

**THE ROLE OF SMALL GROUPS IN PROMOTING HOLISTIC DEVELOPMENT OF THE
CHURCH OF UGANDA: A CASE STUDY ON THE DIOCESE OF KAMPALA.**

BY

KAMUJISHA PARTISON

M23MO5/020

**A RESEARCH DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO BISHOP TUCKER SCHOOL OF DIVINITY
AND THEOLOGY IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD
OF A MASTER OF DIVINITY DEGREE OF UGANDA CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY**

JULY 2026

DECLARATION.

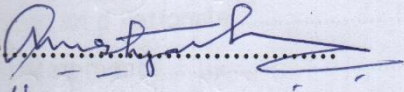
I **Kamujisha Partison** do hereby declare to the best of my knowledge that this research dissertation is my own original work and that it has not been submitted for any award in any institution.

Signature.....*PK*.....
Date.....*29/05/2026*.....

APPROVAL.

I do hereby attest that this research dissertation has been submitted with the approval of my supervisor.

NAME: REV. CANON. AMOS TURAHABWE

Signature.....

Date.....4th June, 2026.....

DEDICATION

I dedicate this research to my parents Dad and Mum, Brothers and Sisters and the Diocese of Kiinkizi management and St. Kakumba Chapel under the leadership of Rev. Eng. Dr. Emmanuel Mwesigwa for mentoring and supporting me throughout this academic journey. May God bless you all.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to Almighty God for granting me life, strength, wisdom, and guidance throughout the entire period of my study and research. Without His grace, this work would not have been possible.

I extend my heartfelt appreciation to my research supervisor Rev. Can. Amos Turyahebwa and lecturers at Uganda Christian University, Bishop Tucker School of Divinity and Theology, for their academic guidance, constructive criticism, and continuous encouragement throughout the research process.

I am also deeply grateful to the leadership of Kiinkizi Diocese for granting me permission to conduct this research. Special thanks go to the Bishop RT. Rev. Dan Zoreka, all the clergy, lay leaders, and respondents who willingly participated in the study and provided valuable information. Their cooperation and openness made this work a success.

Finally, I wish to acknowledge my dear wife for their unwavering support, prayers, encouragement, and understanding during the course of my studies. Their moral and emotional support kept me motivated even during challenging moments.

ABSTRACT

Small groups have historically been significant means through which the Church has nurtured spiritual growth, discipleship, fellowship, leadership development, and community outreach. In the Church of Uganda, however, many congregations continue to experience challenges in sustaining vibrant Christian fellowship, effective discipleship, and holistic ministry despite increasing church attendance. This study investigates the role of small groups in promoting the holistic development of the Church of Uganda, with particular reference to the Diocese of Kampala.

The study aims to examine how small groups contribute to the spiritual, social, emotional and economic growth of church members and the wider church community. Specifically, it seeks to establish the contribution of small groups to discipleship and spiritual maturity, assess their role in fostering fellowship, pastoral care and economic enhancement, identify the challenges affecting their effectiveness, and propose strategies for strengthening small-group ministry within the Diocese of Kampala.

The study will adopt a quantitative case study design. Data will be collected through semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, questionnaires and document analysis involving clergy, lay leaders, and members participating in small groups across selected parishes within the Diocese of Kampala. The collected data will be analyzed thematically to identify recurring patterns, experiences, and perspectives regarding the contribution of small groups to church development.

The study is anchored in the biblical understanding of the early Church as portrayed in Acts 2:42-47 and the theology of Christian fellowship (koinonia), discipleship, and

servant leadership. It is anticipated that the findings will demonstrate that effective small groups significantly enhance spiritual formation, leadership development, pastoral care, evangelism, accountability, economic and community transformation, thereby contributing to the holistic development of the Church. The study will further identify institutional and contextual challenges that hinder the effectiveness of small-group ministries and recommend practical interventions for strengthening their implementation within the Diocese of Kampala and the wider Church of Uganda.

The findings are expected to contribute to theological scholarship on discipleship and church growth while providing practical recommendations for church leaders, clergy, and ministry practitioners seeking to build vibrant, mission-oriented, and holistic Christian communities through small-group ministry.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

DECLARATION.	i
APPROVAL.	ii
DEDICATION	iii
ACKNOWLEDGMENT	iv
ABSTRACT	v
LIST OF TABLES	xi
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.1 Background of the Study.....	1
1.2 Problem Statement.....	2
1.3 Purpose of the Study	3
1.4 Objectives of the Study.....	3
1.5 Research Questions.....	4
1.6 Scope of the Study.....	4
1.7 Significance of the Study	5
1.8 Limitations of the Study and Mitigation Strategies.....	6
1.8.1 Limited Generalizability.....	6
1.8.2 Logistical constraints	7
1.8.3 Diversity and Informality of Small Groups.....	7
1.8.4 Time Constraints and Recall Bias	7

1.8.5 Difficulty accessing respondents	8
1.8.6 Respondent reluctance	8
1.8.7 Environmental disruptions	9
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW	10
2.1 Introduction	10
2.2 Small Groups and Spiritual Growth	10
2.3 Small Groups and Social Cohesion.....	12
2.4 Small Groups and Economic Empowerment	13
2.5 Small Groups and Leadership Development	14
2.6 Summary and Research Gap.....	15
CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY	17
3.1 Introduction	17
3.2 Research Design.....	17
3.3 Study Population	18
3.4 Sampling Strategy.....	18
3.5 Data Collection Methods.....	19
3.6 Data Analysis	20
3.7 Validity and Reliability.....	20
3.8 Ethical Considerations	21
3.9 Summary of the Methodology	22

CHAPTER FOUR: DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS, AND INTERPRETATION.....	23
4.1 Introduction	23
4.2 Reliability of the Instrument.....	23
4.3 Response Rate and Demographic Characteristics.....	24
4.3.1 Response Rate	24
4.3.2 Demographic Profile of Respondents.....	24
4.4 Findings for Research Question One	25
4.4.1 Descriptive Analysis of Spiritual Growth.....	26
4.4.2 Relationship Between Duration in Group and Spiritual Growth.....	27
4.5 Findings for Research Question Two	28
4.5.1 Descriptive Analysis of Social Cohesion	28
4.5.2 Gender Differences in Social Cohesion.....	29
4.6 Findings for Research Question Three	30
4.6.1 Descriptive Analysis of Economic Empowerment and Leadership	30
4.6.2 Relationship Between Participation in Savings Groups and Economic Outcomes	31
4.7 Summary of Key Quantitative Findings	32
4.8 Conclusion	32
CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS	33
5.1 Introduction	33
5.2 Discussion of Findings	33

5.2.1 Discussion of Research Question One: Spiritual Growth and Discipleship	33
5.2.2 Discussion of Research Question Two: Social Cohesion and Emotional Support .	35
5.2.3 Discussion of Research Question Three: Economic Empowerment and Leadership Development	36
5.3 Conclusions	38
5.4 Recommendations	39
5.4.1 Recommendations for Church Leaders (Diocese of Kampala)	39
5.4.2 Recommendations for the Provincial Church of Uganda	41
5.4.3 Recommendations for Development Practitioners and NGOs	41
5.4.4 Recommendations for Future Research.....	42
5.5 Limitations of the Study (Revisited)	43
5.6 Contribution to Knowledge.....	44
5.7 Final Conclusion.....	44
REFERENCES	46
APPENDICES	48
Appendix I: Introductory Letter	48
Appendix II: UG-REC-026 Exemption Notice.....	49
Appendix III : Turnitin Report.....	51

LIST OF TABLES

Table 4.1: Reliability Coefficients for Each Construct	23
Table 4.2: Questionnaire Response Rate	24
Table 4.3: Demographic Characteristics (N=230)	24
Table 4.4: Descriptive Statistics for Spiritual Growth Items (N=230)	26
Table 4.5: Correlation Between Duration in Small Group and Spiritual Growth	27
Table 4.6: Descriptive Statistics for Social Cohesion Items (N=230)	28
Table 4.7: Gender Differences in Social Cohesion	29
Table 4.8: Descriptive Statistics for Economic Empowerment and Leadership Items (N=230) .	30
Table 4.9: Comparison of Economic Empowerment Between Savings Group Members and Non-Members	31
Table 4.10: Summary of Mean Scores and Inferential Tests	32

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Small groups have historically played a central role in the life and growth of the Christian church. From the earliest expressions of Christian community, believers gathered in smaller, relational settings for teaching, prayer, fellowship, and mutual support. The account in the Book of Acts (2:42-47) illustrated how early Christians met in homes, shared meals, and practiced a deeply communal form of faith. These gatherings were not peripheral but formed the foundation of church life and mission. Scholars such as Banks (1994) and Green (2002) observed that these early small groups embodied a participatory and relational model that shaped both spiritual formation and communal identity.

