

**THE INFLUENCE OF CHILDREN'S MINISTRY PRACTICES ON THE
SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT OF CHILDREN 6-12 YEARS: A CASE OF
CHILDREN'S MINISTRIES IN MBALE**

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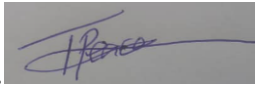
Declaration

I, Tibagonzeka Peace, a student of Uganda Christian University, Mukono, declare that this study was carried out in the children's ministries of Mbale district. This study's data is absolutely derived from the researcher. It has not previously been released or presented to a university or other education establishment

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Signature....

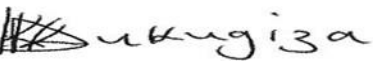


Date..... 4TH / June / 2026

Approval

This certifies that the university supervisor approved the submission of this dissertation.

Name: Kukugiza Doreen Businge (Mrs)

Signature 

Date 6th June 2026

Dedication

Firstly, this study is devoted to my closest companion, the Holy Spirit, who loves me, comforts me, makes a way for me, encourages me, gives me wisdom, and does much more that I cannot mention all at once. I love you, Holy Spirit.

This research study is dedicated to the supportive persons in my academic journey, especially Aunt Jane Harriet, Mum Loyce, and Dad Sam Wamutu; my brother Enoch and his wife, Mercy; my sister Vanessa and her husband, Rogers; my friends; and all those whom I have not mentioned. I also dedicate this study to Mrs. Hilda Ocan, Mr. Henry Muguluma, Tinah, Suubi, Jackie, Mable, and the ladies in the Significant Woman group. My workmates at Africa Renewal University and children's ministries. May you receive many blessings and rewards.

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I appreciate the efforts of the staff of UCU for the academic knowledge and guidance given to me as I carried out my studies, especially my university supervisor, Madam Doreen Kukugiza, for the guidance, expertise, technical support, encouragement, and words of wisdom she rendered to me.

Abstract

This study set out to examine the influence of children's ministry practices on the spiritual development of children aged 6-12 years in the selected four children's ministries in Mbale city. The main goal of the research study was to investigate the influence of the children's ministry practices on the spiritual development of children 6-12 years in children's ministries of Mbale district. In order to collect and analyze data, the study used a mixed method approach that combined qualitative and quantitative techniques. From the population of 66 people, a total of 57 respondents were chosen by simple random sampling to participate in the study, which employed a cross sectional design. To ensure the reliability and validity of the data collection instruments, the researcher carried out a pretest where questionnaires were given to 10 respondents before being issued to the final respondents. And in addition, several questions were adapted from the Adesola (2021), which were reviewed and revised, and others were added by the researcher to address the specific objectives of the study. SPSS was used to analyze the quantitative cross sectional survey data using descriptive statistics, while thematic analysis was used to evaluate the qualitative data. The investigation looked into how present activities in children ministry relate to factors of spiritual growth. The findings revealed that current children's ministry practices had a weak prediction on the various aspects of the children's spiritual development. The study concluded that existing children's ministry practices have limited influence on children's spiritual development because Sunday school was the main practice yet there are several of them. The study therefore recommended that children's ministries were to explore other children's ministry practices and implement more comprehensive practices to ensure the children's spiritual development.

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List of acronyms

ECD:	Early Childhood Development
JLOS:	Justice, Law, and Order Sector
SPSS:	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
UBOS:	Uganda Bureau of Statistics
UNICEF:	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

The present investigation surveyed the children's ministry practices influence on the spiritual growth of children aged 6-12 years. The study's background, including the objectives, questions, problem statement, significance, justification, scope, as well as the conceptual framework, is given in chapter 1.

1.2 Background to the Research

The field of child development highlights the urgency of attending to every facet of the development of children, that is, physique, cognitive, social, emotional, moral, then spiritual development aspects, for fostering long-term well-being and life adjustment. Moreover, an inclusive child development continuum should include all the aspects of child development. Nevertheless, educational and caregiving systems have tended to prioritize the other aspects except the spiritual development of children. However, emerging research reveals that such a narrow focus is insufficient for preparing children for the complex demands of life (Zalika, 2024). Instead, a holistic approach is essential for wellness, and adaptability. Each developmental aspect contributes uniquely and interactively to a child's well-being; for example, spiritual vitality is positively linked to emotional regulation, resilience, and acceptable behavior (Hyde, 2024). Therefore, neglecting any of these aspects risks developmental imbalances that may hinder the children's ability to thrive and contribute meaningfully to their communities.

