

**DISCIPLESHIP IN PRIVATELY OWNED CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS IN DDWANIRO  
SUB-COUNTY, RAKAI DISTRICT, UGANDA**

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**UGANDA CHRISTIAN  
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## **DECLARATION**

I, Daniel Sukuku, hereby declare that the information contained in this dissertation titled, “Discipleship in Privately Owned Christian Schools in Ddwaniro Sub-County, Rakai District, Uganda” is, except where otherwise indicated and acknowledged, my original work; and that it has never been submitted to any Institution for academic or professional award.

Name: **DANIEL SUKUKU**

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of several overlapping horizontal and vertical strokes, positioned below the name.

**March 2, 2026**

## APPROVAL

We certify that this dissertation titled “Discipleship in Privately Owned Christian Schools in Ddwaniro Sub-County, Rakai District, Uganda” by Daniel Sukuku has been under our supervision and that it meets the requirements of a graduate dissertation of Uganda Christian University.

Signed:

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Joseph', is positioned above the printed name.

Joseph Jakisa Owor, PhD

March 2, 2026

## **DEDICATION**

I would like to dedicate this research to my beloved wife, Florence Sukuku, and children, Nissi Baraka, Shammah Ainuliwe, Ruth Ushindi, and Jesse Anaweza, for their support and patience with my absence from home and enduring my encroachment on their time with Dad.

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## **ABSTRACT**

The study explored and analyzed the practices, challenges, and impacts of discipleship in privately owned Christian schools in Ddwaniro Sub-County, Rakai District. Incidents of student participation in strikes, teasing, absenteeism, and irregularity in classes, among others, remain high, undermining the role of discipleship in privately owned schools in Ddwaniro Sub-County. Therefore, this study was limited to exploring how discipleship is conceptualized, identifying the methods and strategies used to promote discipleship, evaluating its effects on spiritual development, and assessing the challenges of implementing discipleship programs in privately owned Christian schools. The study was informed by a qualitative case study research design. The target population comprised pupils/students and school administrators (including head teachers, deputy head teachers, directors of studies, and Chaplains). These were purposively and conveniently sampled. Interview and focus group discussion guides were used for data collection, which was analyzed qualitatively. The results indicated that discipleship is essential for spearheading spiritual development in a school community. Discipleship strategies in schools include fellowship, seminars, and Bible study. Discipleship integrates a Biblical worldview into all subjects. It fosters discipline, encourages deeper personal relationships, and deepens interaction among learners. The implementation of discipleship programs in privately owned Christian schools remains constrained by resource constraints, limited skills, and limited human resources. The study concluded that discipleship in privately owned Christian schools in Ddwaniro Sub-County, Rakai District, remains weak, with several loopholes. The study recommends that privately owned schools streamline discipleship programs.

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **GENERAL INTRODUCTION**

#### **1.0 Introduction**

This study focused on exploring discipleship in privately owned Christian schools in Ddwaniro Sub-County, Rakai District, Uganda. This chapter presents the study background on discipleship in the education sector. It also presents the problem statement, study purpose, study objectives, research questions, research assumptions, scope of the study, study justification, study significance, and a theoretical review.

#### **1.1 Background to the Study**

Discipleship is a global movement. It is a foundational aspect of Christian education, emphasizing the spiritual growth and maturity of students and staff (Barna, 2021). In the classroom, holistic discipleship begins when teachers integrate their Christian faith into all subjects, not restricting it to explicitly religious moments, such as chapel or Bible class. Teachers welcome their learners into a life of discipleship when they lead classes and promote classroom cultures in which there is no distinction between the sacred and the secular (Muwulya, 2024). In this way, studying literature, math, science, and history becomes an avenue for exploring God's created world. Empowering students to use their creative capabilities to cultivate beauty is a way of living out their identity as image-bearers of God. When teaching staff make these connections between faith and learning explicit, learners are equally led forward in their journey of following Christ with their whole lives, beginning with their minds (Barna, 2021). Moreover, a survey conducted in Bangladesh (Benner, 2022; Eckel, 2023) found that there is a lack of spiritual growth among students (47%), irregularity in classes (31%), declining student punctuality (27%), late submission of homework (51%),

and poor academic outcomes (53%), with discipleship being the major contributing factor. Surprisingly, such concerns are experienced in several developed nations across the globe (Kobly, 2024; Benner, 2022; Moore, 2019). This shall be thoroughly investigated, especially by scrutinizing the centrality of discipleship and its practices, challenges, and impacts in privately owned Christian schools in Uganda.

Discipleship in Africa is a vibrant and dynamic journey shaped by the continent's incredible diversity of languages, cultures, and spiritual traditions (Tim, 2024). When a discipleship program started in Sub-Saharan Africa, it focused on Bible study in schools. While Scripture leads to life in Christ, teachers often have the wrong starting place because of a wrong perspective on discipleship. In another study carried out by Song (2021) on the Contextualization and Discipleship in Sub-Saharan schools, it was discovered that most distressed schools experience regular class attendance (29%), punctuality for classes (14%), daily class assignment submission (33%), and better end of term examination scores (34%), of which discipleship being among major factors behind this situation. Similarly, Escobar (2023) opines that while each Christian tradition in East African States has its own framework and vocabulary for expressing the heart of discipleship, the end goal is the same: helping believers be conformed to the image of Christ. When teachers approach their subjects through the lens of the gospel, invite their students to think and interact with an idea from a Biblical perspective, pointing to the truths of the gospel, and including prayer or scripture in their lessons, they are playing a key role in the disciple-making process (Muwulya, 2024). This is what this research seeks to explore.

In Uganda, Christian schools play a vital role in shaping moral and spiritual values among learners (Kasirivu, 2024). Privately owned Christian schools, in particular, often have unique

approaches to discipleship, influenced by their denominational backgrounds, resources, and community contexts. Subsequently, the evangelical movement in Ugandan schools is growing rapidly, fueled by a strong sense of mission and a desire to reach the unreached. This growth provides many opportunities for discipleship, as new believers are integrated into the Church and nurtured in their faith (Muwulya, 2024). Teachers take advantage of the life-on-life opportunities they spend multiple hours with their students each day, opening doors for discipleship, encouraging students to follow Jesus in all facets of life, be it in the classroom, during mealtime, or at recess. In addition, teachers disciple their students specifically in their thinking through approaching the curriculum through a biblical lens (Kasirivu, 2024). The churches, school administrators, and other development partners have emphasized teachers' training in discipleship, mobilizing resources for discipleship programs in schools, and distributing free materials to schools (Tim, 2024).

Despite the fact that several stakeholders and institutions have made some commendable efforts to promote discipleship in schools, the students' moral and spiritual values have remained lacking (Kasirivu, 2024). Students still experience teasing and abuse by colleagues, creating a worrying situation within the school environment. Rising incidences of school strikes in private schools, irregularity for classes, and late coming for classes are said to remain rife in privately owned Christian schools in Ddwaniro Sub-County, ostensibly due to wanting discipleship to handle situational issues (Kasirivu, 2024). Ddwaniro Sub-County in Rakai District presents an interesting setting where these schools contribute significantly to local education and spiritual development. Different scholars have hinted at these gaps in discipleship in schools, including but not limited to: spiritual growth (Kobly, 2024); moral values (Muwulya, 2024), team leadership (Barna, 2021); nurturing spiritual growth (Benner, 2022), and many others. To the best of the researcher's knowledge, no research has been

carried out about the practices, challenges, and impacts of discipleship in privately owned Christian schools. The discrepancies and existing gaps, therefore, instigated the investigator to fill the knowledge gap on exploring discipleship in privately owned Christian schools in Ddwaniro Sub-County.

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

The comprehensive strategy for effective discipleship is vital and needed to nurture mature, resilient followers of Christ who can lead and disciple colleagues (Kobly, 2024). Christian schools aim to nurture discipleship among students. Understanding these practices can inform strategies to enhance discipleship and overall spiritual formation within such institutions (Muwulya, 2024). Despite the fact that school foundation bodies, stakeholders, and development partners have made some recommendable efforts towards promoting discipleship in privately owned schools, the students' spiritual and moral values remain questionable (Kasirivu, 2024). Incidents of students' participation in strikes, coupling within schools, teasing colleagues, irregularity for classes, and absenteeism have been reported to be on the rise private owned schools in Rakai district, and more in Ddwaniro Sub-County (Kasirivu, 2024). It is also recognized that many school leaders and teachers are not involved in discipleship due to a lack of personal spiritual maturity, further weakening the discipleship framework.

Despite this, the discipleship in privately owned Christian schools in Ddwaniro Sub-County, Rakai District, remains underexplored. In light of the above, critical questions are raised: What is the role of discipleship strategies and practices in shaping the moral values in the school community? What are the implications of discipleship among the students? How has the discipleship promoted spiritual growth within schools? Scholars such as Kobly (2024),

Muwulya (2024), Benner (2022), and Barna (2021), nurturing spiritual growth (Benner, 2022), highlighted the practices, challenges, and impacts of discipleship; however, there is limited empirical literature on discipleship in privately owned schools in Rakai District. The discrepancies and existing gaps, therefore, instigated the investigator to fill the knowledge gap on exploring discipleship in privately owned Christian schools in Ddwaniro Sub-County, and this forms one of the bases of the present research.

### **1.3 Action Research Question**

How can the implementation of discipleship enhance spiritual development in privately owned Christian schools in Ddwaniro Sub-County?

### **1.4 Central Research Question**

What are the implications of discipleship in privately owned Christian schools in Ddwaniro Sub-County, Rakai District?

### **1.5 Subsidiary Research Questions**

This was guided by the following subsidiary research questions:

- i. In which way is discipleship being conceptualized within these privately owned Christian schools?
- ii. What methods and strategies are employed to promote discipleship in privately owned Christian schools?
- iii. What are the perceived effects of discipleship on students' spiritual development in privately owned Christian schools?
- iv. What are the challenges faced in implementing discipleship programs in privately owned Christian schools?

## **1.6 Objectives of the Study**

### **1.6.1 General Objective**

To explore and analyze the centrality of practices, challenges, and impacts of discipleship in privately owned Christian schools in Ddwaniro Sub-County, Rakai District.

### **1.6.2 Specific Objectives**

- i. To explore how discipleship is conceptualized within these privately owned Christian schools.
- ii. To identify the methods and strategies employed to promote discipleship in privately owned Christian schools.
- iii. To evaluate the perceived effects of discipleship on spiritual development in privately owned Christian schools.
- iv. To assess the challenges faced in implementing discipleship programs in privately owned Christian schools.

## **1.7 Assumptions of the Research**

The study assumes that the respondents have the information the researcher is seeking and shall provide the researcher with honest information. It is also assumed that the information given by the respondents in the study was true and free from any external influence.

## **1.8 Scope of the Study**

The scope was divided into three dimensions, that is, content, geographical, and time scope of the study as discussed hereunder:

### **1.8.1 Content Scope**

The study was limited to the discipleship in privately owned Christian schools. Specifically, the study was limited to exploring how discipleship is conceptualized within these privately owned Christian schools, identifying the methods and strategies employed to promote discipleship in privately owned Christian schools, evaluating the perceived effects of discipleship on students' spiritual development in privately owned Christian schools, and assessing the challenges faced in implementing discipleship programs in privately owned Christian schools.

### **1.8.2 Geographical Scope**

The study was conducted in selected privately owned Christian schools in Ddwaniro Sub-County, Rakai District, Uganda. Ddwaniro Sub-County has 5 parishes and 49 villages in Rakai District. Rakai district headquarters is located approximately 57 Km from Masaka. Rakai district borders Lyantonde District to the northwest, Lwengo District to the north, Kyotera District to the northeast, Kalangala District to the east, the Kagera Region in the Republic of Tanzania to the south, Isingiro District to the southwest, and Kiruhura District to the northwest. This particular area was selected because of continued weaknesses and gaps in spiritual development in privately owned schools (Rakai DLG, 2022), despite discipleship programs.