This model persisted across generations and cultural contexts. In contemporary Christianity, small groups continued to function as vital spaces where believers connected faith with daily life. Within Uganda, particularly in the Church of Uganda, small groups were widely embedded in church practice. These included Bible study fellowships, youth groups, Mothers' and Fathers' Union meetings, savings groups, and outreach teams. Such groups extended beyond spiritual activities to include social support, economic collaboration, leadership development, and community engagement (Ward & Wild-Wood, 2010; Katongole, 2011).

Despite their widespread presence and perceived importance, the contribution of small groups had not been sufficiently examined through empirical research. Much of the existing understanding remained insufficient or based on theological reflection rather

than systematic data. In many cases, these groups operated informally, with limited structures for monitoring or evaluating their outcomes. This made it difficult to determine the extent to which they influenced personal development, church vitality, or broader socio-economic transformation (Turaki, 2006; Orobator, 2008).

This study was therefore undertaken to examine, using a quantitative approach, the influence of small group participation within the Diocese of Kampala. Specifically, it assessed how involvement in small groups shaped members' spiritual growth, social relationships, economic well-being, and leadership development. By generating empirical evidence, the study sought to bridge the gap between observed practice and documented research, and to provide insights that could inform church leadership, ministry planning, and faith-based development initiatives.

1.2 Problem Statement

Small groups were widely practiced within the Church of Uganda, encompassing Bible studies, fellowships, savings groups, and outreach teams. These groups were often credited with fostering spiritual growth, strengthening community bonds, supporting livelihoods, and developing leadership capacity. However, their actual impact had remained largely undocumented and insufficiently understood.

Most small groups operated without formal evaluation frameworks, making it difficult to measure their effectiveness or compare outcomes across different contexts. Existing knowledge was largely based on assumptions, personal testimonies, or theological perspectives rather than empirical evidence. As a result, church leaders, policymakers,

and development practitioners lacked reliable data to assess what aspects of small group ministry were effective and how they could be strengthened.

This gap in evidence posed a significant challenge. Without systematic analysis, the church risked underutilizing one of its most active and potentially transformative structures for both spiritual and social development. The absence of data also limited opportunities for strategic planning, informed decision-making, and meaningful partnerships with development stakeholders.

This study addressed this problem by providing a quantitative assessment of the influence of small group participation within the Diocese of Kampala, focusing on spiritual, social, economic, and leadership outcomes.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine the influence of small group participation on the holistic development of members within the Diocese of Kampala. Specifically, the study sought to generate structured, empirical evidence that could transform informal assumptions into actionable knowledge for church leaders, ministry planners, and development stakeholders.

1.4 Objectives of the Study

The study was guided by the following objectives:

- i. To evaluate the influence of small group participation on the spiritual growth and discipleship of members within the Diocese of Kampala.

- ii. To assess the role of small groups in promoting social cohesion, emotional support, and a sense of belonging among church members.
- iii. To examine the contribution of small groups to members' economic empowerment and leadership development, including skills acquisition, savings practices, and community engagement.

1.5 Research Questions

The study sought to answer the following research questions:

- i. How did participation in small groups influence the spiritual growth and discipleship of members in the Diocese of Kampala?
- ii. In what ways did small groups contribute to social cohesion, emotional support, and a sense of belonging among church members?
- iii. To what extent did small groups support economic empowerment and leadership development among their members, particularly in terms of skills, savings, and opportunities for service?

1.6 Scope of the Study

The study was conducted within the Diocese of Kampala, which comprised both urban and peri-urban church communities in central Uganda. It focused on active small groups within selected parishes, including Bible study groups, youth fellowships, Mothers' and Fathers' Unions, savings groups, and outreach teams.

The target population consisted of adult church members aged 18 years and above who had participated in a small group for at least six months. This criterion ensured that

respondents had sufficient experience to reflect meaningfully on the influence of group participation.

The study examined small group activities and their impact over a two-year period, from January 2023 to December 2024. It included both male and female participants from diverse age groups, educational backgrounds, and socio-economic statuses in order to capture a broad perspective.

Thematically, the study focused on four key areas: spiritual growth, social cohesion, economic empowerment, and leadership development. A quantitative research approach was employed, with data collected through structured questionnaires and analyzed to identify patterns, relationships, and levels of influence.

1.7 Significance of the Study

This study was significant at ecclesial, academic, and developmental levels.

At the ecclesial level, it provided church leaders in the Diocese of Kampala with empirical data on the outcomes of small group participation. This evidence supported more informed decision-making in pastoral planning, resource allocation, and ministry development. Insights into spiritual growth, social cohesion, economic practices, and leadership formation enabled the strengthening of small group structures and strategies.

At the academic level, the study contributed to a relatively under-researched area within African Christian scholarship. While small groups had been widely discussed in theological literature, few studies had offered quantitative analysis within sub-Saharan

African contexts, particularly in Uganda. This research therefore enriched existing knowledge in practical theology, ecclesiology, and faith-based development.

From a developmental perspective, the study highlighted the role of small groups as informal yet effective platforms for social support, economic resilience, and leadership development. The findings provided valuable insights for non-governmental organizations, policymakers, and faith-based organizations seeking to engage with grassroots community structures.

Overall, the study addressed a critical knowledge gap and produced findings that could inform both practice and policy within church and development contexts.

1.8 Limitations of the Study and Mitigation Strategies

All research studies operate within certain limitations that may affect the scope, validity, or generalizability of findings. This study acknowledged several potential constraints and adopted strategies to mitigate their impact.

1.8.1 Limited Generalizability

The study was confined to the Diocese of Kampala, and its findings might not fully represent small group dynamics in other dioceses or rural settings.

Mitigation: Detailed contextual and demographic information was documented to allow readers to assess the applicability of findings to other contexts. Conclusions were drawn with caution regarding broader generalization.

1.8.2 Logistical constraints

Limited financial resources affected travel consistently across all selected parishes within the Diocese of Kampala. Transportation delays, high fuel costs, and occasional equipment issues such as faulty recording devices slowed down fieldwork and restricted timely data collection.

Mitigation: This limitation was handled in such a way that essential research expenses such as transport, recording materials, and stationery were prioritized during budgeting. Travel plans were made in advance, and flexible scheduling helped accommodate delays or unexpected expenses.

1.8.3 Diversity and Informality of Small Groups

Small groups varied in structure, purpose, and level of organization, which complicated uniform measurement.

Mitigation: Groups were categorized based on type, and analysis was conducted within and across categories to account for variation.

1.8.4 Time Constraints and Recall Bias

Participants were required to reflect on experiences over a two-year period, which may have introduced recall bias.

Mitigation: Questions focused on general patterns and recent experiences rather than specific events. Only participants with at least six months of consistent involvement were included.

1.8.5 Difficulty accessing respondents

Some clergy, small-group leaders, and parish coordinators had demanding schedules. Their limited availability made arranging interviews challenging. Others expressed privacy concerns, leading to delays in scheduling meetings or reluctance to participate

Mitigation: Seeking appointments and working closely with parish priests, small-group coordinators, and local church leaders to facilitate introductions and build trust helped mitigate this limitation. Their involvement helped reduce suspicion and encouraged cooperation from participants.

1.8.6 Respondent reluctance

A number of participants, particularly those with less exposure to formal research felt shy or intimidated by the interview process. Some even hesitated to speak openly about emotional or relational struggles within small groups, especially where group dynamics were sensitive.

Mitigation: A warm and non-judgmental atmosphere during interviews and discussions was created. Skills like building rapport, listening attentively, using a respectful tone, flexible pacing, gentle prompts, and affirmation helped respondents especially those who felt shy to engage more confidently with the process.

1.8.7 Environmental disruptions

Unpredictable weather conditions such as heavy rain, flooding, or storms affected travel to certain parishes. These situations often led to postponement of interviews and delayed scheduled focus group sessions.

Mitigation: All weather clothes such as jackets and umbrellas were purchased to help in such conditions. Reappointments with some respondents were made in unbearable situations.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter reviewed existing literature related to small group participation and its influence on holistic development. The review focused on four key areas: spiritual growth, social cohesion, economic empowerment, and leadership development. These themes reflected the core dimensions through which small groups were understood to impact individual and community life.