Moreover, emerging studies emphasize that spiritual development has a 90 % positive return effect on child development (Kwikirize, 2025). Anderson (2023) also reveals

that 66% are more likely to flourish in life, which resonates with Miller (2016), who also reveals that “children who have a constructive relationship with spiritual development are 40% will not use and abuse substances and 60% will not be depressed as adolescents” (Mag 2015: Tabi Georgina, 2020, Tamis-LeMonda, 2022). The current study focuses on investigating what child ministries do, and how those practices influence actualized spiritual development of youngsters. Whereas youngster’s spiritual growth is an important pillar for child wellbeing, a paucity of information appears in research studies reflecting how child ministry practices influence spiritual development aspects.

Historically, over the centuries, many people have stated their concern and interest in children. They have tried to minister to their various needs because they realized that children’s ministry was important, and so some carried out research and decided to take a step towards children’s ministry. In other words, among such people are educators who contribute to the well-being of children. The following persons’ contributions to children’s welfare will be briefly highlighted: Comenius, Rousseau, Pestalozzi, Froebel, Montessori, and Raikes. According to Odesola (2021), Comenius believed that a conducive environment is essential for teaching children, while (Omony, 2024) emphasized that involving children in the learning process is essential. However, Locke, a British philosopher, believed that education helps children interact with others and become proper societal citizens, viewing their minds as a blank slate. The researcher cannot entirely agree with Locke’s view on children’s development, arguing that they are not blank slates but rather developed according to a natural plan. Raikes contributed to the history of Christian education for children, starting a Sunday school outside their service in Gloucester, England, to

cater to the needs of poor children (Amongin, 2024). This clearly shows that ministry to children is important, and so are the operations.

Theoretically, according to Odesola (2021), Anton Backer, James Fowler, and Carl Jung were three men who supported seeing young children's spiritual development favorably. Subsequently, these psychologists wrote about the spiritual upbringing of the children and considered it essential for the healthy growth of the self. This is because religion and faith play a role and have responsibilities in helping people feel secure in life and in helping children develop their identities as they grow. As a result, a child's holistic development indicates a "complete person." Including mentally, spiritually, emotionally, and physically" is a crucial idea significant to this research (Odesola 2021). However, a great deal of investigations have been done on the other facets of development, and little have been researched on the children's spiritual growth in Uganda.

Contextually, according to Uganda's 2015 Convention on the Rights of the Child, early childhood development (ECD) is crucial for "the children's spiritual, social, physical, social, and moral development". However, the children's ministry practices are often undervalued in some children's ministries, highlighting that some children's ministries often undervalued the ministry practices, and yet there is a need for holistic ministry to children. That is why children's ministries should prioritize effective practices and strategies for their ministries, as they are future leaders. Despite its existence, many children's ministries focus on adult ministry and spiritual activities, leaving children's ministry struggling. That is why, in short, there is a paucity of research in Uganda to evaluate the effectiveness of the children's ministry practices and strategies, which is a problem if not handled.

Conceptually, according to Odesola (2021), raising youngsters from a young age is significant for their spiritual upbringing, as it has a constructive impact on the forthcoming accomplishments. Growing, one must think and feel about the wonderful and exceptional truths about the transcendent, the earth's creator, which give us value as people. "Everyone who has received a solid spiritual nurture is most likely to have a strong sense of purpose, life, love, and care for others." This motivates us to protect the world and all of its living creatures (Selvam, 2013). In addition, early childhood is when a person first develops the spiritual and moral values that will guide their thoughts and behavior as adults (Zalika, 2024). Spiritual development is for everyone, and young children should be given opportunities to grow in this area. Spiritual development that fosters faith in GOD strengthens both the social and emotional bonds in children (Mubiru, 2024). Spiritual progress is a natural right that must be spoken of promptly. However, there is a paucity of research in Uganda looking at the spiritual development of children.

Lastly, many parents are deteriorating in fulfilling their parental duties effectively, specifically in the part of spiritual nurturing (Odesola, 2021). On the whole, ministry to children becomes a necessary middle support in rising of the spiritual development of youngsters. Consequently, practices are serious in the children's ministries, especially for the spiritual development of the children. Later, the results from this paper will give a weighty input to the concept of the children's ministry practices. This research will also highlight the importance of children's ministry practices in fostering spiritual development in young children. It examines the influence of these practices on the spiritual growth of children aged 6-12 in Mbale children's ministries, identifying the most effective practices and evaluating the effectiveness of existing ones.