### **1.8.3 Time Scope**

The time scope of this study focused on the secondary data from 2018 to 2024; the time period for periodization of discipleship in privately owned schools. The researcher thought of having a reflection on all related literature available for this period to give extensive information on the current study. Secondly, the study was conducted within the time frame

from April to October 2025 so as to enable the investigator accomplish other educational requirements within the specified period of time, which enabled the researcher to make conclusions and recommendations.

### **1.9 Justification of the Study**

The study uncovers the centrality of discipleship in privately owned Christian Schools in Ddwaniro Sub-County, Rakai District, Uganda. Scholars have always loved to discuss the significance of discipleship in privately owned Christian Schools. The available literature indicates the centrality of practices, challenges, and impacts of discipleship in privately owned Christian schools in different districts or regions and aspects; however, Ddwaniro Sub-County has always gone missing (Kobly, 2024; Kasirivu, 2024; Muwulya, 2024). This has created an imbalance in the existing literature gaps in the theological and empirical aspects.

This study, however, attempts to look into the discipleship in privately owned Christian Schools in Ddwaniro Sub-County, Rakai District, so as to fix the theological and literature gaps through documenting the unique discipleship strategies and benefits within privately owned Christian schools in Ddwaniro Sub-County. This study shall expand the knowledge of the influence of discipleship in privately owned Christian schools, and also show how discipleship is not only a factor but one that is imbued in influencing spiritual growth.

Despite the existence of discipleship at the ground, there still exists a difference in discipleship in privately owned Christian schools. Still, discipleship holds significant cultural and spiritual importance, extending beyond mere program to encompass deep spiritual development and moral values. However, the spiritual dimensions embedded in the

discipleship in privately owned Christian schools remain underexplored. This study shall also contribute to preserving cultural and education-focused heritage before these strategies are further eroded.

Furthermore, this research is timely as it examines the specific discipleship strategies that continue to be used within the privately owned schools, providing an in-depth analysis of how this discipleship and its relevance to the individuals (students) and schools today. By identifying and documenting this specific discipleship in privately owned schools with unique spiritual ties and administrative structures, this study aims to ensure that discipleship's knowledge is precise and accurately represented or understood, filling a significant research gap while also giving privately owned schools and individuals a voice in the discourse around discipleship programs.

### **1.10 Significance of the Study**

The study may provide information that shall help policy makers and foundation bodies on the discipleship. It shall provide insights to them about the centrality of practices, challenges, and impacts of discipleship in privately owned Christian schools in Ddwaniro Sub-County. This can enable individuals to obtain a deep gratitude of the spiritual and cultural legacy, as well as the uniqueness of such schools.

Practically, this research shall help school administrators to understand concerns surrounding discipleship in privately owned Christian schools in the Ugandan context, and therefore serve as advice to them when implementing discipleship in their schools. From the findings of this research, head teachers and directors shall be aware of the consequences of discipleship,

therefore make more use of positive and discipleship strategies so as to mitigate problems that come with negative spiritual sessions.

The same documented cultural knowledge shall be of great value to the students involved in discipleship and spiritual growth, informing them about the discipleship that venerate and adhere to spiritual and educational standards to regulate doctrinal conflicts and discipleship controversies within privately owned schools in the Rakai district.

Finally, the documentation shall make a great academic contribution by providing adequate information that shall enrich many academic fields, like religious and theological studies, sociology, cultural and environmental stewardship, and provide literature for future scholars.

### **1.11 Theoretical Reflection**

This research was grounded on several theories as explained hereunder:

#### **1.11.1 Discipleship Theory**

The study was grounded in **Discipleship Theory** as articulated by Robert E. Coleman (The Master Plan of Evangelism). This theory emphasizes that a disciple has a personal encounter with Jesus Christ, who calls him or her to follow Him. Discipleship today is at the core of church teaching. The theory also noted that the young person's faith is engaged with intentional friendships, doctrinal formation, sacramental participation, and fostering the practice of virtue (Risse, 2017). The theory finally emphasize the disciple must embark on a life-long commitment to be a member of the Church, understanding their calls to personal holiness and apostolate within a culture of vocations.

One of the major critiques of disciple moving within schools is that its discipleship is ineffective and weak (Eckel, 2023). The research is based on Mamo's 2017) model of

discipleship and contextualization, which emphasizes the importance of discipleship strategies being both biblically sound and contextually effective. The theory may also help analyze how leadership and educational practices influence discipleship processes.

### **1.11.2 Transformational Leadership Theory**

The study was also grounded in **Transformational Leadership Theory**, which emphasizes spiritual and moral transformation through leadership practices. The theory of transformational leadership is a leadership style in which a leader's behaviours influence their followers, inspiring them to perform beyond their perceived capacities (Escobar, 2023). This style of leadership encourages school administrators and teachers to achieve unexpected or remarkable results by prioritizing their collective vision of discipleship over their immediate self-interests.

The theory of transformational leadership also emphasizes that individuals collaborate with followers or teams to identify changes and create a vision that guides these changes through influence and inspiration (Escobar, 2023). The theory is a central component of the Full Range Leadership Model, which emphasizes empowering followers (students) by granting autonomy and authority towards making decisions after they are trained. The approach also fosters positive changes in both the perception and attitudes of followers and in the overall organization. The framework also helps analyze how leadership and educational practices influence discipleship processes.

## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 2.0 Introduction

The previous chapter provides a general introduction; this chapter presents a review of relevant literature for the study. It was organized into themes, well-organized in line with the objectives, systematically. The literature involved opinions and views of other scholars and researchers that are related to the topic under study. It conjointly presents an outline of the salient gaps identified within the literature review that this study seeks to fill.

#### 2.1 Conceptualization of Discipleship within Christian Schools

According to Escobar (2023), in his book titled "*The New Global Mission*", the findings noted that "*a disciple*" is simply one who lives for God's glory. Because Christ magnifies the Father and makes Him known, so a disciple of Christ will become one who magnifies the Father and makes Him known. The disciple becomes a worshipper of God in every area of life in an increasing manner as he grows – He will live doxologically. This necessarily implies that discipleship must begin with an understanding of living for the glory of God, which results in internal transformation (Escobar, 2023). So, discipleship is not about external conformity, but the pursuit of internal reality or *transformation*. This process results in the life of Christ becoming the life of the believer to a greater and greater degree.

More to the above, Song (2021), in his book titled "Contextualization and Discipleship: Closing the Gap between Theory and Practice," the findings stress that discipleship or living doxologically is more about a path or a road that one travels on than it is about the actual things that a disciple does. This is an important distinction because one disciple can say to another, "Follow me down this path." But he should not say, do this like I do this, and then you will be a disciple. Because man's purpose is to glorify God in every area of life, a

teacher is called to be a disciple maker (Song, 2021). This is not just one hat that the teacher wears. In other words, the teacher is not: educator, disciple-maker, friend, counselor, etc. Instead, he is called to make disciples, and he uses education, friendship, counseling, etc., to do it. Making disciples who bring glory to God is his purpose, and the other areas are the tools that he uses to accomplish it.

Additionally, discipleship, like anything else, finds its reason for existence in the ultimate purpose for man's existence – God's glory. When discipleship is seen as an independent entity or if it is placed on any other foundation, the fruits of a discipleship program will be out of sync with its purpose. Educators must start with a God-centered perspective (Song, 2021). Yet this is sometimes easier said than done, because discipleship is by nature about dealing with people. For this reason, discipleship can easily become an end in itself, perverting the created order. Perversions like this are even more likely when the thing in view is good. For example, an emphasis on evangelism could potentially have man at its center.

While studies (Moore, 2019) in his book titled "Education for Christian Discipleship" widely noted that discipleship is the process that reconnects man in these three areas so that his life is lived declaring the worth of God. The goal of the discipleship process is for people to understand that a relationship with Christ affects their entire person so that they now have the ability to begin to walk in the way that they were created. In other words, because of the work of Christ, individuals now have the freedom to walk in a relationship with God, the freedom to build meaningful and lasting relationships with other people, and the freedom to live life in a purposeful, meaningful way according to the way that God has knit them together since they were in their mother's womb. Discipling is about respecting the

individuality of a disciple and assisting his or her uniqueness to blossom in accord with God's design (Moore, 2019). This results in lives that bring glory to God, because as these three areas see restoration, man more closely reflects what he was intended to reflect. So, the research study remains justified. This study is based on this notion, henceforth calling for serious investigations

## **2.2 The Methods and Strategies Employed to Promote Discipleship in Schools**

According to Muwulya (2024), in his book titled "An Evaluation of the Effectiveness of the Current Discipleship Strategies in West Buganda Diocese in Light of Mamo's (2017) Model of Discipleship and Contextualization", the results shows that many African communities have a profound spiritual hunger; one can feel it in churches, homes, schools, and even public gatherings (Muwulya, 2024). This openness to spiritual matters creates fertile ground for discipleship. Students are eager to learn about Jesus and grow in their faith, making the continent a ripe field for sharing the gospel.

Furthermore, Kobly (2024), in his book titled "Discipleship in the School," stresses that African cultures are inherently communal. There is a strong emphasis on relationships, community life, and shared experiences, which aligns beautifully with the Biblical model of discipleship that emphasizes mentorship and living out faith together. In African schools, discipleship often takes place in small groups, school-based scripture unions, scripture family gatherings, and one-on-one mentoring, fostering an environment where faith is both taught and experienced in daily life. This study therefore involved assessment, and the study of summary discipleship among the teaching staff, qualitatively as well as quantitatively. The study utilized a correlational method utilizing a sample of 123 respondents hence different

from the current research that utilized qualitative ethnographic research design, which gave the cause and effect of the current status more exhaustively and comprehensively.

Additionally, Benner (2022), in his book titled "Nurturing Spiritual Growth", the results indicated that biblical literacy and sound teaching are essential for promoting discipleship in schools. The engagement of students is another significant strength. Africa's youthful population brings immense energy, creativity, and potential to the discipleship. Youth, especially students, are actively involved in fellowship life and leadership, making them a vital part of the present and future of the African discipleship as noted by Kobly (2024). Many evangelical church-based schools focus on discipling the students, aiming at nurturing a generation of passionate, committed followers of Christ who can lead with integrity and vision. More so, Barna (2021) argues that despite facing challenges of poverty, persecution, and political instability, African Christians have developed a remarkable resilience. This resilience is a powerful testament to the transforming power of the gospel and plays a vital role in discipleship, teaching believers to trust God in all circumstances. Previous researchers conducted studies in vocational institutions, but not in schools such as public secondary schools. This gives a gap to be filled by this study.

In several church-founded schools across Africa, Kobly (2024), in his book titled "Discipleship in the School,"; the results indicated that adopting advanced technology helps to promote discipleship. School administrators have encouraged digital discipleship, providing safe spaces for worship, counseling, and training in secure locations. Schools and other development partners offer resources and support to persecuted Christians, helping them to continue their discipleship journeys without drawing undue attention. Similarly, Moore (2019), in his book titled "Education for Christian Discipleship", shows that

technology can be a game-changer for discipleship, especially in regions where face-to-face meetings are difficult. Developing digital resources like online courses, podcast and videos can also reach believers, especially students, in remote areas and underserved schools. Social media platforms can also be used to share biblical teachings and foster community. In areas with limited internet access or technical skills, simpler technologies like SMS-based Bible studies, radio broadcasts, or distributing teachings via USB drives can be incredibly effective. The goal is to make sure technology serves as a bridge, not a barrier, to discipleship. Previous researchers were similar in methodological approach used in the two studies, since they also utilized an ethnographic research design, but a different method of analysis. This study utilized thematic and content analysis, which have more features and are more accurate.

Further, Kobly (2024), in his book titled “Discipleship in the School”, indicates that a comprehensive strategy for effective discipleship is vital. The comprehensive strategy is needed to nurture mature, resilient followers of Christ who can lead and disciple colleagues. This plan can start with understanding the local context through cultural research and community assessments, involving local leaders to ensure the success of any discipleship initiative. Equally, Leland (2006), in her book titled “The Concept of Discipleship in Christian Education, ” stresses that developing culturally relevant discipleship programs that use local languages, integrate storytelling and oral traditions, and promote relational discipleship is also crucial. Equipping and training teachers through theological training centers, developing lay leadership, and offering continuous education may help build a solid foundation for discipleship. In support of the above, Benner (2022), in her book titled "Nurturing Spiritual Growth", stresses that churches in persecuted areas can focus on underground groups, digital resources, and other discreet methods of discipleship. Providing

safe spaces for worship, using coded language, and offering support through organizations that specialize in persecuted church school support are essential strategies. These organizations and development partners can help provide the materials and resources needed to disciple believers in secret, as well as legal and humanitarian aid for those facing persecution. Previous researchers used a descriptive approach based on correlations, and regression analysis was applied, unlike this research, which focused on thematic content analysis.