Recent scholarship increasingly recognized small groups not merely as spiritual gatherings, but as relational and functional systems that shaped identity, behavior, and development outcomes. Studies in practical theology, sociology of religion, and development studies highlighted the multidimensional role of small groups, particularly in contexts marked by social fragmentation, economic vulnerability, and leadership gaps.

However, much of the empirical research remained concentrated in Western settings, with limited quantitative studies conducted in sub-Saharan Africa. Within Uganda, and specifically Anglican diocesan contexts, research on small groups had been largely descriptive or theological rather than data-driven. This chapter therefore examined existing knowledge while identifying gaps that justified the present study.

2.2 Small Groups and Spiritual Growth

The relationship between small group participation and spiritual growth had been widely discussed in theological and empirical literature. Scholars consistently argued

that spiritual formation was more effectively nurtured within relational and participatory environments than through individual practice alone.

Frost and Hirsch (2016) emphasized that authentic discipleship emerged within communities where individuals engaged in shared practices such as prayer, Scripture study, and accountability. In such settings, faith was not only taught but also practiced and reinforced through relationships. Similarly, Ogden (2018) argued that small groups facilitated what he termed “lived theology,” where beliefs were translated into daily actions and habits.

Empirical studies supported these claims. Lim and Putnam (2016) found a strong association between participation in small groups and increased religious commitment, including more consistent prayer, deeper engagement with Scripture, and sustained devotional practices. These findings suggested that small groups created structures that supported ongoing spiritual discipline.

Within African contexts, spirituality was often understood as inherently communal rather than individualistic. Magezi and Banda (2017) observed that African Christian spirituality emphasized relationships, shared experiences, and collective identity. Small groups aligned naturally with this worldview, making them effective platforms for discipleship and spiritual growth.

Despite these insights, most studies within African settings remained qualitative in nature. There was limited quantitative evidence measuring specific indicators of spiritual growth, such as frequency of prayer, Scripture engagement, or perceived spiritual transformation. This gap highlighted the need for systematic measurement,

which the present study addressed by examining these variables within the Diocese of Kampala.

2.3 Small Groups and Social Cohesion

Social cohesion and a sense of belonging had become increasingly important areas of study, particularly in rapidly urbanizing societies where traditional support systems were weakening. Small groups were widely recognized as key mechanisms for fostering social capital within religious communities.

Putnam and Campbell (2017) argued that small groups strengthened what they termed “bonding social capital,” characterized by trust, mutual support, and shared identity. These relational ties were essential for maintaining strong and resilient communities. Similarly, Dougherty and Whitehead (2016) found that individuals involved in small groups reported higher levels of emotional support, interpersonal trust, and attachment to their congregations compared to those who only attended larger worship services.

In church contexts, small groups functioned as relational anchors. They provided safe spaces where members could share personal experiences, seek support, and build meaningful relationships. This contributed to a stronger sense of belonging and community integration.

In African urban settings, the importance of such groups was even more pronounced. Freeman (2019) noted that as traditional kinship networks weakened due to urban migration and economic pressures, faith-based groups often served as surrogate families. They provided emotional support, crisis assistance, and moral guidance in ways that extended beyond formal church structures.

In Uganda, church-based fellowships and associations were commonly observed to play a significant role in social integration. However, systematic measurement of their impact on social cohesion remained limited. This study contributed to addressing this gap by quantitatively examining indicators such as trust, belonging, emotional support, and interpersonal relationships within small groups in the Diocese of Kampala.

2.4 Small Groups and Economic Empowerment

Economic empowerment had increasingly been recognized as a critical component of holistic ministry. In many contexts, small groups extended beyond spiritual functions to include financial collaboration, mutual aid, and skills development.

Ledgerwood, Earne, and Nelson (2016) highlighted the role of community-based savings groups in improving financial discipline, enhancing resilience to economic shocks, and increasing access to informal credit. These groups were particularly effective among low-income populations, where access to formal financial systems was limited.

Within faith-based contexts, Swart and van der Merwe (2020) observed that economic activities within small groups were often combined with moral accountability and ethical teaching. This integration encouraged responsible financial behavior, including regular saving, budgeting, and mutual support.

African church settings frequently demonstrated this integration of faith and economics. Baloyi (2017) argued that small groups reflected a theology of survival and shared responsibility, where members supported one another in meeting basic needs and improving livelihoods. Savings groups, in particular, were common within church structures and played a key role in promoting economic resilience.

Despite this, many studies treated economic empowerment broadly and did not isolate the specific contribution of church-based small groups. There was also limited quantitative analysis linking participation in such groups to measurable outcomes such as savings habits, financial confidence, or access to support.

The present study addressed this gap by assessing how participation in small groups within the Diocese of Kampala influenced economic behaviors and outcomes, including savings practices, financial skills, and perceived economic security.

2.5 Small Groups and Leadership Development

Leadership development within small groups had gained increasing attention, particularly in discussions of participatory and decentralized leadership models. Scholars argued that leadership was often developed through practice and relational engagement rather than formal training.

Northouse (2019) emphasized that leadership skills emerged through experience, interaction, and responsibility. Small groups provided such opportunities by allowing members to take on roles such as facilitating discussions, organizing activities, and mentoring others.

Church-based studies reinforced this view. Roxburgh and Romanuk (2015) argued that small groups functioned as leadership incubators, where individuals developed confidence, communication skills, and a sense of responsibility. These grassroots leadership structures were seen as essential for sustainable church growth and mission.

In African contexts, small groups were particularly important in creating inclusive leadership opportunities. Kakwata (2021) noted that they provided pathways for women, youth, and lay members who might otherwise face barriers within formal church hierarchies. Participation in small groups enabled these individuals to develop leadership capacity and extend their influence beyond the church into the wider community.

However, as with other areas, empirical measurement of leadership outcomes remained limited. Few studies quantitatively assessed how small group participation influenced leadership skills, confidence, or readiness for broader roles.

This study contributed to filling this gap by examining leadership development in measurable terms, including role participation, confidence levels, skill acquisition, and preparedness for service.

2.6 Summary and Research Gap

The reviewed literature demonstrated strong agreement that small groups played a significant role in promoting spiritual growth, strengthening social cohesion, enhancing economic empowerment, and developing leadership capacity. Across different contexts, small groups were consistently identified as important structures for fostering holistic development.

However, several gaps remained evident.

First, much of the empirical research had been conducted in Western contexts, with limited studies focusing on sub-Saharan Africa. Second, within African settings, many

studies relied on qualitative approaches or theological reflection rather than quantitative analysis. Third, there was a notable absence of diocesan-level studies within Anglican contexts in Uganda.

These gaps limited the ability to generalize findings or to apply them effectively within local church settings. There was a clear need for context-specific, data-driven research that could provide measurable evidence of the impact of small group participation.

The present study addressed these gaps by conducting a quantitative analysis within the Diocese of Kampala. By examining spiritual, social, economic, and leadership outcomes, the study contributed original empirical evidence to the fields of practical theology, ecclesiology, and faith-based development.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter presented the research methodology that was adopted in the study. It outlined the research design, study population, sampling strategy, data collection methods, data analysis procedures, issues of validity and reliability, and ethical considerations. The purpose of this chapter was to explain how the study was conducted in order to ensure transparency, rigor, and replicability.

The study employed a quantitative approach to examine the influence of small group participation on spiritual, social, economic, and leadership development among members of the Diocese of Kampala.

3.2 Research Design

The study adopted a quantitative research design. This design was chosen because it allowed for the measurement and statistical analysis of relationships between variables. Specifically, the study examined how participation in small groups influenced four key outcomes: spiritual growth, social cohesion, economic empowerment, and leadership development.

A cross-sectional survey design was used, meaning that data were collected at a single point in time. This approach was considered appropriate because it enabled the researcher to capture a snapshot of participants' experiences and perceptions across different small groups within the diocese.

The quantitative design also allowed for the use of statistical techniques to identify patterns, correlations, and levels of influence among variables.

3.3 Study Population

The study population consisted of adult members of the Church of Uganda within the Diocese of Kampala. The target participants were individuals aged 18 years and above who had actively participated in a small group for at least six months.

These small groups included Bible study fellowships, youth groups, Mothers' and Fathers' Unions, savings groups, and outreach teams. The population was drawn from both urban and peri-urban parishes within the diocese.

The inclusion criteria ensured that participants had sufficient exposure to small group activities to provide informed responses regarding their influence on personal and communal development.