1.3 Problem statement

According to the National Child Policy Implementation Plan (2020-2025), “Uganda has a young population with over 56 percent of its population under the age of 18 and about half (48.7 percent) under the age of 15 years” (UBOS, 2016). Consequently, investing in children’s holistic development, including their spiritual development, is essential for individual and societal wellbeing. children’s ministries are recognized as important platforms for nurturing youngsters’ spiritual development (Amongin, 2024), and several such ministries operate within Mbale city (Zalika, 2024).

Despite the existence of these ministries in Uganda (Kamukama, 2025), scholarly literature indicates that children’s ministry leaders often lack adequate understanding of children’s spiritual development, its aspects, and the practices necessary to effectively foster it (King, 2023: Hyde, 2024). Furthermore, limited parental involvement in children’s spiritual development and the absence of structured approaches to nurturing them continues to challenge the effectiveness of ministry programs (King, 2023: Odesola, 2021). As a result, there remains insufficient evidence regarding the children’s ministry practices, and the extent to which children’s ministry practices influence the youngster’s spiritual development. This situation revealed a significant gap in addressing the barriers hindering the sustainability of the practices for the youngsters’ spiritual growth.

This gap is particularly concerning in Mbale, where children increasingly face social challenges such as poverty, family instability, violence and involvement in criminal activities (Amongin, 2024). Moreover, most existing children’s ministries studies in Uganda have been conducted in other districts rather than Mbale. Research also

suggests that spiritual development can enhance children's emotional resilience, behavioral adjustment, and ability to cope with adversity (Zalika, 2024). However, little empirical evidence exists on the relationship between children's ministry practices and the spiritual development of children aged 6-12 years in Mbale city.

Therefore, this study sought to examine the influence of children's ministry practices on the spiritual development of children 6-12 years in children's ministries in Mbale city.

1.4 Purpose of the study

“To investigate the influence of the children's ministry practices on the spiritual development of children 6-12 years in children's ministries of Mbale district”

1.5 Specific objectives of the study

1. To find out the children's ministry practices for children aged 6-12 years in the children's ministries of Mbale.
2. To determine the spiritual development aspects exhibited among children aged 6-12 years in the children's ministries of Mbale.
3. To examine the relationship between children's ministry practices and the spiritual development of children aged 6-12 years in the children's ministries of Mbale.
4. To examine the barriers hindering the sustaining of the children's ministry practices for the spiritual development of children aged 6-12-year-olds in children's ministries of Mbale.

1.6 Research questions

1. What are the children's ministry practices for children aged 6-12 years in the children's ministries of Mbale?

2. What spiritual development aspects are exhibited among children aged 6-12 years in the children's ministries of Mbale?
3. What is the relationship between children's ministry practices and the spiritual development of children aged 6-12 years in children's ministries of Mbale?
4. What barriers are hindering the sustaining of the children's ministry practices for the spiritual development of children aged 6-12 years in Mbale?

1.7 Scope of the study

1.7.1 Geographical scope

This study was geographically carried out in Mbale district in Eastern Uganda. UN HABITAT (2024) said that the districts of Tororo in the southeast, Kumi in the north, Budaka in the northwest, and Butaleja in the north encircle Mbale. The district in total covers 2,467 square kilometers (953 sq mi). It has mountainous areas in and around the district (UN HABITAT, 2024). Mbale City has children's ministries that have existed over a period of time (Maisha Children's Ministry, 2023). Deliverance children's ministry Mbale and St. Andrews Cathedral were chosen because they have existed for a long time and nurtured many children through the years with 49 and 30 years, respectively. Others were from Elgon Seventh-day Adventist and Living Word of Faith children's ministries.

1.7.2 Scope of content

The study looked at practices as the independent variable. These were various activities, methods, strategies, and programs implemented by children's ministries or organizations to nurture the spiritual, psychological, physique, and moral development of children usually 0-12 years (Brewster, 2021).

The study also looked at spiritual development, which is referred to as the children's progression in deepening their relationality with the transcendent, the environment, others, self; Imagination and creativity; a sense of awe, wonder, and happiness; and morality and beliefs (Beckwith, 2023).