More, Risse (2017), in her book titled “Discipleship within the Context of the Local Church”, in her findings, she stresses that the church founded schools to engage local voices and insights. It is essential to include the voices and insights of African pastors, teachers, theologians, and church leaders. For example, Kenyan Pastor (John) emphasized the significance of contextualizing the gospel message, saying, “...in our community schools, using local stories and proverbs helps convey biblical truths more effectively”. Thus, when individuals see the gospel in the context of their own culture, they are more likely to embrace and live it out. Similarly, Nigerian Reverend (Sarah) highlights the need for holistic discipleship: “Discipleship isn’t just about spiritual growth; it’s about empowering individuals to live out their faith in every aspect of life, including how they manage their resources, their relationships, and their role in the school community”. These insights underline the importance of adapting discipleship methods to the unique cultural and social contexts of different African communities (Song, 2021). Despite all the literature review relating to discipleship, there was still a gap in the methods and strategies employed to promote discipleship in schools in Rakai district, creating a gap for this research.

Muwulya (2024), in his book titled “An Evaluation of the Effectiveness of the Current Discipleship Strategies in West Buganda Diocese in Light of Mamo’s (2017) Model of Discipleship and Contextualization”, the results indicated that syncretism and theological confusion are paramount. Teaching biblical theology, encouraging critical thinking, and providing apologetic resources may help believers, especially students, to develop a strong foundation in their faith and engage effectively with non-Christian beliefs and practices. Integrating holistic discipleship that combines spiritual and practical teaching supports socio-economic development and encourages community service, which may also help ensure that discipleship efforts address the whole individual and the broader school community. Similarly, Escobar (2023), in his book titled “The New Global Mission”, found that utilizing technology and media effectively can enhance discipleship efforts, especially in schools with limited access. Developing digital resources, using social media for discipleship, and adapting to technological limitations can help reach more individuals with the gospel message. Thus, fostering unity and collaboration among different Christian denominations and schools, encouraging peer learning, and promoting prayer and spiritual unity within schools may strengthen discipleship efforts across the African continent. The researcher agrees with the above notions because it is vital that spiritual and practical teaching supports discipleship in schools, bearing in mind that schools have limited human resources to do so, creating a gap for the study in privately owned Christian schools in the Rakai district.

More so, Benner (2022), in her book titled "Nurturing Spiritual Growth", shows that teachers can have a part in the sanctification process in their students' lives. Mentoring brings intentionality to the process. The individuals who embodied their faith in words and actions in our relationships had the most profound impact on my growth in faith. As teachers live life doxologically and begin to embody the truths that they are learning, they cannot help but make a

difference in the lives of those around them. No mentoring efforts will be complete if the educators themselves are not also disciples. If the teachers are becoming whole people, the next crucial component is for them to reach out and develop relationships with the students. Additionally, Barna (2021), in her book titled “Growing True Disciples”, stresses that if Christian educators want their students to bring glory to God, they must be concerned about the process of sanctification in the lives of their students. Immaturity is implied when one speaks about growth, since without immaturity, there would be no need for growth. This is an important truth for educators to understand, creating a need for this research.

### **2.3 The Effects of Discipleship on Students’ Spiritual Development**

According to Kobly (2024), in his book titled “Discipleship in the School”, the findings stress that discipleship creates opportunities to share the gospel. On several occasions, discipleship in schools has helped those learners not yet saved, and or undisciplined, but with a desire to understand the Bible; they have been able to learn the Bible, Jesus, God, and Salvation by faith. Similarly, Kasirivu (2024), in his book titled “The Story of a Discipleship Movement in Uganda”, the results indicated that discipleship helps individuals to build strong relationships with new Christians. Some of the closest friends in school and church are those we have taken through discipleship. It creates a bond between individuals or students that leads to a continued “iron sharpening iron” relationship. This is especially true when your disciples go on to take another couple through the curriculum. Every new Christian needs a mentor, a friend to come alongside and hold their hands as they grow in their newfound faith in Christ. This has created an imbalance in the existing literature gaps, especially in the theoretical and empirical aspects.

Additionally, Leland (2006), in his book titled “The Concept of Discipleship in Christian Education. Religious Education”, the results indicated that discipleship helps students learn to better teach basic Bible truths. It is one vital thing to “know’ the truth. It is also something completely different to effectively communicate that truth to a new believer. Discipleship is just as much training for the disciple as it is for the disciple. The more students do it, the better they learn to answer questions and navigate the “rewriting” process of Holy Spirit transformation. The continuing curriculum, for one, is designed so that one could easily study the lessons and even “read” the lessons with their new disciple. Subsequently, Kobly (2024), in his book titled “Discipleship in the School”, the findings indicated that discipleship helps students memorize scripture. Thus, memorizing scripture, especially understanding and grasping all the verses, greatly helps students to follow spiritual and Christian values. Previous researchers took a qualitative survey design, unlike this study, which used a triangulation design.

Furthermore, Barna (2022), in his book titled “Growing True Disciples”, the results indicated that discipleship allows a friendly and safe atmosphere for addressing concerns and answering questions. Inevitably, discipleship creates a safe environment where teachers can establish a relationship and the authority of the Bible before dealing with a touchy subject like peer group influence. During lessons, one of the major discipleship assignments must be clarified. One powerful truth taught in that lesson is that unconfessed sin is a hindrance to God answering your prayers. Similarly, Burggraff (2015) in his book titled “Developing Discipleship Curriculum”, his results indicated that discipleship provides the foundation of a relationship to help new Christians through difficult growing pains. The transformative process of replacing the world’s thinking with Biblical thinking is sometimes scary and

tedious. Thus, having colleagues to answer your questions and encourage you is often the difference maker in a new Christian's life, creating a gap that needs to be ascertained.

In the context of discipleship, *mentoring* is the process whereby the life of Christ in one person begins to be the life of Christ in another. The incredible thing about the life of Christ is that it takes root and blooms in different ways in the lives of believers. The characteristics are the same, but the gifts and abilities of the individual believer are still present and begin to be governed by Christ (Barna, 2021). In the context of education, each teacher brings a different gift set and interest to the table. The life of Christ is then manifested in various gift sets and fields. In fact, in what other situation would there be a more diverse set of interests and gifts? Teachers mentor when they are intentional about providing opportunities for students to practice the truth that they are learning. Students can see how the life of Christ has been manifested in the life of the teacher. In this setting, students shall be better equipped to be disciples of Christ.

*Integration* is often taught as how a particular subject relates to Scripture. It is thought to occur when a teacher links the subject at hand and a truth about God, His creation, His purposes, morality, etc. The author will demonstrate that this is not a complete definition of true integration (Benner, 2022). Biblical truth is resistant to simply being known. A Biblical understanding of knowledge would be that knowing truth results in living truth. So true integration can only take place when the teacher himself lives truth. Truth will never be transformational in the life of the student if it does not first impact the life of the teacher (Eckel, 2023). However, what prompted this is the fact that there is no scientific evidence or documented literature linking the methods and strategies employed to promote discipleship in privately owned Christian schools, creating a gap for this study.

## **2.4 Challenges Faced in Implementing Discipleship Programs in Schools**

Barna (2021) argues that discipleship in African schools is not without its challenges. One significant hurdle is syncretism, where Christian beliefs are mixed with traditional African religions and practices. Many new believers also struggle to fully embrace the Christian faith, often holding onto ancestral worship, witchcraft, and other traditional practices. This blending of beliefs can dilute the gospel message and hinder spiritual growth, creating confusion and inconsistency in discipleship. Similarly, Eckel (2023) opines that another challenge to discipleship in schools is limited access to theological education by teachers. Several teachers and school chaplains lack access to sound theological training, which can lead to shallow teaching and a lack of depth in discipleship. Benner (2022) also stresses that without a strong theological foundation, the church schools remain vulnerable to all forms of errors and misconceptions. Teachers lack the skills, competence, and knowledge need to disciple others effectively. The present study; therefore, sought to fill in these gaps in the literature.

Similarly, Kobly (2024) argues that economic pressures also play a significant role. In many parts of Sub-Saharan Africa, unemployment, poverty, ignorance, illiteracy or lack of education are daily realities. These economic challenges can impact discipleship efforts, as individuals are often more focused on meeting their immediate physical needs than on spiritual growth. More still, Muwulya (2024) argues that church schools frequently find themselves balancing the need to address both material and spiritual needs, which can strain resources and affect the efficiency and effectiveness of discipleship programs. This

perspective highlights that students have failed to integrate practical life skills and academic work into discipleship programs, ensuring that believers are equipped to navigate all areas and aspects of life. The study took a quantitative method, applying a cross-sectional survey design, unlike this study, which purely applied a qualitative ethnographic research design.

More to the above, Kasirivu (2024) argued that the African continent's incredible diversity is both a blessing and a challenge. With thousands of languages and ethnic groups, discipling across these divides can be tough. Language barriers and cultural differences can create misunderstandings and hinder effective communication of the gospel. Additionally, some ethnic tensions and historical conflicts can affect unity within the church schools, making discipleship more challenging (Barna, 2021). It is essential to recognize the broader contextual challenges that impact discipleship across Sub-Saharan Africa. Political instability and inter-ethnic conflict significantly affect how church schools operate. In regions with unstable governments or ongoing conflicts, it can be tough for church schools to function openly. However, discipleship efforts need to be adaptable, focusing on building small, resilient communities that can weather times of crisis (Kasirivu, 2024). Training church-based teachers to navigate these complexities and promoting peace and reconciliation within their congregations is vital. However, previous researchers conducted their studies outside Uganda and based on tertiary institutions. These constitute gaps in conducting a similar study in Uganda, thus a justification for this research.

## **2.5 Literature Gaps.**

### **2.5.1 Theoretical Gaps.**

The literature review reveals several significant theoretical gaps that limit understanding of discipleship practices in privately owned Christian schools. First, there is limited application of Discipleship Theory in the discipleship in Christian schools, particularly in developing

country contexts where resource constraints, cultural beliefs and institutional challenges may influence the discipleship practices in privately owned Christian schools.

Second, insufficient integration of multiple theoretical perspectives has resulted in a fragmented understanding of how discipleship contributes to spiritual development in privately owned Christian schools through different mechanisms and pathways. Most studies rely on single theoretical frameworks, limiting a comprehensive understanding of complex organizational phenomena.

Third, there is a lack of context-specific theoretical models that account for unique characteristics of Sub-Saharan African privately owned Christian school environments, including cultural factors, resource constraints, traditional norms, and institutional development challenges that may influence strategies employed to promote discipleship in schools.

### **2.5.2 Empirical Gaps**

Several empirical gaps limit the evidence base for understanding discipleship practices. First, there is a scarcity of studies specifically exploring discipleship in privately owned Christian schools, where regulatory requirements, ethical considerations, traditional beliefs, religious affiliations, and complex stakeholder relationships create unique management challenges.

Second, limited evidence exists on the discipleship in privately owned Christian schools in developing countries, where different resource constraints and institutional contexts influence the effectiveness of discipleship practices and other management approaches developed in high-income settings.

Third, there is an absence of systematic evaluation frameworks specifically designed for assessing discipleship in privately owned Christian schools, limiting the ability to measure progress and identify effective interventions.

### **2.5.3 Contextual Gaps**

The literature reveals significant contextual gaps that limit understanding of discipleship in Sub-Saharan African privately owned Christian schools. First, insufficient attention has been paid to cultural and organizational factors that may influence the adoption and effectiveness of discipleship practices in African educational contexts.

Second, limited knowledge exists regarding best practice models for discipleship that are specifically adapted to resource-constrained environments and local education institution priorities.