3.4 Sampling Strategy

A stratified random sampling technique was used to ensure representation across different categories of small groups and demographic characteristics.

The sampling process was carried out in stages:

Stage 1: A number of parishes within the Diocese of Kampala were purposively selected to reflect diverse socio-economic and geographic contexts.

Stage 2: Within each selected parish, a list of active small groups was compiled with the assistance of church leaders.

Stage 3: Small groups were then stratified according to type, including spiritual groups (Bible studies), social groups (fellowships), and economic groups (savings groups).

Stage 4: From each stratum, groups were randomly selected to participate in the study.

Stage 5: Individual members within the selected groups were randomly sampled to complete the questionnaire.

This approach ensured that the sample was both representative and balanced across different types of small groups and participant backgrounds.

3.5 Data Collection Methods

The primary method of data collection was the use of structured questionnaires. The questionnaire was designed to gather quantitative data on participants' experiences and perceptions regarding small group participation.

The instrument covered four main areas:

- Spiritual growth (e.g., prayer life, Bible study, spiritual accountability)
- Social cohesion (e.g., belonging, trust, emotional support)
- Economic empowerment (e.g., savings habits, financial skills, economic security)
- Leadership development (e.g., roles in groups, confidence, skill development)

The questionnaires were administered in person by trained research assistants. Depending on the preference of respondents, the questionnaires were administered in either English or Luganda to ensure clarity and accurate responses.

3.6 Data Analysis

After data collection, the completed questionnaires were checked for completeness and consistency. The data were then coded and entered into statistical software (such as SPSS or Stata) for analysis.

The analysis was conducted in two main stages:

Descriptive analysis: This involved the use of frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations to summarize demographic characteristics and key variables.

Inferential analysis: This included correlation analysis and regression techniques to examine the relationships between small group participation and the four outcome variables: spiritual growth, social cohesion, economic empowerment, and leadership development.

The results were presented using tables and charts to enhance clarity and interpretation. The findings were then interpreted in relation to the research questions and objectives.

3.7 Validity and Reliability

To ensure validity, the research instrument was reviewed by academic supervisors and subject matter experts in theology and social research. Their feedback was used to refine the questionnaire, improve clarity, and ensure that the questions accurately measured the intended variables.

A pilot study was also conducted with a small group of respondents outside the selected study area. The pilot results helped to identify unclear questions and improve the structure of the instrument.

Reliability was tested using Cronbach's Alpha to assess the internal consistency of the questionnaire items. A reliability coefficient of 0.70 or higher was considered acceptable for the study.

3.8 Ethical Considerations

The study adhered to strict ethical standards throughout the research process.

Informed consent was obtained from all participants before data collection. Respondents were clearly informed about the purpose of the study, their role, and their right to withdraw at any time without any consequences.

Confidentiality was maintained by ensuring that no personal identifiers were included in the questionnaires. All responses were treated anonymously and used strictly for academic purposes.

Approval to conduct the study was obtained from relevant academic authorities and church leadership within the Diocese of Kampala prior to data collection.

The study also ensured respect for participants' dignity, beliefs, and privacy throughout the research process.

3.9 Summary of the Methodology

This chapter outlined the methodological framework that guided the study. A quantitative cross-sectional survey design was adopted to examine the influence of small group participation on spiritual, social, economic, and leadership development. Data were collected using structured questionnaires and analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistical methods. Measures were taken to ensure validity, reliability, and ethical compliance throughout the research process.

CHAPTER FOUR: DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS, AND INTERPRETATION

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the quantitative data collected from 230 small group members within the Diocese of Kampala. The presentation is organised according to the three research questions that guided the study. Both descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages, means, standard deviations) and inferential statistics (Cronbach's Alpha, Pearson correlation, independent t-tests) are employed. Where appropriate, findings are briefly interpreted in light of the literature reviewed in Chapter Two, though full discussion is reserved for Chapter Five.

4.2 Reliability of the Instrument

Before analysing the data, the internal consistency of the questionnaire was tested using Cronbach's Alpha.

Table 4.1: Reliability Coefficients for Each Construct

Construct	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha	Interpretation
Spiritual Growth	10	0.89	Excellent
Social Cohesion	10	0.91	Excellent
Economic Empowerment & Leadership	10	0.87	Good
Overall instrument	30	0.94	Excellent

All Cronbach's Alpha values exceed the acceptable threshold of 0.70 (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994), confirming that the questionnaire reliably measured the intended constructs.

4.3 Response Rate and Demographic Characteristics

4.3.1 Response Rate

Table 4.2: Questionnaire Response Rate

Description	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Questionnaires distributed	250	100.0
Questionnaires returned (valid)	230	92.0
Unreturned or invalid	20	8.0

A 92.0% response rate is exceptionally high for survey research (Baruch & Holtom, 2008), minimising non-response bias.

4.3.2 Demographic Profile of Respondents

Table 4.3: Demographic Characteristics (N=230)

Characteristic	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Age	18-25	42	18.3
	26-35	78	33.9
	36-45	58	25.2
	46-60	36	15.7
	60+	16	7.0
Gender	Male	98	42.6

	Female	128	55.7
	Prefer not to say	4	1.7
Education	No formal education	12	5.2
	Primary	34	14.8
	Secondary	68	29.6
	Diploma/Certificate	52	22.6
	Degree	48	20.9
	Postgraduate	16	7.0
Duration in group	6 months - 1 year	64	27.8
	1-2 years	86	37.4
	2+ years	80	34.8

The sample was predominantly female (55.7%) and aged 26-35 years (33.9%), which aligns with Freeman's (2019) observation that women and young adults are often the most active participants in faith-based small groups in African urban settings.

4.4 Findings for Research Question One

Research Question One: *How did participation in small groups influence the spiritual growth and discipleship of members in the Diocese of Kampala?*

4.4.1 Descriptive Analysis of Spiritual Growth

Table 4.4: Descriptive Statistics for Spiritual Growth Items (N=230)

Item	Mean	SD	% Agree/Strongly Agree
I read the Bible more regularly since joining my small group.	4.21	0.82	85.2
My personal prayer life has deepened through group participation.	4.18	0.79	83.5
I feel more connected to God because of my small group.	4.26	0.81	87.8
Group discussions help me understand Scripture better.	4.35	0.76	90.4
I have become more active in church because of my small group.	4.24	0.83	86.9
I am more confident sharing my faith with others.	4.12	0.85	83.5
I have grown in obedience to God's Word.	4.19	0.80	86.1
I have developed spiritual habits (fasting, meditation, journaling).	3.94	0.94	76.5
I feel spiritually accountable to my group members.	4.08	0.87	80.0
I experience ongoing spiritual transformation.	4.22	0.80	85.3
Average (10 items)	4.18	0.83	84.5

Note: % Agree/Strongly Agree combines response options 4 and 5.

Interpretation: The overall mean of 4.18 (SD = 0.83) indicates a strong positive influence on spiritual growth. The highest endorsement was for “Group discussions help me understand Scripture better” (mean = 4.35; 90.4% agree). This supports Frost and Hirsch (2016), who argued that small groups facilitate “lived theology” through shared discussion. The relatively lower score for “developed spiritual habits” (3.94) suggests that while small groups excel in Bible engagement, intentional habit formation may require additional emphasis—a point noted by Ogden (2018).

4.4.2 Relationship Between Duration in Group and Spiritual Growth

To determine whether longer participation was associated with greater spiritual growth, a Pearson correlation was conducted.

Table 4.5: Correlation Between Duration in Small Group and Spiritual Growth

Variable	Duration in Group	Spiritual Growth (Mean Score)
Duration in Group	1.00	
Spiritual Growth	0.42**	1.00

** p < 0.01 (two-tailed)

A moderate, positive, and statistically significant correlation ($r = 0.42$, $p < 0.01$) was found. This suggests that members who had participated for longer periods reported higher levels of spiritual growth, consistent with Lim and Putnam’s (2016) finding that sustained small group involvement deepens religious commitment.

