the church, youth face risks of being overwhelmed by the prevailing cultures like the modern culture of “my life my choice”. The mission of My Life My Choice is to prevent the commercial sexual exploitation of adolescents through survivor - led programs that educate and empower youth to find their voice and create a positive life path while working to eliminate the violence and victimization of commercial sexual exploitation. The unfortunate understanding of this phrase is that, young girls grow to become very rude and do not want to be advised contrary to what they think they know which many time lands them in big life - threatening problems. This calls for the church to bring in spiritual books with biblical teachings to help the young girls to make informed decisions in life (Timothy 4: 12.) says, “Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith and in purity” It is also supported by (Proverbs 1: 8 - 9) “My child, listen when your father corrects you. Don't neglect your mother's instruction. What you learn from them will crown you with grace and be a chain of honor around your neck”

The results were that the Church has implemented programs and seminars geared towards teaching moral ethics to students. Church leaders agree that the church shares a similar, or even broader role in teaching sexuality as the school, parents and community members. Teachings by the Church is expected to influence the sexual behaviors and attitudes of its members in accordance with the guidelines of the Bible as well as its canon law. Pope John Paul (1995) in his *Evangelism Vital* posits that the Church teaches that sexual intimate relationships should only happen in marriage as strongly supported by one of the Ten Commandments in Exodus 20: 14 “You shall not commit adultery”. The findings indicated that the Church was identified as an agent of morality in all aspects of human life. The Church is expected to safeguard the sanity and respect for the soul as well as the body for it is the temple of the Holy Spirit. The Church should offer guidance and counseling to the growing youth, equip them with life skills and teach them in - depth catechesis and scripture knowledge so as to be able to counter respond more firmly and confidently to the social vices bombarding them at their youthful stage of life.

It was also identified that the Church has what it takes to mitigate the vices in society by encouraging its members to stand out as role models to the young ones who are still in school. The church should respond to the “sponsor” phenomenon by working hand in hand with the government in educating the young ones who are still in school and agree on which media materials could be allowed for young people to access.

Whereas this study intended to find out the Church's response to sponsor phenomenon among the girls in secondary schools, the researcher found it very complex

since it is negotiated rather than forced on the victims. The repercussion of this is that, some of these young mothers have become victims of early marriages and ridicule in their communities, the country would be led for a situation where there would be many young/teenage mothers some of whom may never get a second chance to go to back to school.

5. Conclusion

The study concludes that the Church, through various programs and teachings, is actively responding to the sponsor phenomenon in Nakuru's Catholic sponsored schools. However, more efforts are needed from parents, government, and society to curb this issue effectively. Pastoral teachers in these schools should harness, explore and relate the students' interests and experiences during the teaching, thus making pupils feel that they are valued. This certainly would be involving, demanding use of professional skills and modern teaching approaches. Thus they were required to design specific learning activities to challenge the students to translate the Christian teachings and value into the student's daily life. The Ministry of education office said there was working relationship between churches and ministry of education in the approvals in Christian Religious Education and Pastoral Programs. Both the church and the ministry of education agreed on providing guiding and counselling services in the schools so as to continually guide and mentor the youth as they go through their academic phase.

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