Third, there is an inadequate understanding of how external factors, including donor requirements, regulatory frameworks, and regional collaboration networks, influence the outcomes of discipleship in privately owned Christian schools.

## **2.6 Summary of Literature Review**

Based on the literature review, it is concluded that there are several strategies, challenges, and impacts of discipleship in privately owned Christian schools in Rakai District. The review process involves identifying the gaps in the literature and making analysis of the studies that have been conducted regarding the discipleship in privately owned Christian schools. A critical analysis of the above studies did not provide a clear answer. This left a very huge gap that necessitates the need to undertake a study that is applicable to Ddwaniro Sub-County. It was therefore on this ground that the researcher opts to conduct a study to fill

this gap by providing an in-depth exploration of discipleship in privately owned Christian schools in Rakai District.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.0 Introduction**

This chapter explains the methodological aspects. To understand the discipleship in privately owned Christian schools in Ddwaniro Sub-County, Rakai District, qualitative methodological aspects were adopted. Thus, it highlights the specific procedures followed in carrying out this study. Data collection involved research design, area setting, sources of information, study population, sample size determination, sampling strategy, instruments of data collection, procedures of data collection, validity and reliability of instruments, data presentation and analysis, as well as ethical considerations.

#### **3.1 Research Design**

Connelly (2016) and Cohen (2011) opine that research design is a general plan or strategy that gives an outline of how data is to be gathered, processed, and analysed. This study employed a Case-Study research design and was qualitative in nature. This design was particularly suitable because it emphasizes an in-depth and holistic examination of phenomena within their natural settings (Yin, 2018). The goal of the study was to examine a single unit to represent the complete population of a certain region, which made the research design helpful. This directly aligns with my study's objectives. Using a range of data sources, a case study design was used to make it easier to explore a phenomenon in its context. A Case Study Design is an in-depth exploration of a bounded system based on extensive data collection

(Creswell, 2018). Therefore, a case study design was the best way to get a lot of primary data quickly.

With a Case Study Design, a variety of qualitative research approaches/methods were employed such as in-depth individual interviews to produce narrative data and focus group discussions. By focusing on the Ddwaniro Sub-County as a bounded system, I am able to investigate the practices, challenges, and impacts of discipleship in privately owned Christian schools in Ddwaniro Sub-County. The triangulation process produced well-organized and comprehensive results. The study used two data collection tools which were based on the principle of triangulation, which helped in converging opinions to be able to arrive at better conclusions. The relevance of this design lies in its ability to integrate multiple data collection methods such as interviews, focus group discussions, and document reviews, ensuring that my research captures a nuanced understanding of the subject.

As Stake (1995) emphasizes, qualitative case studies excel in answering “how” and “why” questions, making them ideal for covering the processes through which discipleship strategies have been passed down through generations and understanding the religious significance they hold for the students. In applying this research design, I adopted a focused qualitative approach that situates the discipleship in privately owned Christian schools in Ddwaniro within their broader socio-cultural, spiritual and historical context. Through interviews and focus group discussions with teachers and school administrators, I aim to understand the evolving nature of these discipleship strategies in privately owned Christian schools. Observing discipleship strategies in schools also provided, firsthand insights into their practical and symbolic importance.

Despite its strengths, the qualitative case study research design is not without critique. Scholars (like Flyvbjerg, 2006) argue that its focus on a specific context can limit the generalizability of findings. However, my study addressed this limitation through analytical generalization, where the insights from the privately owned schools in Ddwaniro Sub-County contributed to broader debates on discipleship. Additionally, concerns about subjectivity are mitigated through the use of reflexivity and triangulation, ensuring a balanced and rigorous analysis.

### **3.2 Area Setting**

The study was conducted in selected privately owned Christian schools in Ddwaniro Sub-County, Rakai District, Uganda. Ddwaniro Sub-County has 5 parishes and 49 villages in Rakai District. Rakai district headquarters is located approximately 57 Km from Masaka. Ddwaniro Sub-County has 5 privately owned Christian schools that were conveniently selected, and these comprised one (1) secondary school, and four (4) primary schools. This particular area was selected because of continued weaknesses and gaps in spiritual development in privately owned schools (Rakai DLG, 2022), despite discipleship programs.

### **3.3 Sources of Information**

According to Creswell (2018), data sources refer to the existing recognized literature, whether unpublished or published, as long as it has been accepted by the academic sector or any other institution of good reputation. The researcher mainly used primary sources of information. In this regard, primary data is data obtained from the field by the researcher on the variables of interest for the specific study goal (Sekaran, 2003). Primary sources of information were those sources which were original in nature, and were got for the first time from the field. These primary data were collected by the use of interview guide and focus group discussions. On the

other hand, Kothari (2014) further points out that secondary data are the data that are gathered and analyzed by someone else. Several documents were gathered for analysis including; government policy documents, online sources, school reports, journals and text-books, and several other academic research reports which the researcher made the best use of it, in supporting the findings.

### **3.4 Study Population**

The study population comprised of: students and school administrators (including of head teachers, deputy head teachers, directors of studies and Chaplains). Chaplains constituted the study population as they were informed on how the discipleship is embedded in spirituality and curriculum. These provided rich and in-depth data which offers a comprehensive understanding of the discipleship. Selected Head teachers, deputy Head teachers, and Directors of Studies were interviewed to get a variety of views towards making the results more reliable and comprehensive for the benefit of this nation. The students were also selected in order to obtain reliable and valid information required for this study. This enabled the researcher to get a variety of views and unbiased responses, which made the study to become valid. The study also involved both male and female participants, selected purposively.

### **3.5 Sample Size Determination**

As defined by Singh & Masuku (2014), a sample size is a small group of individuals that are selected to participate in a study in order to collect data and draw conclusions about the population. Here, the researcher decides to include all key staff. Therefore, all (6) school administrators per school (including 1 Head teacher, 1 Director of Studies, 1 Chaplain, 1 School Director, and 2 deputy Head teachers) were expected to be part of the final sample of the study. This is in agreement with Mugenda & Mugenda (2003), who recommended that, in

any study with a small target population, it is advisable to consider taking the entire population. This approach allowed the researcher to thoroughly explore the discipleship in privately owned schools and ensure that my findings are both rich and well-grounded. The researcher eventually scheduled appointments with individuals (each administrator) for interviews to provide adequate qualitative data.

For students/pupils, convenience sampling was used. This was used to select teachers who are easily accessible, especially those who were found within school premises during the actual time of data collection, and those who were willing to participate. I conveniently selected fourteen (14) students/pupils per school. This approach allowed me to thoroughly explore the discipleship in privately owned schools and ensure that my findings are both rich and well-grounded. Supporting this approach, Creswell (2018) suggests that 5-20 participants are typically adequate in qualitative-case studies, though the expected number may vary depending on the complexity of the research topic. Following Patton's (2015) recommendation, I aim to gather information-rich cases that provide valuable insights into discipleship in privately owned schools in Ddwaniro Sub-County, rather than focusing solely on sample size.

### **3.6 Sampling Methods and Techniques**

I used purposive sampling in selecting participants such as school administrators (including Chaplains, Head teachers, deputy Head teachers, School Directors and Director of Studies) who had extensive, knowledge of discipleship in schools. This sampling method allowed me to gain access to individuals who were directly involved in discipleship and who possess the spiritual, historical and cultural knowledge needed to fully capture the context of these religious beliefs (Creswell, 2018).

Additionally, recognizing that expertise within the privately owned schools were interconnected, I employed convenience sampling to select students/pupils, ensuring that I captured a wide range of voices within the privately owned schools. Convenience sampling is a non-probability sampling method where units are selected for inclusion in the sample because they are the easiest for the researcher to access (Patton, 2015). This can be due to geographical proximity, availability at a given time, or willingness to participate in the research.

### **3.7 Data Collection Methods and Tools**

The following data collection instruments were used in collecting primary data.

#### **3.7.1 Interviews**

The researcher conducted interviews as a primary method to gather in-depth, culturally rich insights into exploring discipleship in privately owned Christian schools in Ddwaniro Sub-County. I conducted in-depth, semi-structured interviews to gather vital information. I engaged school administrators (including Head teacher, deputy Head teachers, school director, Director of Studies, and Chaplains) in one-on-one interviews, focusing on eliciting personal narratives that reflects both the spiritual aspects of discipleship and the spiritual meanings behind them.

An interview guide [see Appendix II] with core questions related to each objective such as questions about specific discipleship strategies and spiritual contexts within schools. Interview responses were noted down (short notes) on the separate sheet for each individual, and was transcribed at the end of each day into verbatim quotations. The interviews were face-to-face between researcher and selected participants which enhanced confidentiality and observing of

non-verbal behaviours. In this research, it used to interview these selected participants since they had in-depth information and they could all be got at school on the same day.

### **3.7.2 Focus Group Discussion Guide**

Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) were used to get and collect data from the students/pupils. I conducted around ten FGDs (Appendix III). In each school, two FGDs were conducted. Each FGD comprised seven (7) students/pupils, and it was conducted on the agreed schedule per school. Each FGD session took 35-60 minutes. It was strictly conducted in an organised classroom or the school's main hall. This is in accordance with Creswell & Poth (2018) noting that FGDs facilitates researchers to conversationally establish a dialogue with a group of 5-15 participants in order to obtain their views about the phenomenon under investigation in a convenient, permissive, non-threatening and highly interactive environment.

While conducting FGDs, on-camera session was done, and the end of each day, spoken words and observation actions were translated into texts through transcribing records and typing up observation notes. The FGD guide was used to collect and facilitated the discussions. The FGD guide was used because of its flexibility not only in allowing rephrasing and rewording of questions to suit the respondents but also in allowing the students/pupils to answer questions in an open-ended and therefore unlimited and exhaustive way.

### **3.8 Validity and Reliability**

The research ensured credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability through practical measures being applied at each stage of collecting primary data and analysis. To establish credibility, researcher conducted individual member checks by sharing preliminary results with school heads for their feedback and validation, ensuring the interpretations and conclusions reflecting their lived perceptions, views, experiences and ideas.

More so, transferability was achieved by providing a detailed contextual description of the discipleship, including spiritual, religious and historical factors, allowing future researchers to assess the applicability of my results to similar settings. Transferability was also achieved by providing a detailed contextual description of the privately owned schools in Ddwaniro Sub-County, including spiritual, socio-cultural, and religious factors, allowing future researchers towards assessing the applicability of my results to similar settings.

Similarly, dependability was ensured through the use of a detailed audit trail, where I documented the entire research process, including data collection methods, instruments of data collection, field notes, and analytical decisions. This provided transparency and allowed for the research process to be reviewed for accuracy and consistency.

Finally, confirmability was ensured through data triangulation, where I compared results from focus group discussions and interviews. Cross-referencing these sources ensured that the basic conclusions being drawn were grounded in the data rather than in researcher bias. These practical strategies ensured the rigor and validity of my study.

### **3.9 Data Presentation, Analysis, and Interpretation**

According to Miles, Huberman & Saldana (2014), data analysis in qualitative research is an iterative process that involves data reduction, data display, and drawing conclusions or verification. The method chosen for data analysis aligned with the objectives and the nature of the methods of the data collection. Creswell & Poth (2018) emphasize that qualitative data analysis often involves organizing raw data, coding, categorizing, and identifying themes towards interpreting the underlying patterns and meanings. The researcher used qualitative methods of data analysis to turn the qualitative data obtained from the field into meaningful

insights. In this study on the discipleship in privately owned Christian schools in Ddwaniro Sub County, I used thematic analysis, content analysis, and narrative analysis.

### **3.9.1 Thematic Analysis**

I used thematic analysis to identify, analyze and interpret key themes and patterns within the qualitative data gathered from discipleship in privately owned Christian schools. This method involved identifying patterns and themes in the data for easy understanding, interpretation and presentation in a logical manner. This method also allowed for flexibility in organizing and describing the data set in rich detail, focusing on the most significant aspects related to the research objectives, such as the spiritual and religious context of the discipleship.

Additionally, thematic analysis was particularly suited for this study because it enabled a detailed exploration of complex and nuanced discipleship strategies, while allowing the researcher to remain closely grounded in the data. It provided a systematic way to make sense of the varied forms and existence of discipleship in privately owned Christian schools. This approach ensured that the study captures the diversity of experiences and perceptions related to the discipleship in the face of today's economy.