4.5 Findings for Research Question Two

Research Question Two: *In what ways did small groups contribute to social cohesion, emotional support, and a sense of belonging among church members?*

4.5.1 Descriptive Analysis of Social Cohesion

Table 4.6: Descriptive Statistics for Social Cohesion Items (N=230)

Item	Mean	SD	%Agree/Strongly Agree
I feel a strong sense of belonging in my small group.	4.38	0.74	92.2
Group members care about my personal well-being.	4.32	0.76	90.4
I can freely share my struggles with the group.	4.12	0.89	82.6
My group provides emotional support during difficult times.	4.24	0.82	86.9
I have formed meaningful friendships through my small group.	4.35	0.78	90.4
I feel accepted and valued by my group members.	4.34	0.75	91.3
My group helps me stay connected to the wider church community.	4.21	0.84	86.1
Group activities foster unity and cooperation.	4.33	0.77	90.4
I trust other members of my group.	4.30	0.79	88.6
My group has become like a second family to me.	4.28	0.84	87.9
Average (10 items)	4.29	0.80	88.7

Interpretation: Social cohesion received the highest average mean (4.29) of all three domains. The strong sense of belonging (92.2% agree) and feeling of family (87.9% agree) align with Putnam and Campbell’s (2017) concept of “bonding social capital” within religious small groups. The slightly lower score for “freely share my struggles” (82.6%) suggests that while trust is high, some members may still exercise caution in vulnerability—a finding consistent with Dougherty and Whitehead (2016).

4.5.2 Gender Differences in Social Cohesion

An independent samples t-test compared male and female respondents on overall social cohesion.

Table 4.7: Gender Differences in Social Cohesion

Gender	n	Mean	SD	t	p
Male	98	4.22	0.78	-1.98	0.049
Female	128	4.35	0.75		

Females reported significantly higher social cohesion than males ($t = -1.98$, $p = 0.049$). This may reflect gendered patterns of relational engagement within church settings, as noted by Kakwata (2021) in African contexts.

4.6 Findings for Research Question Three

Research Question Three: *To what extent did small groups support economic empowerment and leadership development among their members?*

4.6.1 Descriptive Analysis of Economic Empowerment and Leadership

Table 4.8: Descriptive Statistics for Economic Empowerment and Leadership Items (N=230)

Item	Mean	SD	% Agree/Strongly Agree
I have improved my savings habits through group participation.	3.88	0.96	73.9
I have learned practical skills (e.g., budgeting, entrepreneurship).	3.75	0.99	68.7
My group provides opportunities for financial support or advice.	3.92	0.94	76.5
I feel more economically secure because of my group involvement.	3.71	1.00	66.1
I have gained leadership experience through my small group.	3.99	0.90	77.4
Group responsibilities have helped me grow in confidence and public speaking.	4.05	0.88	80.0
I have taken on a leadership or organizational role within the group.	3.86	0.98	72.2
My group encourages and mentors potential leaders.	4.01	0.86	79.2
I feel prepared to serve in other leadership roles in church or community.	3.94	0.92	74.8
My group promotes both spiritual and practical development.	4.17	0.83	85.2
Average (10 items)	3.93	0.93	75.4

Interpretation: The average mean of 3.93 is lower than the spiritual (4.18) and social (4.29) domains but still indicates a positive influence. Leadership development items performed better (e.g., “confidence and public speaking,” mean = 4.05) than economic items. Economic security (66.1% agree) and practical skills acquisition (68.7% agree) were the weakest areas. This echoes Baloyi’s (2017) argument that while African small groups embody a theology of shared responsibility, intentional economic training is often underdeveloped.

4.6.2 Relationship Between Participation in Savings Groups and Economic Outcomes

To test whether members of savings groups reported higher economic empowerment, an independent t-test was conducted.

Table 4.9: Comparison of Economic Empowerment Between Savings Group Members and Non-Members

Group Type	N	Mean (Economic Empowerment)	SD	t	p
Savings group members	76	4.12	0.82	3.45	0.001
Non-members	154	3.84	0.96		

Members of savings groups reported significantly higher economic empowerment (mean = 4.12) than non-members (mean = 3.84), $t = 3.45$, $p = 0.001$. This supports Ledgerwood et al. (2016), who found that community-based savings groups improve financial discipline and perceived economic security.

4.7 Summary of Key Quantitative Findings

Table 4.10: Summary of Mean Scores and Inferential Tests

Research Question	Domain	Average Mean	Key Inferential Finding
RQ1	Spiritual Growth	4.18	Positive correlation with duration in group ($r = 0.42$, $p < 0.01$)
RQ2	Social Cohesion	4.29	Females scored significantly higher than males ($p = 0.049$)
RQ3	Economic & Leadership	3.93	Savings group members scored higher than non-members ($p = 0.001$)

In summary, small group participation in the Diocese of Kampala exerts a strong positive influence on spiritual growth and social cohesion, and a moderate positive influence on economic empowerment and leadership development. Participation duration and group type (savings groups) are significant moderating factors.

4.8 Conclusion

This chapter has presented the quantitative findings from 230 respondents. The data were reliable ($\alpha = 0.94$ overall). All three research questions were addressed using descriptive and inferential statistics. The findings largely support the theoretical frameworks discussed in Chapter Two, though economic empowerment requires further strengthening. A full discussion of these findings in relation to the literature, along with conclusions and recommendations, follows in Chapter Five.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a detailed discussion of the findings presented in Chapter Four, interpreting them in light of the literature reviewed in Chapter Two. The chapter is organised according to the three research questions that guided the study. Following the discussion, conclusions are drawn, and practical recommendations are offered for church leaders, development practitioners, and policymakers. Finally, limitations of the study are acknowledged, and directions for future research are suggested.

5.2 Discussion of Findings

5.2.1 Discussion of Research Question One: Spiritual Growth and Discipleship

Finding: Small group participation had a strong positive influence on spiritual growth, with an overall mean of 4.18 (on a 5-point scale). The highest endorsement was for “Group discussions help me understand Scripture better” (mean = 4.35; 90.4% agreement). A moderate positive correlation was found between duration of group participation and spiritual growth ($r = 0.42$, $p < 0.01$).

Discussion: These findings align closely with the literature reviewed in Chapter Two. Frost and Hirsch (2016) argued that authentic discipleship emerges within relational environments where shared practices such as Scripture study and prayer occur. The high score for understanding Scripture through group discussions empirically supports their claim that small groups facilitate “lived theology”—where beliefs are not merely taught but practiced and discussed collectively.

Similarly, Lim and Putnam (2016) found a strong association between small group participation and increased religious commitment, including consistent prayer and deeper engagement with Scripture. The present study's finding that 85.2% of respondents read the Bible more regularly since joining a small group directly echoes their work.

The positive correlation between duration of participation and spiritual growth ($r = 0.42$) is particularly significant. It suggests that spiritual formation is not instantaneous but cumulative. Ogden (2018) described this as the “long obedience” of discipleship, where repeated exposure to group accountability and teaching gradually transforms habits and beliefs. This finding validates the inclusion criterion of at least six months of participation, as shorter involvement might not capture meaningful transformation.

The relatively lower score for “developed spiritual habits such as fasting, meditation, and journaling” (mean = 3.94; 76.5% agreement) is noteworthy. While still positive, it suggests that small groups in the Diocese of Kampala may focus more on Bible study and prayer than on cultivating broader spiritual disciplines. Magezi and Banda (2017) observed that African spirituality is inherently communal, but individual spiritual disciplines (like journaling or silent meditation) may be less emphasised in oral and communal cultures. This presents an opportunity for intentional teaching on diverse spiritual practices.

Conclusion for RQ1: Small group participation substantially enhances spiritual growth and discipleship, with longer involvement yielding greater benefits. However, the

development of diverse spiritual habits beyond Bible reading and prayer may require additional emphasis.

5.2.2 Discussion of Research Question Two: Social Cohesion and Emotional Support

Finding: Social cohesion received the highest average mean of all three domains (4.29), with 92.2% of respondents agreeing that they feel a strong sense of belonging. Females reported significantly higher social cohesion than males ($p = 0.049$). The lowest-rated item in this domain was “I can freely share my struggles with the group” (82.6% agreement), though this still represents a strong majority.

Discussion: These findings strongly support Putnam and Campbell’s (2017) concept of “bonding social capital” within religious small groups. The near-universal sense of belonging (92.2%) and the finding that groups function as “second families” (87.9%) empirically demonstrate that small groups serve as relational anchors in urban and peri-urban Kampala. This is particularly significant given Freeman’s (2019) observation that traditional kinship networks are weakening due to urban migration and economic pressures. Small groups appear to be functioning as surrogate families, providing the emotional and social support that extended families once provided.

The finding that females reported significantly higher social cohesion than males warrants attention. This may reflect both cultural and structural factors. In many Ugandan church contexts, women are more likely to attend small groups regularly, participate in fellowship activities, and form intimate relational bonds (Kakwata, 2021). Men, while still reporting positive social cohesion (mean = 4.22), may be more reserved in emotional expression or may attend groups more intermittently. This gender

difference is consistent with Dougherty and Whitehead's (2016) finding that women typically report higher levels of emotional support and attachment within congregational small groups.

The slightly lower score for "freely share my struggles" (82.6%) is instructive. While a strong majority feel safe sharing, approximately 17% do not. This may reflect natural caution in vulnerable disclosure, or it may indicate that some groups have not yet developed sufficiently deep trust. As noted in Chapter Two, trust is built over time through consistent, non-judgmental listening. Groups with shorter durations or less intentional facilitation may still be developing this capacity.

Conclusion for RQ2: Small groups in the Diocese of Kampala excel at fostering social cohesion, emotional support, and belonging, with women experiencing these benefits more strongly. While most members feel safe sharing personal struggles, deepening trust and vulnerability remains an ongoing process.

5.2.3 Discussion of Research Question Three: Economic Empowerment and Leadership Development

Finding: The average mean for economic empowerment and leadership development was 3.93, lower than the spiritual and social domains but still indicating positive influence. Leadership-related items performed better (e.g., "confidence and public speaking," mean = 4.05) than economic items (e.g., "economic security," mean = 3.71; "practical skills," mean = 3.75). Members of savings groups reported significantly higher economic empowerment than non-members ($p = 0.001$).

Discussion: These findings present both encouragement and challenge. The leadership development outcomes are robust: 80% of respondents agreed that group responsibilities helped them grow in confidence and public speaking, and 79.2% agreed that their group encourages and mentors potential leaders. This empirically supports Northouse's (2019) assertion that leadership skills emerge through practice and responsibility rather than formal training alone. It also validates Roxburgh and Romanuk's (2015) claim that small groups function as "leadership incubators" within churches.

The finding that savings group members reported significantly higher economic empowerment (mean = 4.12 vs. 3.84) is particularly important. It suggests that when small groups intentionally incorporate economic activities—not merely spiritual discussions—members perceive tangible economic benefits. Ledgerwood, Earne, and Nelson (2016) highlighted that community-based savings groups improve financial discipline and resilience, and this study provides empirical evidence that such benefits occur within church-based savings groups in Kampala.

However, the relatively weaker performance of economic items overall (particularly "practical skills" at 68.7% and "economic security" at 66.1%) indicates room for improvement. Swart and van der Merwe (2020) observed that economic activities within faith-based small groups are often informal and inconsistent. The present study suggests that while many groups provide financial advice or small loans, fewer offer structured training in budgeting, entrepreneurship, or income generation. Baloyi (2017) argued that African small groups reflect a "theology of survival" but often lack the systematised economic programming seen in secular microfinance initiatives.

The gap between leadership development (strong) and economic empowerment (moderate) is notable. One possible explanation is that leadership skills (facilitating a meeting, organising an event) are naturally exercised within the group's regular activities, whereas economic empowerment requires deliberate external resources, partnerships, or training. Church leaders may feel more confident teaching Scripture than teaching financial literacy.

Conclusion for RQ3: Small groups contribute meaningfully to leadership development, building confidence, public speaking, and mentoring structures. Their contribution to economic empowerment is positive but more limited, with savings groups showing the strongest effects. Intentional economic programming remains an area for strategic strengthening.

5.3 Conclusions

Based on the findings and discussion, the following conclusions are drawn:

1. **Small groups are effective platforms for spiritual formation.** Participation leads to increased Bible reading, deeper prayer life, greater connection to God, and improved understanding of Scripture. Longer participation yields greater spiritual benefits, underscoring the value of sustained involvement.
2. **Small groups function as surrogate families in urban and peri-urban contexts.** The strong sense of belonging, emotional support, and trust reported by members indicates that small groups are filling relational gaps created by urbanisation and the weakening of traditional kinship networks. Women, in particular, benefit from this social cohesion.

3. Leadership development is a significant outcome of small group participation.

Members gain confidence, public speaking skills, and mentoring experience through group roles and responsibilities. Small groups serve as grassroots leadership incubators within the church.

4. Economic empowerment is a promising but underdeveloped dimension. While savings groups demonstrate clear economic benefits, the majority of small groups do not yet provide structured financial training or tangible improvements in economic security. This represents both a gap and an opportunity for holistic ministry.

5. The holistic influence of small groups varies by domain. Social cohesion is the strongest outcome, followed closely by spiritual growth. Economic empowerment, while positive, is the weakest of the three domains. This suggests that small groups naturally excel in relational and spiritual functions but require intentional design to achieve economic outcomes.

5.4 Recommendations

5.4.1 Recommendations for Church Leaders (Diocese of Kampala)

- 1. Strengthen spiritual habit formation.** While Bible study and prayer are strong, intentionally teach and model diverse spiritual disciplines such as fasting, meditation on Scripture, and journaling. Consider dedicating one group meeting per quarter to a different spiritual practice.

2. **Deepen trust and vulnerability, especially for men.** The finding that approximately 17% of members do not freely share struggles indicates room for improvement. Train small group facilitators in active listening, confidentiality, and creating psychologically safe spaces. Consider men's only groups or men's fellowships where male members may feel more comfortable sharing.
3. **Formalise leadership development pathways.** Create a clear, documented pathway for small group members to progress from participant → group facilitator → group leader → parish leader. Pair emerging leaders with mentors. Recognise and celebrate members who complete leadership training.
4. **Intentionally integrate economic empowerment.** Not every small group must become a savings group, but every group should offer periodic financial literacy sessions. Partner with microfinance institutions, banks, or NGO programmes to deliver basic training in budgeting, saving, debt management, and small business skills.
5. **Encourage and resource savings groups.** Given the strong evidence that savings group members report higher economic empowerment, actively support the formation of church-based savings groups. Provide secure savings boxes, basic record-keeping training, and links to village savings and loan association (VSLA) networks.

5.4.2 Recommendations for the Provincial Church of Uganda

- 1. Develop a diocesan small group assessment tool.** Create a standardised but adaptable questionnaire that parishes can use annually to evaluate the spiritual, social, and economic outcomes of their small groups. This would move the church from anecdotal to evidence-based ministry planning.
- 2. Establish a small group leader training curriculum.** Develop a certification programme for small group facilitators covering biblical facilitation, pastoral care, conflict resolution, financial literacy basics, and leadership mentoring.
- 3. Create inter-diocesan learning networks.** Facilitate annual gatherings where small group leaders from different dioceses share best practices, particularly in economic empowerment and youth engagement.

5.4.3 Recommendations for Development Practitioners and NGOs

- 1. Partner with church-based savings groups.** Faith-based savings groups reach populations that secular microfinance programmes often miss. NGOs working in financial inclusion should consider the Church of Uganda's small group network as a delivery channel.
- 2. Co-design economic curricula with theological integration.** Economic training is more likely to be adopted when it is framed as part of holistic Christian discipleship rather than as a secular add-on. Develop materials that integrate biblical stewardship with practical money management.

3. **Target women's groups for economic programming.** Given that women report higher social cohesion and are more actively involved in small groups, women's fellowships and Mothers' Unions are ideal platforms for savings and livelihoods interventions.

5.4.4 Recommendations for Future Research

1. **Conduct a longitudinal study.** The present study used a cross-sectional design. A longitudinal study tracking the same members over 2-3 years would establish causal relationships and measure changes over time.
2. **Compare rural and urban dioceses.** This study was confined to the Diocese of Kampala (urban/peri-urban). Similar research in rural dioceses (e.g., Mbale, Kinkiizi, West Buganda) would reveal whether small group influences differ by context.
3. **Use mixed methods.** While this study employed a quantitative approach, qualitative interviews with small group members and leaders would provide richer explanations for *why* certain outcomes occur and how members experience transformation.
4. **Isolate the effects of savings groups.** Conduct a dedicated study comparing members of church-based savings groups with members of spiritual-only small groups, controlling for demographic variables, to determine the precise added value of economic activities.

5. **Examine the role of small groups in youth and men's retention.** Given that females reported higher social cohesion and that youth fellowships are common, future research could investigate how small groups influence the retention of young people and men in the Church of Uganda.

5.5 Limitations of the Study (Revisited)

As noted in Section 1.8, the following limitations were acknowledged, and mitigation strategies were employed. They are restated here to provide context for the conclusions:

Limitation	Mitigation
Limited generalisability (Diocese of Kampala only)	Detailed contextual information provided for reader assessment
Reliance on self-reported data	Anonymity ensured; cross-check questions included
Diversity and informality of small groups	Groups categorised by type; analysis conducted within and across categories
Recall bias over a two-year period	Questions focused on general patterns and recent experiences
Limited resources	Structured sampling strategy prioritised data quality

These limitations do not invalidate the findings but suggest caution in over-generalising beyond similar urban Anglican contexts in Uganda.