### **3.9.2 Content Analysis**

I also used content analysis to systematically analyze the data obtained from the literature, interview notes and observation notes. Content analysis was a great method of analyzing data for it pays attention to the themes and patterns that illustrate a lot of meaning of the spiritual and social aspect under study (Zhang & Wildemuth, 2009). Although, it was time consuming, and reductive in nature, the method is affordable, and easy to deal with or reproduce results.

### **3.9.3 Narrative Analysis**

I however applied the narrative method in data analysis. This overcomes the short comings of the thematic method. The researcher identified, analyzed and interpreted participants' stories. This brought out the lived experiences of participants, their perspectives, feelings, behavior and meanings attached to the discipleship in privately owned Christian schools. Even though the method was time consuming and quite hard to deal with, it was capable of providing rich data that is in-depth, contextual, and flexible. The researcher, however focuses on key stories in the form of myths that reflect the connection between discipleship and academic attainment in schools.

The three methods enabled the researcher to develop different levels of meaning in the data. The content analysis helped in the identification of patterns, e.g., common words and symbols related to discipleship, gave an overview of the themes, and lay a ground for deeper analysis. The thematic analyses come in to explore the themes in detail with a focus on meanings and relationships existing in the ideas.

Finally, the narrative analysis provided individual stories and experiences to capture the participants' worldview. Using these three methods gave my study a comprehensive understanding of the connectivity between the discipleship and spiritual development in privately owned Christian schools in Ddwaniro Sub County.

### **3.10 Ethical Considerations**

There were several reasons why it was important to adhere to ethical norms in research. First, norms promote the aims of research, such as knowledge, truth, and avoidance of error (Rowley, 2012). The ethics framework was essential as it entails the voluntary informed consent of the participants. The researcher observed several ethical considerations to ensure a

dutiful research that not only benefits the involved communities but also builds integrity and reliability.

The researcher observed the ethical principle of informed consent to all participants. Official permission from school heads and participants were obtained beforehand. A consent form was signed by participants (Appendix I) so that they contribute to the study from an informed ground. Additionally, the researcher fairly involved different categories of people including the male and female, and religious leaders to ensure justice, fairness and equality.

Besides, the researcher ensured confidentiality and anonymity of the information given to him by the research participants. Since the study dealt with cultural, religious and spiritual aspects which are in most cases sensitive to certain individuals, I anonymized the information especially if participants wished it. In addition, the information given by the research participants were only used to satisfy the demands of the study i.e. answering the research questions.

Additionally, the study had a positive impact on the school-based environment of the study. The researcher employed environmental friendly methods and tools to collect data. More importantly, the study established environmental well-being and stewardship. For example, I put efforts on finding out how the students and school administrators' spiritual beliefs and practices can contribute to the discipleship.

In my study, I addressed key ethical considerations, including informed consent, confidentiality and anonymity, gender, and environmental ethics, as they are integral to ensuring the integrity and ethical rigor of my research process. Informed consent (Appendix I) is crucial in ensuring that all participants, particularly students and school administrators, understand their involvement in their research including the potential risks and benefits. This

process ensured that participants could make autonomous decisions about their participation, fostering trust and transparency.

Given the cultural sensitivity of discipleship, confidentiality and anonymity was also prioritized to protect the identities and practices of individuals and school communities. I anonymized all names and identifiable information in notes, records and published results. This means removing personal details, altering any identifiers and securely storing all data on encrypted devices accessible only to authorized devices members of the research team.

Considerations of religious affiliations was central to my study, as the roles of different Christian settings on discipleship may differ and thus require careful attention to avoid bias. I ensured that the study was inclusive, allowing for the perspectives of individuals from different religious affiliations and different age groups within school members to be equally represented. So I remained culturally sensitive to religious dynamics that influence participation.

The research procedures were explained to all the respondents before they took part in the research, and their informed consent was obtained. To ensure anonymity of the respondents, the investigator gave respondents codes or numbers that are known to the researcher only to ensure that the information given by the respondents cannot be easily linked to them by a third party. Personal bias was avoided during the entire study that is to say, during interviews, data analysis and reporting.

Lastly, all the sources of literature were acknowledged throughout the whole study through proper citations and referencing.

### **3.11 Methodological Constraints**

This study faced several limitations that could impact the scope, generalizability, and depth of the findings.

The study was challenged with the attainment of a diversity of indigenous and spiritual beliefs as well as perceptions concerning discipleship due to different contexts of the participants. This made generalization very difficult and challenging to the investigator. However, with the ethnographic research design, I engaged participants in detailed interviews and active participation to attain deep understanding of the phenomenon that can be used for generalization.

Besides, the contextual variations, the study suffered from diversion of focus from social, cultural to spirituality aspects because of the nature of the topic of study. Discipleship is commonly influenced by individual and family traditional beliefs in Africa setting and in Uganda, discussing it's religiously or spirituality may pose a big challenge. The cultural part of it might overshadow the religious or spiritual dimension due to participants' perspectives. To manage this, I concentrated on specific discipleship strategies so that the cultural aspect does not distract the respondents from religious or spiritual facets.

The study was also affected by the researcher's interpretative lens. According to Miles, Huberman & Saldana (2014), researchers' biases shaped data interpretation, which was a challenge in ethnographic or culturally embedded research. Although, I strived for reflexivity, my interpretations were still being influenced by personal or cultural biases that could affect the authenticity of the analysis.

The study was also limited by the effects of the changes that had taken place in discipleship in schools. The participants gave biased responses in favor of the current ways of discipleship which were in their context and understanding. This denied a comprehensive understanding of

the study. However, the researcher used focused group discussions to involve elders from teachers and students, each giving their contextual responses about the discipleship within their schools.

In this study, Creswell & Poth (2018) note that qualitative research often, relies on small samples size, due to its in-depth, time-intensive nature. This limitation applied here, as the focus on in-depth interviews with the privately owned Christian schools in Ddwaniro Sub-County limited the extent to which findings was generalized to broader populations or other indigenous groups. However, Lincoln & Guba (1985) emphasize that establishing trust with participants is critical, but even with rapport, there are still cultural or spiritual boundaries that restrict information sharing. Since the study was limited to qualitative methods, I enhanced the robustness of findings by employing multiple qualitative techniques such as triangulating interviews with observations and documentary reviews.

The study faced limitations in terms of time and resources. Fieldwork involving immersion in the privately owned Christian schools in Ddwaniro Sub-County requires significant, time and resources and limitations in either could constrain the depth of data collection and analysis.

Furthermore, the study was limited by restricted access and acceptance within the privately owned Christian schools in Ddwaniro Sub-County. Participants were not willing to reveal their social, religious or spiritual and cultural life to a stranger. The researcher however sought permission from the responsible authorities for accessibility. I also got an introductory letter from the university for credibility and easy acceptance by the community.

Lastly, as Baxter & Jack (2008) note, challenges in data triangulation across various sources could affect the reliability of findings especially when working with different types of data (e.g. focus group discussions, interviews, observations, archival materials). Despite these

limitations, I aim to mitigate their impact by employing strategies like prolonged engagement, member checking and triangulation to enhance the study's credibility and rigor. Creswell (2018) emphasizes the value of narrow, context specific research in qualitative studies as it allows for in-depth understanding. Additionally, the study delimits itself to particular types of data sources: interviews, participant's observations and documentary reviews.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION**

#### **4.0 Introduction**

The study unravels the discipleship in privately owned Christian schools in Ddwaniro Sub-County, Rakai District, Uganda. This chapter details with the detailed presentation, analysis and interpretation of primary results highlighting the purpose as well as which was answered by the respective objectives. This chapter highlights the data presentations and analysis, as well as discussion of research findings.

The presentations are done according to the research objectives. Research results being presented in thematically, narratives individual statements as per participants' opinions in line to each research objectives have been provided for each of the study theme. Interview results were qualitatively presented in form of verbatim quotations and similar narrative statements as per participants' views in regards to the research objectives. They are presented in thematically basing of verbatim quotation.

#### **4.1 Presentation of Results**

The results being developed basing on the research purpose and are analyzed within the scope of theoretical review. The results of the research are presented, and this is done in accordance with the stated research objectives that is to say: exploring how discipleship is conceptualized within these privately owned Christian schools, identifying the methods and strategies

employed to promote discipleship in privately owned Christian schools, evaluating the perceived effects of discipleship on spiritual development in privately owned Christian schools, and assessing the challenges faced in implementing discipleship programs in privately owned Christian schools.

## **4.2 The Conceptualization of Discipleship**

The first objective was to explore how discipleship is conceptualized within these privately owned Christian schools. Discipleship is the lifelong, intentional process of following Jesus Christ, becoming more like Him in behavior, attitude, and character, and helping others do the same. Discipleship is not an add-on but is woven into the fabric of the school day, with teaching staff integrating their faith and Christian beliefs into all subjects, not just explicitly religious ones. Interview schedules were used to solicit primary information. Respondents were involved in answering interviews.

### **4.2.1 Holistic Education**

Participants described discipleship in schools to involve integrating a Biblical worldview into all subjects, fostering spiritual growth through relationships, and training learners to live out their faith, rather than treating it merely as a separate religious subject. Participants in FGDs indicated that, “.... discipleship involves holistic education that shapes hearts and minds of learners, with educators acting as mentors who model Christ-like character...” (Pupils, FGD 1, School A; 4<sup>th</sup> November 2025). Clearly indicating that educators could build relationships with learners by being present, encouraging them, and offering godly counsel. The school environment, including discipline and interactions, encourages a deeper personal relationship with Jesus as ascertained by Kobly (2024).

In interviews, it was revealed that discipleship is conceptualized as a holistic process of spiritual formation that goes beyond classroom learning to also include the shaping of individual's character to be Christ-like; in fact, one of the head-teachers described that; "...discipleship in schools involves a mentor-discipline relationship where teaching staff integrate faith into all daily lessons, creating a culture of mentorship and guidance throughout the school day towards building Christian beliefs, character and a biblical worldview. Such an integrated approach is considered a lifelong, relational journey that equips learners to live out their faith as well as fulfill the great commission...." (Head teacher, School A, Interview, October 30<sup>th</sup> 2025). This clearly indicates that discipleship plays a vital role in character formation. A primary goal of discipleship is to mold learners into Christ-like characters who are spiritually mature and equipped to live according to Christian teachings. This is in agreement with Escobar (2023) who stated that discipleship equips learners with the relevant knowledge and habits towards engaging with culture according to their Christian identity.

#### **4.2.2 Form of Discipline**

In interviews, it was revealed that discipleship is conceptualized as a form of discipline; in fact, one of the deputy head-teachers described that, "...we look at discipleship aiming at transforming learners into Disciples of Christ through biblical correction, training, and character development. The discipleship aims at training learners to become followers of Christ. Thus, discipleship is based on biblical principles from scripture, which is seen as useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness...." (Deputy head-teacher, School C; Interview, November, 3<sup>rd</sup> 2025). It is viewed as a loving, God-centered process rooted in the belief that learners need guidance towards combating sin, growing in righteousness and learning self-discipline under the Holy Spirit's guidance. The ultimate goal

here is not just rule-following, but fostering godly character traits especially respect, integrity and responsibility. This is in agreement with Benner (2022) argument that discipleship ultimately helps learners to develop self-discipline, guided by the Holy Spirit. Schools actively work with homes towards building godly habits especially respect, courtesy, cheerful obedience, responsibility and truthfulness.

#### **4.2.3 Mentorship and Relationships**

Additionally, participants described that discipleship is also conceptualized to focus more on mentorship and relationships. It seems fairly intuitive to me that discipleship, as defined above, happens in Christian schools. Teaching staffs who care about learners growing in wisdom and virtue may naturally care about them growing in their faith as well. Participants in the FGDs described that, “... discipleship involves a mentor-disciple relationship where mature believers guide less experienced ones (students in this case) through regular meetings, prayer, Bible study, and accountability. Here, our teachers act as spiritual mentors, not just instructors, and model spiritual disciplines and a biblical worldview. Emphasis is placed on practices like scripture memorization, Bible study, and prayer to deepen a student’s relation with God...” (Students, FGD 3, School B; November, 4<sup>rd</sup> 2025). Clearly indicating that discipleship, the process of learning from and following a mentor or teacher, is crucial for spiritual growth and community development. It fosters personal maturity, strengthens faith, and allows believers (learners) to impact the world around them.