5.6 Contribution to Knowledge

This study makes the following original contributions:

1. **Empirical evidence in an under-researched context.** It provides the first quantitative analysis of small group outcomes within an Anglican diocese in Uganda, filling a gap identified in Chapter Two.
2. **Holistic measurement framework.** The study operationalised holistic development (spiritual, social, economic, leadership) into measurable indicators, offering a replicable instrument for future research.
3. **Practical insights for faith-based development.** By demonstrating that savings group members report higher economic empowerment, the study provides evidence for integrating economic activities into church ministry.
4. **Gender-disaggregated findings.** The significant difference in social cohesion between males and females suggests that small groups may meet different needs for different genders—a finding with practical implications for group design.

5.7 Final Conclusion

Small groups within the Diocese of Kampala are not merely peripheral church activities but are central, transformative structures that shape the spiritual lives, social connections, and leadership capacity of their members. They function as relational families in an increasingly fragmented urban environment, and they incubate leaders

for both church and community. Their contribution to economic empowerment, while positive, is less developed and represents a strategic opportunity for holistic ministry.

For the Church of Uganda, investing in small groups is not an optional addition to “real” church work. It is among the most effective, grassroots strategies for discipleship, community building, and leadership development. With intentional support particularly in economic programming and trust-building—small groups can become even more powerful agents of holistic transformation.

REFERENCES

- Baloyi, M. E. (2017). The role of small groups in economic survival within African Pentecostal churches. *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa*, 158(1), 45-62.
- Banks, R. (1994). *Paul's idea of community: The early house churches in their cultural setting* (Rev. ed.). Hendrickson Publishers.
- Baruch, Y., & Holtom, B. C. (2008). Survey response rate levels and trends in organizational research. *Human Relations*, 61(8), 1139-1160.
- Dougherty, K. D., & Whitehead, A. L. (2016). Small group participation and religious commitment in the United States. *Review of Religious Research*, 58(3), 403-425.
- Freeman, D. (2019). Urbanisation, kinship, and faith-based groups in sub-Saharan Africa. *African Affairs*, 118(471), 312-335.
- Frost, M., & Hirsch, A. (2016). **The shaping of things to come: Innovation and mission for the 21st-century church** (Rev. ed.). Baker Books.
- Green, M. (2002). *Evangelism in the early church* (Rev. ed.). Eerdmans Publishing.
- Kakwata, K. (2021). Women, small groups, and leadership pathways in African Anglican contexts. *Journal of Anglican Studies*, 19(2), 145-163.
- Katongole, E. (2011). *The sacrifice of Africa: A political theology for Africa*. Eerdmans Publishing.
- Ledgerwood, J., Earne, J., & Nelson, C. (Eds.). (2016). *The new microfinance handbook: A financial market system perspective*. World Bank Publications.

Lim, C., & Putnam, R. D. (2016). Small groups, religion, and civic engagement in America. *Sociology of Religion*, 77(1), 1-28.

Magezi, V., & Banda, C. (2017). African spirituality and small group discipleship: An interdisciplinary approach. *Missionalia*, 45(2), 112-129.

Northouse, P. G. (2019). *Leadership: Theory and practice* (8th ed.). SAGE Publications.

Nunnally, J. C., & Bernstein, I. H. (1994). *Psychometric theory* (3rd ed.). McGraw-Hill.

Ogden, G. (2018). *Transforming discipleship: Making disciples through small groups*. InterVarsity Press.

Orobator, A. E. (2008). *Theology brewing: Essays on African Christianity*. Paulines Publications Africa.

Putnam, R. D., & Campbell, D. E. (2017). *American grace: How religion divides and unites us*. Simon & Schuster.

Roxburgh, A. J., & Romanuk, F. (2015). *The missional leader: Equipping your church to reach a changing world*. Jossey-Bass.

Swart, I., & van der Merwe, J. (2020). Faith-based small groups and economic resilience in South African townships. *Religion and Development*, 3(1), 78-99.

Turaki, Y. (2006). *Foundations of African traditional religion and worldview*. WordAlive Publishers.

Ward, K., & Wild-Wood, E. (Eds.). (2010). *The East African Revival: History and legacies*. Routledge.

APPENDICES

Appendix I: Introductory Letter

 **UGANDA CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY**
A Centre of Excellence in the Heart of Africa

15th March 2026

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

Dear Sir/Madam

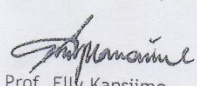
INTRODUCTION LETTER FOR DATA COLLECTION

This letter serves to introduce to you KAMUSISHA PARTUON a student of Bishop Tucker School of Divinity pursuing a Master of Divinity/ Master of Arts in Theology/ Master of Arts in Theology and Development/Master of Arts in Theology and Health care Management/ Bachelors of Divinity.

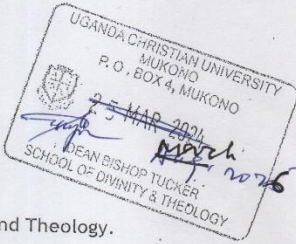
His/her is carrying out a research as a partial requirement for him/her to be awarded the degree he/she is pursuing. So kindly avail him or the required information for building his/her research work.

Counting on your cooperation and thank you in advance

Yours faithfully


Rev. Prof. Elty Kansime

Research coordinator, Bishop Tucker School of Divinity and Theology.
ekansiime@ucu.ac.ug, 0772621182



A Centre of Excellence in the Heart of Africa

P.O. Box 4, Mukono, Uganda (East Africa), Plot 67-173, Bishop Tucker Road, Mukono Hill. Tel: +256 772 621 182

Appendix II: UG-REC-026 Exemption Notice

 **UGANDA CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY**
A Centre of Excellence in the Heart of Africa
Office of the Vice Chancellor
Research Ethics Committee UG-026
PARTISON KAMUGISHA
Uganda Christian University
kamujishapartison@gmail.com


14th July, 2026

UG-REC-026 EXEMPTION NOTICE

To: Partison Kamugisha; Principal Investigator

Re: UCU-REC Application titled : *The Role of Small Groups in Promoting Holistic Development of the Church of Uganda: A Case Study on the Diocese of Kampala.*

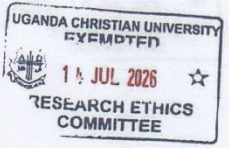
Application Number: UCUREC-2026- 811

Version: 4.1

Type: ☒ Initial Review
☒ EXEMPTION REQUEST
☐ Protocol Amendment
☐ Letter of Amendment (LOA)
☐ Continuing Review
☐ Material Transfer Agreement
☐ Other, Specify:

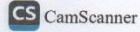
I am pleased to inform you that the UG-REC-026; UCUREC exempted the above referenced application.
Exemption of the research is for the period from 14th July, 2026, to 14th July, 2027.

This research is considered minimal risk category since there is no humans involved in research.
As Principal Investigator of the research, you are responsible for fulfilling the following requirements of approval:



Research and Ethics

P.O. Box 4, Mukono, Uganda, Plot 67-173, Bishop Tucker Road, Mukono Hill
Tel: +256 (0) 372 350 885 Fax: +256 (0) 4142 90 800 Email: rec@ucu.ac.ug Web: www.ucu.ac.ug
UCUREC is accredited by Uganda National Council for Science & Technology, FDA, and National Institutes for Health of the United States of America





UGANDA CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY

A Centre of Excellence in the Heart of Africa

Office of the Vice Chancellor
Research Ethics Committee UG-026



1. All co-investigators must be kept informed of the status of the research.
2. Changes, amendments, and additions to the protocol must be submitted to the REC for re-review and approval prior to the activation of the changes. The REC exemption number assigned to the research should be cited in any correspondence.
3. Reports of unanticipated problems during study or other must be submitted to the UCUREC for notification. New information that becomes available which could change the status of the study; i.e. involving members of the research team, guardians, or any unexpected occurrence must be communicated to UCUREC.
4. Regulations require review of an exempted study not less than once per 12-month period. Therefore, a continuing review application must be submitted to the REC eight weeks prior to the above expiration date of 14th July, 2027 in order to continue the study beyond the exempted period. Failure to submit a continuing review application in a timely fashion may result in suspension or termination of the study, at which point any change in approach to data collection must be communicated.
5. You are required to get clearance from Uganda National Council for Science and Technology (UNCST) before proceeding for data collection.