Another interviewed Director of Studies had this to say; “...the curriculum is always taught with a Christian lens, showing how subjects like history, literature and science can be viewed through a faith-based perspective....” (Director of Studies, School D; Interview, November 3<sup>rd</sup> 2025). This clearly indicates that discipleship is viewed as a continuous, relational journey of

spiritual growth. It moves beyond mere knowledge to include seeing faith in action, developing practical skills, and understanding how to live out one's faith in the world. This is in agreement with Abuga (2020) stresses that discipleship is encouraging colleagues and students in their pursuit of Christ. Disciple-makers possess an other-focused mentality and a Christ-centered end goal. Arguably, Barna (2022) noted that discipleship as walking alongside other disciples in order to encourage, equip and challenge one another in love to grow towards maturity in Christ.

In addition, the study noted that discipleship deigns when teaching staff integrate their Christian faith into all subjects, not restricting their faith to explicitly religious moments such as Bible class or chapel. Interviewed Chaplain noted that, "...teaching staff welcome their learners into a life of discipleship when they lead classes in which there is no distinction between the secular and the sacred. In this way, studying all class subjects becomes an avenue for exploring God's created world. Empowering such learners to use their creative capabilities towards cultivating beauty is also a way of living out their identity as image-bearers of God..." (Chaplain, School D; Interview, November, 3<sup>rd</sup> 2025). This indicates that when teaching staff make these connections between learning and faith explicit, learners are led forward in their journey of following Christ with their whole lives, beginning with their minds. This is in agreement with Kobly (2024) who stresses that while each Christian tradition has their own vocabulary and framework for expressing the heart of discipleship, the end goal is the same: helping believers be conformed to the image of Christ. When teaching staff approach the subjects through the lens of faith, invite their learners to think and interact with an idea from a biblical perspective, pointing to the truths of the gospel, and at times including scripture or prayer in their lessons, they are playing a key role in the process of disciple-making.

#### **4.2.4 Intentional and Holistic Development**

The study noted that privately owned Christian schools conceptualize discipleship through intentional and holistic development that comprises fellowship, spiritual transformation, mentorship, and cultivation of spiritual disciplines, especially Bible study. The Director of Studies indicated that, "... the goal of intentional and holistic development in a school is to raise committed individuals who emulate Christ by sharing the good news, loving colleagues, and living a life of dedication and service. Discipline ship equips learners for faithfulness. They are to equip others in how to walk in step with truth of the gospel...." (Director of Studies, School D; Interview, November, 2<sup>nd</sup> 2025). This meant the church leaders ought to invest more on the bible study and fellowship since these two lay a foundation and background for family life and parenting. The findings affirm that the concept of discipleship involved a deep and lasting commitment to following Christ, which involves taking up one's cross and living a dedicated life as ascertained by Leland (2006).

Furthermore, it was important to find out the church privately owned Christian schools has put up programs for the learners to be disciple; but current studies show learners to be in a serious exodus from their mainline Christian schools to charismatic evangelical or Pentecostal churches. Across FGDs, a rearing view was, "... school going children feel the Christian schools is irrelevant and does not address their needs and have lost a sense of belonging thus the exodus. In the same study, the Chaplain also agreed that they had not met the expectations of the learners and as a result have lost some charismatic members of their faith. Discipleship in schools considers guiding learners to develop their faith, character and relationship with God through a holistic approach that integrates with all aspects of school life...." (Students, FGD 1, School A; November, 2<sup>nd</sup> 2025). This clearly indicates that discipleship in schools

involves teaching staff modeling a faith filled life, integrating faith into all subjects, and providing a supportive environment for learners to learn, question, and grow spiritually through consistent mentorship and personal investment. This approach seeks to help connecting learners grow into followers of Christ by connecting their daily lives, spiritual growth and academic subjects in a unified way.

#### **4.2.5 Scripture Reading**

However, in another focus group discussion with some of the students, they confessed that, “.. the privately owned Christian schools has no specific discipleship programs but instead the teaching staff to implement the strategic discipleship movement which involves daily scripture reading. One of the students quickly emphasize that confirmation class is one of the discipleship programs. In an interview, one of the students also emphasized mentorship discipleship program and fellowship meeting that the two contributed immensely to the growth of faith....” (Students, FGD 4, School E; November, 4<sup>th</sup>2025). This clearly indicates that Christian schools lack efficient and appropriate discipleship strategy. It is a long-term relationship where teaching staff act as mentors and role models, going beyond just formal religious instruction to weave faith into every subject, classroom culture and daily interaction. Similarly, Atwongyeirwe (2025) stresses that many of the individuals describe the Christian schools as boring. Christian school is disconnected from the real-life interest of the youth. This depicts a big gap in discipleship ministry.

Finally, the study noted that discipleship is a term commonly used in religious contexts, particularly in Christianity, but it can also be applied more broadly to various mentorship and apprenticeship relationships. The interviewed DOS described that, “...in its Christian context, discipleship refers to the process of following and learning from Jesus Christ, as well as

helping others to do the same. It involves deepening one's faith, understanding of scripture, and commitment to living according to the teachings and example of Jesus. In practical terms, discipleship often involves a mentor-disciple relationship, where a more experienced believer (the mentor) guides and teaches a less experienced believer (the disciple) in matters of faith, theology, spiritual growth, and practical Christian living. This relationship typically involves regular meetings, study of the Bible, prayer, accountability, and encouragement....” (Director of Studies, School D; Interview, November, 4<sup>th</sup> 2025). This clearly indicates that discipleship can be understood as a relational journey where mature believers, often referred to as mentors or disciplers, invest their time, wisdom, and spiritual guidance into the lives of newer or less mature believers, known as disciples. This concurs with Dumebi (2024) who argues that discipleship is characterized by trust, accountability, and a shared commitment to spiritual growth. At its core, discipleship is about following the example of Jesus Christ, who called his disciples to follow him and learn from his teachings.

Overall, discipleship is a multifaceted concept that involves learning, growth, community, service, and mentorship. Whether in a religious or secular context, discipleship plays a vital role in personal development and the passing on of wisdom from one generation to the next.

In the next section, the methods and strategies employed to promote discipleship in privately owned Christian schools were addressed hereunder.

### **4.3 The Methods and Strategies employed to Promote Discipleship**

The second objective was to identify the methods and strategies employed to promote discipleship in privately owned Christian schools. Schools create opportunities for community service, leadership training and fellowship to put faith into action. Interview schedules were used to solicit primary information. Respondents were involved in answering interviews.

### **4.3.1 Curriculum Integration**

In interviews, participants described that discipleship can be promoted in schools through a combination of curriculum integration, spiritual formation, and community building; in fact, one of the head teachers explained that, “...the combination of curriculum integration, spiritual formation, and community building involves teaching learners to think critically through a Christian worldview, encouraging consistent prayer and Bible study, and providing opportunities for them to engage in their faith through small groups and community services....” (Head teacher, School C; Interview, October 30<sup>th</sup> 2025). This clearly indicates that encouraging teaching staff and school heads to model their faith through their daily actions and interactions with learners. This can be attained by incorporating prayer and scripture. This is in agreement with Atwongyeirwe (2025) that there is need to weave daily Bible reading, study, and prayer into the school’s routines. School staff encourages and guides learners beyond memorization to truly understand and apply the Christian values and the Bible to their lives.

### **4.3.2 Fellowships**

The participants described that having scheduled fellowship as another strategy employed in privately owned schools to promote discipleship; and one of the interviewed Directors of Studies had these to say, “...in most schools, Tuesday and Thursday fellowship were the most effective methods of discipleship programs....in the fellowship meetings, believers helped each other grow spiritually, supported each other in times of joy and sorrow, visited each other and shared meals. As a result, many individual learners were attracted to fellowship and this led to the growth of Christianity and discipleship in schools....” (Director of Studies, School A; Interview, October, 4<sup>th</sup> 2025)

In another FGDs with the students, it was described that, “.... fellowships in schools was vital part of discipleship programs. He explained how brethren would look for those who got lost from fellowships, how they prayed together, shared the word and walked in light. He also noted that repentance was a key element of their fellowship....” (Students, FGD3, School D; November, 5<sup>th</sup>2025). This clearly indicates that fellowship in privately owned schools motivate learners to gather for religious activities such as prayer, Bible study and worship. These groups often called Inter School Christian Fellowship aims at building common among learners of shared faith, providing spiritual growth and encouraging them to serve and be a positive influence in their schools. These groups are typically learner-led, with the support of teaching staff, often meet regularly especially during lunch hours or after school. This is in agreement with Kasirivu (2024) who stated that school-based Christian fellowships provide a supportive Christian school community, nurture spiritual growth through prayer and Bible study, and empowering learners to share their faith with colleagues.

#### **4.3.3 Seminars and Bible Study**

More so, participants also noted that seminars and Bible study as another strategy employed in privately owned schools to promote discipleship; and one of the interviewed deputy head-teachers described that, “...everyone benefits when engaging biblical and theological views and ideas academically. The more one engages the Bible and its attendant ideas, the more one is forced to engage their own faith perspectives, questions and assumptions. Such engagement produces growth in discipleship....” (Deputy Head teacher, School B; Interview, November, 4<sup>th</sup>2025). This clearly indicates that teachers using Bible study cultivate intimacy with the Lover of our soul by listening, knowing Him and responding by His Grace and for His glory. These help students to love each other and respect their teachers. This is in agreement with

Chris (2024) asserting that through Bible seminars and fellowships often organize larger events especially nights of worship and religious emphasis weeks to engage the wider school community. Thus, a focus of service is common with learners encouraged to demonstrate their faith through actions and outreach within the school and wider community. The goal of every Bible study is to understand truth, developing as a learner, and enjoying the book of life.

#### **4.3.4 Confirmation**

The participants described that confirmation class as the most effective method of discipleship. A cross FGDs, a rearing view was that, "...confirmation class took one-year after which the candidates would be examined and only those who passed the examination would be confirmed and others would repeat...the early confirmation days created fresh efforts to teach the faith. The clergy were also to teach their Christians and exhort all parents to teach their children and servants to do the same. This explains well how deep the early Christian fathers valued catechism..." (Pupil, FGD 5, School E; November, 4<sup>th</sup>2025). This tallies well with what other clergy said about confirmation in promoting discipleship in privately owned Christian schools. Such a confirmation class is conducted before the confirmation ceremony. This is in agreement with Atwongyeirwe (2025), who stated that confirmation is taught in class by religious leaders. Teaching the confirmation class, the traditional aspect in the Anglican Church, since the God parents are expected to teach the young one their faith and the way of the lord as the 16<sup>th</sup> century leaders of reformation encouraged. This supports what Haasnoot (2015) found out in his study when he concluded that the reason, we don't see a big impact after confirmation among Christians is that teaching is not done well as in the past.

#### **4.3.5 Integrating Faith into Daily Life and Curriculum**

Lastly, the study noted that discipleship in schools is achieved through a combination of integrating faith into daily life and curriculum. One of the interviewed Director of Studies had these to say; “.... integrating faith into curriculum by teaching with a Christian worldview, establishing daily routines like Bible study and prayer, encouraging learners through consistent relationships, interaction, mentorship and engaging in community service activities...” (Director of Studies, School E; Interview, November, 4<sup>th</sup>2025). This clearly indicates that discipleship is promoted through creating daily rhythms, including singing, prayer and devotional readings; in addition to giving learners a role in planning activities to foster ownership and leadership. This is in agreement with Burggraaf (2015) who argued that discipleship is emphasized through fostering fellowship. Thus, creating opportunities for learners to develop deeper relationships with one another through activities like shared game, meals or movie nights.

In the next section, the perceived effects of discipleship on spiritual development in privately owned Christian schools were addressed hereunder.

#### **4.4 The Effects of Discipleship on Spiritual Development**

The third objective was to evaluate the perceived effects of discipleship on spiritual development in privately owned Christian schools. Clearly indicating that privately Christian schools need to put in more efforts since, without it the church’s continuity is at stake, not only the church but also a country’s future leaders. Interview schedules were used to solicit primary information. Respondents were involved in answering interviews.

##### **4.4.1 Mentoring Learners in Biblical Worldviews**

Participants described that discipleship in schools integrates Christian faith with academic learning to foster holistic, Christ-like character development in learners. Participants in the

FGDs indicated that, "...discipleship functions by breaking down the barrier between secular and sacred, mentoring learners in biblical worldviews across all subjects, and providing consistent, supportive adult relationships that guide them toward an external, rather than purely earthly, perspective..." (Students, FGD 4, School D; November 4<sup>th</sup> 2025). This shows that discipleship goes beyond academics to focus on forming Christ-like character, encouraging learners to use their God-given talents for kingdom purposes. Students are encouraged to be faithful to their colleagues and elders, to devote more of their time to academic work rather than immoral behaviors, and to respect school rules and educators while at school. This is in agreement with Dumebi (2024) who argues that schools provide a unique, relational environment for learners to grow alongside peers, fostering humility, unity and a shared commitment to Christian values.

#### **4.4.2 Personal and Relational Growth**

In interviews, it was revealed that discipleship leads to personal and relational growth; in fact, one of the interviewed head teachers described that, "... discipleship provides a framework for personal change as individuals learn from their mentors and apply principles to their lives. This leads to a transformation that is often more impactful than simply hearing or teaching theory...." (Head teacher, School A; Interview, November, 4<sup>th</sup>2025).

Similarly, participants in the focus group discussion indicated that, "...intentional discipleship process, especially when it involves close relationships, strengthens a person's relationship with God and can lead to higher scores on faith related metrics. Discipleship provides a structured way to study and understand the Bible, which leads to a greater depth of knowledge and a more personal application of its teachings...." (Students, FGD 1, School B; November, 4<sup>th</sup> 2025). This clearly indicates that discipleship improves emotional and social well-being.

Discipleship positively impacts well-being by fostering a sense of meaning, purpose, and hope. It also provides a strong sense of belonging and community with like-minded individuals. This is in agreement with Mark (2020) who ascertained that because of discipleship, Christians have been able to love their church by; increasing church participation, an increase of church giving, and improved church structures. This matches well with what Leland (2006) found out in his study when he wrote that when discipleship is done, a Christian becomes holistically mature. The above are attributes of a mature Christian.

#### **4.4.3 Mentoring**

The participants described that spiritual growth in Christianity is more than just an individual pursuit; it is a collaborative effort that relies heavily on the concept of discipleship. One of the interviewed deputy head-teachers had these to say, “.... discipleship, which is reflected in the life and teachings of Jesus, is the purposeful act of mentoring and directing individuals towards spiritual growth. Discipleship is a personal journey that requires customized guidance towards meeting each individual’s specific spiritual needs...:” (Deputy Head teacher, School C; Interview, November, 3<sup>rd</sup> 2025). This clearly indicates that discipleship is a foundational aspect of Christianity, rooted in the teachings of Jesus Christ. It involves the process of nurturing and guiding individuals to grow in their faith, knowledge, and understanding of God, while also equipping them to live out their beliefs in their daily lives. In the context of the privately owned schools, Dumebi (2024) opines that discipleship plays a vital role in fostering spiritual maturity among believers and empowering them to fulfill their mission in the world. This comprehensive write-up explores the concept of discipleship and its profound impact within the private school community.

#### **4.4.4 Spiritual Transformation**

The study noted that as a result of discipleship, individuals have been grounded in God's word. This takes a discipline of fellowship and bible study. The results from interview from Chaplain indicated that, "... discipleship involves Bible study and fellowship, where individuals memorize Bible verses, meditation on scripture, prayer and fasting among many others. These spiritual disciplines lead to a close relationship with God and pave the way for one's spiritual transformation..." (Chaplain, School B; Interview, November, 2<sup>nd</sup> 2025). This clearly indicates that the available discipleship programs have enhanced discipleship ministry. It is believed that these discipleship programs have brought many to come to Christ. The discipleship programs strengthened the faith of believers and strengthened fellowship meetings. This is in agreement with Babatunde (2024) who noted that mature disciples are equipped and encouraged to mentor and teach colleagues, creating a generational ripple effect. Individuals learn by observing the actions and behaviors of their mentors, which can lead to them being able to replicate those actions themselves.

The participants described that discipleship remains a cornerstone of the contemporary church for several reasons. Participants in the FGDs indicated that, "...discipleship provides a structured framework for believers to grow spiritually. Through teaching, mentorship, and accountability, discipleship helps individuals deepen their understanding of the faith and mature in their relationship with God..." (Students, FGD 1, School B; November, 4<sup>th</sup> 2025). This clearly indicates discipleship fosters a sense of community and fellowship within the church. Small group settings often accompany discipleship programs, allowing believers to build relationships, support one another, and journey together in their faith. This is in agreement with Burggraff (2015) who argued that discipleship equips believers with the knowledge, skills, and spiritual gifts necessary for ministry. As disciples grow in their faith,

they are better equipped to serve others and fulfill the Great Commission of making disciples themselves.

#### **4.4.5 Providing Guidance and Wisdom, Rooted in Biblical Truth**

The study noted that while the methods of discipleship may evolve to suit contemporary contexts, the core principles remain relevant. One of the interviewed deputy head-teachers had these to say, “... discipleship addresses the challenges and questions that believers face in today's rapidly changing world, providing guidance and wisdom rooted in biblical truth. In a culture that often prioritizes individualism and self-reliance, discipleship emphasizes the importance of community, accountability, and interconnectedness within the body of Christ...” (Deputy Head teacher, School C; Interview, November 3<sup>rd</sup> 2025). This clearly indicates that discipleship has the potential to bring about transformational change in individuals, families, communities, and even societies at large. As disciples grow in their faith and live out their beliefs, they become agents of positive change in the world around them, as ascertained by John Mark (2024). The contemporary church continues this mission by following Jesus' example, investing in the spiritual growth and development of believers.

#### **4.4.6 Nurturing Individuals in their Faith Journey**

The study revealed that discipleship involves mentoring, teaching, and nurturing individuals in their faith journey. The interviewed Director of Studies described that, “...through discipleship, believers are equipped with the knowledge, skills, and spiritual practices necessary for their personal growth in Christ. Jesus' model of discipleship was not only about making disciples but also about teaching them to make disciples themselves. When disciples reproduce themselves by investing in others, the church experiences exponential growth...” (Director of Studies, School E; Interview, November 3<sup>rd</sup> 2025). This indicates that discipleship

fosters a sense of belonging and community within the church. As believers walk together, supporting and encouraging one another, they strengthen their bonds and build a unified body of Christ. In support of the above findings, Atwongyeirwe (2025) acknowledged that through discipleship, emerging leaders are identified, mentored, and developed. This process ensures the continuity of leadership within the church and empowers individuals to serve in various capacities.

#### **4.4.7 Grow in Discernment and Accountability**

The study noted that disciples who are grounded in their faith and equipped with the tools of discipleship are better prepared to share the gospel with others. As they live out their faith and testify to God's transforming power, they become effective witnesses in their communities, leading to the expansion of the church. Participants in the focus group discussion participants indicated that, "...discipleship relationships provide a platform for believers to grow in discernment and accountability. Trusted mentors can offer guidance, correction, and encouragement, helping disciples navigate challenges and stay true to their faith. As disciples grow in their understanding of biblical principles and the teachings of Jesus, they become agents of positive change within their societies. Through acts of compassion, justice, and mercy, disciples contribute to the transformation of communities and cultures...." (Students, FGD 3, School D; November, 4<sup>th</sup> 2025). This clearly indicates that discipleship equips believers to stand firm in their faith amidst spiritual battles. By grounding themselves in the truth of God's Word and supporting one another in prayer, disciples are better equipped to overcome temptations and trials, thereby safeguarding the health and growth of the church.

In summary, discipleship deepens spiritual development through a strongest relationship with God, personal transformation, and increased understanding of scripture. It also fosters

intentional community, provides mentorship, and equips individuals to live out their faith, leading to a greater sense of purpose, well-being and peace. In the next section, the challenges faced in implementing discipleship programs in privately owned Christian schools were addressed hereunder.

#### **4.5 The Challenges Faced in Implementing Discipleship Programs**

The fourth objective was to assess the challenges faced in implementing discipleship programs in privately owned Christian schools. Discipleship is one of those things that every individual wants but many struggles to pursue or even understand. Discipleship is difficult as it takes intentionality, time and effort. Interview schedules were used to solicit primary information. Respondents were involved in answering interviews.

##### **4.5.1 Time Factor**

In interviews, it was revealed that time factor limits the implementation of discipleship programs in privately owned schools; in fact, one of the school directors explained that, "...discipleship feels counter-intuitive to everything else in our culture. We live in a quick-moving world that endorses fast-fold mentalities and instant gratification. Unfortunately, discipleship doesn't happen that way. Instead, it takes time and prolonged commitment from both the disciple and the disciple..." (School Director, School B; Interview, November, 3<sup>rd</sup> 2025). This clearly indicates that with increasing academic demands including finishing syllabus in time, discipleship in schools have been given limited time. This is in agreement with Atwongyeirwe (2025) who argued that teachers have less time to devote themselves in discipleship, instead, they devote more of their time to teaching and completing the syllabus within the time frame.

##### **4.5.2 Digital Age**

The study noted that distractions in the digital age also limit the implementation of discipleship programs in privately owned schools. One of the interviewed head teachers had these to say, "...with digital age, many staff and learners spend a lot of their time on social media rather than fellowshipping, preaching and praising. After classes in the evening, learners and staff prefer to spend that time to chat with friends and family members; giving less time to discipleship...." (Head teacher, School C; Interview, November, 4<sup>th</sup>2025). This implies that in the age of technology, distractions can hinder discipleship. Phones and other electronic gadgets are constantly taking staff and learners' time and attention. Technology has been a distraction, and limiting focused pursuit of faith.

#### **4.5.3 Balancing Spiritual Growth with Daily Academic Work**

The participants described that balancing spiritual growth with daily academic and teaching life equally limits the implementation of discipleship programs in privately owned schools. One of the interviewed Directors of Studies indicated that, "...teachers are always encouraged, motivated, and sometimes forced to finish their academic syllabus in time. Some of them teach for extra hours, in preps and early morning classes. Such teachers do have limited time to even extend message of faith to his or her learners in class. On the other side, learners with a lot of academic assignments have limited time to concentrate on discipleship such as fellowships...." (Director of Studies, School A; Interview, November, 4<sup>th</sup> 2025). This clearly indicates that integrating discipleship into daily routines poses a challenge. To strike a harmonious balance have remained a challenge, practical time management between academic activities and fulfilling spiritual life remains a challenge in schools. In agreement with the above results, Babatunde (2024) argues that main challenge of discipleship in schools was that discipleship was not given the first priority in school calendar. This was followed by limited

resources with 64% score. This indicates the source of the serious challenges the private schools are facing today.

#### **4.5.4 Financial Resource Constraints**

The study further noted that limited financial resource and experienced discipler or teachers with discipleship skills equally limits the implementation of discipleship programs in privately owned schools. One of the interviewed Chaplain indicated that, “.... private schools have limited resources to have required materials from discipleship especially Bibles. The schools have limited finance to mobilize and arrange for interschool fellowship sessions....” (Chaplain, School E; Interview, November, 4<sup>th</sup> 2025). This clearly indicates that private schools have limited financial base to finance the planned discipleship programs. The school administrators have always failed to finance for the planned discipleship programs in schools. Those schools financial base is always limited, run basing on school fees; such limited financial resources limit them from engaging in discipleship activities as ascertained by Chris (2024).

In the next chapter, the summary of results, conclusions and recommendations was addressed hereunder.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **5.0 Introduction**

This chapter presents the summary of the whole research study based on the study findings, following the sequence developed from the stated research objectives. The chapter equally contains the conclusion of results and study-suggested recommendations to different key stakeholders. The areas of further research were also covered and equally presented.