The following is the list of all documents approved in this application by UG-REC _026:

The following is the list of all documents approved in this application by UG-REC _026:

	Document Title	Language	Version	Version Date
1.	Protocol	English	1.0	2026-07-14
2.	Request for REC exemption	English	1.0	2026-07-14

Signed and Stamped

Dr. Edward Mukooza.
UCUREC Chairperson,
emukooza@ucu.ac.ug



Research and Ethics

P.O. Box 4, Mukono, Uganda, Plot 67-173, Bishop Tucker Road, Mukono Hill
Tel: +256 (0) 312 350 885 Fax: +256 (0) 4142 90 800 Email: rec@ucu.ac.ug Web: www.ucu.ac.ug
UCUREC is accredited by Uganda National Council for Science & Technology, FDA, and National Institutes for Health of the United States of America

Appendix III : Turnitin Report



Digital Receipt

This receipt acknowledges that Turnitin received your paper. Below you will find the receipt information regarding your submission.

The first page of your submissions is displayed below.

Submission author: Partison Kaugisha
Assignment title: Quick Submit
Submission title: DISSERTATION
File name: Partison_Dissertation.docx
File size: 54.1K
Page count: 35
Word count: 8,260
Character count: 51,532
Submission date: 27-Jul-2026 11:59AM (UTC+0300)
Submission ID: 3004147853

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Small groups have historically played a central role in the life and growth of the Christian church. From the earliest expressions of Christian community, believers gathered in smaller, relational settings for teaching, prayer, fellowship, and mutual support. The account in the Book of Acts (2:42-47) illustrated how early Christians met in homes, shared meals, and practiced a deeply communal form of faith. These gatherings were not peripheral but formed the foundation of church life and mission. Scholars such as Banks (1994) and Green (2002) observed that these early small groups embodied a participatory and relational model that shaped both spiritual formation and communal identity.

This model persisted across generations and cultural contexts. In contemporary Christianity, small groups continued to function as vital spaces where believers connected faith with daily life. Within Uganda, particularly in the Church of Uganda, small groups were widely embedded in church practice. These included Bible study fellowships, youth groups, Mothers' and Fathers' Union meetings, savings groups, and outreach teams. Such groups extended beyond spiritual activities to include social support, economic collaboration, leadership development, and community engagement (Wani & Widi-Wandi, 2010; Katungire, 2011).

Despite their widespread presence and perceived importance, the contribution of small groups had not been sufficiently examined through empirical research. Much of the existing understanding remained anecdotal or based on theological reflection rather than systematic data. In many cases, these groups operated informally, with limited structures for monitoring or evaluating their outcomes. This made it difficult to determine the extent to which they influenced personal development, church vitality, or broader socio-economic transformation (Tumusiime, 2006; Ombao, 2008).

This study was therefore undertaken to examine, using a quantitative approach, the influence of small group participation within the Diocese of Kampala. Specifically, it assessed how involvement in small groups shaped members' spiritual growth, social relationships, economic well-being, and leadership development. By generating empirical evidence, the study sought to

Partison Kaugisha

DISSERTATION



Quick Submit



Quick Submit



Uganda Christian University

Document Details

Submission ID

trn:oid::1:3618145808

Submission Date

Jul 27, 2026, 11:57 AM GMT+3

Download Date

Jul 27, 2026, 12:02 PM GMT+3

File Name

Partison_Dissertation.docx

File Size

54.1 KB

35 Pages

8,260 Words

51,532 Characters

19% Overall Similarity

The combined total of all matches, including overlapping sources, for each database.

Exclusions

▶ 4 Excluded Matches

Match Groups

-  **117 Not Cited or Quoted 19%**
Matches with neither in-text citation nor quotation marks
-  **3 Missing Quotations 0%**
Matches that are still very similar to source material
-  **0 Missing Citation 0%**
Matches that have quotation marks, but no in-text citation
-  **0 Cited and Quoted 0%**
Matches with in-text citation present, but no quotation marks

Top Sources

- 11%  Internet sources
- 6%  Publications
- 15%  Submitted works (Student Papers)

Integrity Flags

0 Integrity Flags for Review

No suspicious text manipulations found.

Our system's algorithms look deeply at a document for any inconsistencies that would set it apart from a normal submission. If we notice something strange, we flag it for you to review.

A Flag is not necessarily an indicator of a problem. However, we'd recommend you focus your attention there for further review.

Match Groups

- **117 Not Cited or Quoted 19%**
Matches with neither in-text citation nor quotation marks
- **3 Missing Quotations 0%**
Matches that are still very similar to source material
- **0 Missing Citation 0%**
Matches that have quotation marks, but no in-text citation
- **0 Cited and Quoted 0%**
Matches with in-text citation present, but no quotation marks

Top Sources

- 11% Internet sources
- 6% Publications
- 15% Submitted works (Student Papers)

Top Sources

The sources with the highest number of matches within the submission. Overlapping sources will not be displayed.

1	Student papers	
	Uganda Christian University	9%
2	Internet	
	lib.convdocs.org	<1%
3	Student papers	
	Pathfinder Enterprises	<1%
4	Student papers	
	Midlands State University	<1%
5	Internet	
	ucudlr.ucu.ac.ug	<1%
6	Internet	
	erepository.uonbi.ac.ke	<1%
7	Internet	
	repository.unlmac.edu.gh	<1%
8	Internet	
	www.assajournal.com	<1%
9	Internet	
	psa.mypolycc.edu.my	<1%
10	Student papers	
	University of West London	<1%

11	Student papers	Central University of Technology	<1%
12	Internet	ljlr.org	<1%
13	Internet	llste.org	<1%
14	Internet	kwpublications.com	<1%
15	Student papers	South College	<1%
16	Internet	journalkeberianjutan.com	<1%
17	Internet	hub.hku.hk	<1%
18	Publication	Rice, Reginald M.. "Church-Based Small Group Participation and Faith Maturity: A ...	<1%
19	Student papers	American Intercontinental University Online	<1%
20	Publication	James, Joshua L.. "The Retention of Millennials In the Black Church.", University of...	<1%
21	Internet	jlclt.com	<1%
22	Internet	quarterlyreview.net	<1%
23	Student papers	Sheffield Hallam University	<1%
24	Internet	lrbackend.nkumbauniversity.ac.ug	<1%

25	Internet	theaspd.com	<1%
26	Student papers	University of Northampton	<1%
27	Student papers	Westford Global Education	<1%
28	Internet	lnk.springer.com	<1%
29	Internet	ojs.ijemd.com	<1%
30	Internet	repository.up.ac.za	<1%
31	Student papers	Zambia Centre for Accountancy Studies	<1%
32	Internet	Internationalpolicybrief.org	<1%
33	Internet	www.annexpublishers.com	<1%
34	Publication	Hui Lin, Qi Sun, Weiwei Yao, Chuanling Yuan, Qinru Xing, Tingting Sun, Qiaoling ...	<1%
35	Student papers	Institute of Graduate Studies, UITM	<1%
36	Internet	dataIntel.com	<1%
37	Internet	etd.aau.edu.et	<1%
38	Internet	lrbackend.uml.ac.ug	<1%

39	Publication	Reginald S. Prudente, Whitney Kayle Marquez, Joma Kayerelle Sorla, Andre A. Tull...	<1%
40	Publication	Rosemary Madzore, Vellsiwe Gasa. "Influence of child abuse on academic perfor...	<1%
41	Internet	assets-eu.researchsquare.com	<1%
42	Internet	Journal-Isl.org	<1%
43	Internet	llu.dlva-portal.org	<1%
44	Internet	repository.sbts.edu	<1%
45	Internet	rsisinternational.org	<1%
46	Internet	wsj.westsciences.com	<1%
47	Publication	Hughes, Jessica Louise. "Discipleship Praxis In Light of Colonial Mission History In ...	<1%
48	Publication	Jernigan, Ralph W., Jr.. "Can A Christian College Student Please God? Spiritual Gro...	<1%
49	Internet	academicworldpublisher.co.uk	<1%
50	Internet	core.ac.uk	<1%
51	Internet	lr.greysauniversity.ac.ke	<1%
52	Internet	lr.jkuat.ac.ke	<1%

53	Internet	lr.uew.edu.gh:8080	<1%
54	Internet	www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov	<1%
55	Internet	www.tpsc.go.tz	<1%
56	Internet	lr.mu.ac.ke:8080	<1%