#### **5.1 Summary of Results**

The summary of results is done based on the results thematically presented in chapter four as follows:

##### **5.1.1 The Conceptualization of Discipleship**

The study conceptualized discipleship as a holistic process of spiritual formation that goes beyond classroom learning to also include the shaping of an individual's character to be Christ-like. Discipleship is based on biblical principles from scripture, which is seen as useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness. Discipleship ultimately helps learners to develop self-discipline, guided by the Holy Spirit. It also summarized that discipleship is viewed as a continuous, relational journey of spiritual growth. It moves beyond mere knowledge to include seeing faith in action, developing practical skills, and understanding how to live out one's faith in the world. Discipleship begins when teaching

staff integrate their Christian faith into all subjects, not restricting their faith to explicitly religious moments such as Bible class. Discipleship in schools involves teaching staff modeling a faith filled life, integrating faith into all subjects, and providing a supportive environment for learners to learn, and grow spiritually through consistent mentorship.

### **5.1.2 The Strategies Employed to Promote Discipleship**

The researcher found out the privately owned Christian schools in Ddwaniro Sub-County has various discipleship programs which are good to lead many to spiritual maturity and can as well produce continuous disciples since discipleship is a continuous process. These discipleship programs include fellowships, seminars, bible study, mentorship programs, confirmation or catechism classes, pastoral visitation and Christian nurture groups. Discipleship can be promoted in private owned schools through a combination of curriculum integration, spiritual formation, and community building.

### **5.1.3 The Effects of Discipleship on Spiritual Development**

The study summarized that discipleship deepens spiritual development through a strongest relationship with God, personal transformation, and increased understanding of scripture. It also fosters intentional community, provides mentorship, and equips individuals to live out their faith, leading to a greater sense of purpose, well-being and peace. Equally, discipleship minimizes social evils, increased church participation; students are more grounded in God's word, many come to Christ, and increased church attendance. The researcher further found out that indeed discipleship has contributed fairly to the spiritual development of students which has then resulted into the spiritual and numerical growth of individuals. Parameters that show church growth is fellowship, stewardship, income generating, care for the vulnerable people, all these cannot be achieved without a personal's spiritual growth.

#### **5.1.4 The Challenges Faced In Implementing Discipleship Programs**

The researcher found out various challenges faced by discipleship ministry affecting both the disciple and the disciple in privately owned schools. These challenges are not new; they have been there and may still be there because every generation may carry its own challenges. These challenges included limited time on both the church leaders and those to carry out discipleship, and those that need to be disciplined or the new converts or entrants, limited finances, lack of models and mentors to look up to, discipleship not being a priority among others.

#### **5.2 Conclusions**

The study conclusions were reached based on the themes developed from the objectives in chapter one of this dissertation. This part concludes the key results in collaboration with the stated objectives in order to easily formulate and design the appropriate interventions.

In conclusion, discipleship is essential for its vitality and impact in a school community. By prioritizing discipleship, churches can cultivate mature believers, strong communities, effective leaders, and a transformative presence in the world. As believers commit themselves to the call of discipleship, they become true followers of Christ, embodying His love, truth, and grace to a broken world. The overall conclusion from the findings of this study was that discipleship strategies include fellowship, confirmation class, seminars, Bible study and pastoral visitation.

With the existence of discipleship strategies in schools, personal transformation and relationship with God has been deepened. Learners have increased their understanding of scripture and increased their faith, henceforth, minimizing social evils, fostering intentional community, providing mentorship, and equipping individuals to live out their faith, leading to

a greater sense of purpose, well-being and peace. Despite these benefits of discipleship in private owned Christian schools, several challenges, including financial constraints, limited skills, time and human resource capacity remains a challenge in the implementation of discipleship programs in privately owned Christian schools.

### **5.3 Policy Recommendations**

Following the analysis of the study, the researcher came up with the following recommendations.

#### **5.3.1 The Strategies Employed to Promote Discipleship**

The study recommends that privately owned schools should have streamlined discipleship programs, and these programs should be effectively utilized.

The study also recommends that syllabi and curricula should be developed for uniformity providing what kind of knowledge should be passed on in all Christian nurture groups. Chaplains elected should be born again so that they can nurture their subjects to spiritual maturity.

#### **5.3.2 The Effects of Discipleship on Spiritual Development**

The study recommends that the school administrators especially the head teachers and Chaplain to put much emphasis on teaching and emphasizing Bible study lessons so as to promote spiritual development.

The study recommends that daily fellowship meetings to be encouraged in schools. Their daily attendance of these fellowships encourages the brethren to keep coming for the same but also helps them to develop a closer relationship with the brethren school community. It gives them the chance to guide, teach and correct this group of students.

The study noted that since discipleship is a continuous process, the researcher recommends that a systematically age-based discipleship program be designed for all age groups in the private owned schools.

### **5.3.3 The Challenges Faced in Implementing Discipleship Programs**

The study recommends that training of trainers' plan should be put in place and well implemented, have more of sensitization seminars, disciples avoid sin and compromise to the great commission. Chaplain's should be discipline; church laws and principals be strictly observed. The teaching staff should also be trained on the required skills and knowledge to extend discipleship.

The researcher recommends that the school leaders and Chaplain makes discipleship a priority in all her activities in order to ensure continuity of discipleship programs. Some of the parameters for church growth already evident include fellowships, stewardship, and spiritual maturity, discipleship be made a key ministry hub and an age-based discipleship program.

The study finally recommends that more sensitization seminars should be carried out about the value of Christian discipleship in all privately owned schools at all levels in order to reduce this growing insensitiveness to Christian discipleship.

### **5.4 Recommendations for Further Studies**

The investigator carried this research in order to establish "Discipleship in Privately Owned Christian Schools in Ddwaniro Sub-County, Rakai District, Uganda" but this research has not been extensively explored owing to several bottlenecks. More areas that need more research is vital in scope of:

- i) Choice experiment, ANOVA, regression model and Pearson's' Correlation can be used instead of Thematic and Content Analysis in a further study.
- ii) The study recommends that similar studies should be done in other districts in the country for comparison purposes and allow generalization of the findings on the discipleship in privately owned Christian schools in other districts in Uganda.
- iii) Further research should be done on the need for discipleship training, who needs to be trained for this ministry, and what kind of training would be necessary for a disciple.
- iv) Challenges in the Implementation of Discipleship in Ugandan schools.
- v) A study should also be conducted to determine influence of staff development on the implementation of discipleship in Ugandan schools.
- vi) The study was only confined in selected privately owned schools in Ddwaniro Sub-County, Rakai District, Uganda. Related research needs to be done in all other schools especially government aided schools in Uganda, thus able to identify other areas for improvement.

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**APPENDICES**

**APPENDIX I: CONSENT FORM**

**UGANDA CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY**

**TOPIC:** Discipleship in Privately Owned Christian Schools in Ddwaniro Sub County, Rakai District, Uganda

Dear..... [Name & tittle],

I am Daniel Sukuku, a student of Uganda Christian University, conducting a research study in your area on “Discipleship in Privately Owned Christian Schools in Ddwaniro Sub County, Rakai District, Uganda”. The findings of this study will help in informing the policy makers in the religious and private education sectors, and act as a channel of passage of our rich culture to the generations in future.

This is therefore to seek your permission to conduct research within your jurisdiction. I will interact with students/pupils, and other key participants, to collect data through interviews, and focus group discussions. The research will respect the customs, norms and regulations of the school and participation will be voluntary. Although, the findings may be published, the information given will be confidentially handled and used for only academic purposes.

For confidentiality, I will ensure the participants that the answers they will provide shall be confidentially treated. It shall only be used for study purpose and authorized people may be only to access them. For the purposes of this research study, your comments will not be

anonymous. Every effort will be made by the researcher to preserve your confidentiality including the following:

- Assigning code names/numbers for participants that will be used on all research notes and documents
- Keeping notes and any other documents identifying participant information in a locked file cabinet in the personal possession of the researcher.

Participant data will be kept confidential except in cases where the researcher is legally obligated to report specific incidents. These incidents include, but may not be limited to, incidents of abuse and suicide risk.

Your participation or involvement in this study is fully out of your good will. This study will be fully carried out when you accept right now. Get informed that no legal implication or any other form of punishment may be given to you when you decline to take part in this research. For more required information, contact the Principal Researcher.

By signing on this form you permit me to conduct research in your community. For any clarification, feel free to contact me on: -----

**Authority's consent:**

I.....[Name & title] hereby grant permission to Daniel Sukuku to conduct the aforementioned study in our community.

Signature -----

Date and stamp-----

Include all data collection tools/instruments as appendices

**APPENDIX II: INTERVIEW GUIDE**

**DISCIPLESHIP IN PRIVATELY OWNED CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS IN DDWANIRO  
SUB COUNTY, RAKAI DISTRICT, UGANDA**

**Interview guide for school administrators**

Dear respondents,

I am Daniel Sukuku, a student of Uganda Christian University, conducting a research study about the “Discipleship in Privately Owned Christian Schools in Ddwaniro Sub-County, Rakai District, Uganda”. The findings of this study will help inform the policy makers in the religious and private education sectors, and act as a channel of passage of our rich culture to the generations in future. You have been selected as an eligible person who can contribute towards the success of this study. Therefore, kindly take a few minutes to complete this tool by answering the questions asked. The information given will be valuable, confidentially handled and used for only academic purposes. Thank you for participating and making this research a success.

**SECTION A: Respondent’s demographic information**

**(Fill in the space provided)**

What is your:

A1: Name:..... (Optional)

A2: Gender:.....

A3: Age:.....

A4: Religion:.....

A5: Village/District:.....

A6: Educational background:.....

A7: Occupation:.....

A8: Work place:.....

**Section B: Discipleship in Privately Owned Christian Schools**

B1: In which way does discipleship being conceptualized within these privately owned Christian schools?

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B2: In your view, what methods and strategies employed to promote discipleship in your school?

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B3: In your view, what are the perceived effects of discipleship on students' spiritual development in your school?

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B4: In your view, what are the challenges faced in implementing discipleship programs in your school?

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B5. How have these challenges been handled by the school administrators?

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B6: In your view, how best do you think discipleship should be done in school?

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**Thank you very much for your time and contribution, may God bless you**

**APPENDIX III: FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE**  
**DISCIPLESHIP IN PRIVATELY OWNED CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS IN DDWANIRO**  
**SUB COUNTY, RAKAI DISTRICT, UGANDA**

**Interview guide for students**

**Guiding Questions**

1. In which way is discipleship being conceptualized within these privately owned Christian schools?
2. In your view, what methods and strategies are employed to promote discipleship in your school?
3. In your view, what are the perceived effects of discipleship on students' spiritual development in your school?
4. In your view, what are the challenges faced in implementing discipleship programs in your school?
5. How have these challenges been handled by the school administrators?
6. In your view, how best do you think discipleship should be done in school?

**Thank you very much for your time and contribution, may God bless you**

## Appendix IV: Authorization Letter



### UGANDA CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY

A Centre of Excellence in the Heart of Africa

Directorate of Postgraduate Studies

September 29, 2025

**TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN**

**RE: INTRODUCTION OF MR. DANIEL SUKUKU**

This is to introduce to you **Mr. Daniel Sukuku**, a bona fide student of Uganda Christian University, pursuing a **Master of Arts in Organizational Leadership and Management**. As part of the requirements for the award of this degree, he is conducting a research study titled:

**“Discipleship in Privately Owned Christian Schools in Ddwaniro Sub-County, Rakai District, Uganda.”**

The purpose of this study is purely academic, and the findings will contribute to a better understanding of discipleship practices, challenges, and their impact in privately owned Christian schools.

We kindly request you to grant him the necessary permission, cooperation, and support as he interacts with administrators, teachers, students, and other relevant participants in order to collect data. All information obtained will be treated with utmost confidentiality and will be used strictly for academic purposes.

Your positive consideration and assistance rendered to him will be highly appreciated.

Yours faithfully,

  
**Joseph Jakisa Owor, PhD**

Head, Graduate Research & Training  
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