Furthermore, the study looked at the barriers hindering the sustainability of these practices for the spiritual advancement of children. For this study, barriers are factors, circumstances, or conditions that negatively affect the sustainability of practices for their development.

Therefore, this study focused on three variables: the independent variable, which was the children's ministry practices; the dependent variable, which was the spiritual development; and the extraneous variable, which was the barriers hindering the sustaining of these practices for their holistic development.

1.7.3 Time scope

The study looked at literature between 2003 to 2025 because children's ministry has undergone significant changes in the last two decades due to shifts in culture, technology, and education (Bunge, 2008). Allen, H. C. (2008), "Children's ministries must be studied through the lens of contemporary challenges and cultural shifts if they are to remain relevant and effective." Also, it is from 2003 because it has been emphasized by scholars to be the more appropriate period with literature that incorporates information from diverse cultural, contextual perspectives and can reflect the modern understanding and discourse (White, K, 2018). Furthermore, UBOS (2018) states that from 2000 to date, children have faced risks like violence, emotional distress, digital exploitation, and moral decline. These point to a spiritual development and social crisis affecting children, and yet children's ministries stand to be a dynamic frontline in influencing the spiritual development of the young ones.

1.8 Justification of the study

UNICEF (2023) mentioned that early childhood, defined as the years up to eight years of age, is crucial for physical, socio-emotional, and mental development. A child's brain at that time is elastic and adaptable during those years as billions of brain cells, or neurons, are connecting through various experiences, environment, and heredity. This shows that a stimulating environment, enough nutrition, and relationships with caring parents and guardians are necessary for optimal development of the brain. Youngsters' potential is impacted by unsafe environments, unfavorable interactions, and a lack of educational opportunities during these formative years (UNICEF, 2023).

Researchers have also noted that children are most receptive throughout their formative years; as a result, reaching young people between the ages of 4 and 14 is now prioritized (Kummer, 2022). This shows that childhood is a prime period in faith formation but also are formative years for personality, values, character, and worldview. In addition to providing a significant return on the investment today, an effective ministry encourages and supports the ministry for children overall. However, it also results in a more promising future for holistic nurturing (Sparks ministry team, 2021). This implies that the children are very key in building today's and tomorrow's nation. Children's ministry helps to reach children, which transforms them through holistic development. However, Eria Luzinda, the retired Bishop of Mukono Diocese, also observed that many children's ministries were disregarding their young people (Lanyero, 2015). It is therefore important to conduct the investigation.

The study considered the age of 6-12 years because, according to Fowler's mythic-literal faith stage, lasting from age six to middle school, he states that this phase marks the start of contemplations on the concepts and emotions of faith. It is at this stage that children can find meaning in the facts as well as the order in which they happened. However, their meanings are literal and tangible to them. Children at this stage are believed to be able to distinguish and do a lot of imaginaries or fantasize (Unitarian Universalist Association, 2024).

According to Lourenco (2014), a cognitive theory by Piaget, a youngster can operate or think reasonably during the concrete operational stage (roughly the ages of 7 to 12) years). However, he says that this ability is based on the tangible objects that can be subject to identification, class inclusion or participation, preservation, change, and other concepts. A youngster who can function in the intellectual sphere is also able to collaborate in social places and able to engage in debate or discussions through words or language. This justifies why I chose this particular age group of 6-12 years.

1.9 Significance of the study

The significance of this study lies in its contribution to the field of child development by enlightening the role of children's ministry practices in nurturing the spiritual development of children, which is an important aspect in ensuring holistic child development. The following are the benefits of this study:

Child development professionals' benefit from this study by identifying effective children's ministry practices that they can adopt with more comprehensive, culturally responsive, and ethically grounded approaches for youngsters' wellness.

Child development practitioners benefit from this study through being roused to advocate for and implement spiritual development-enriching experiences that align with the broader goals of holistic child development.

Educators, caregivers, children's ministry leaders, and mental health professionals' benefit from this study through the interdisciplinary collaborations to create environments where children can thrive not only intellectually and emotionally but also in spiritual development.

Ministries for children benefit from this study by gaining insight into the spiritual development aspects of children. In addition, they are going to be able to understand correlation of the ministry practices and the spiritual development of the children. This will eventually lead to suggestions for practices to improve the ministry for children.

This study supports further stakeholders like the government in Uganda to evaluate their ministries and find practices that can improve the state of their ministry to children.

Scholars and academicians who intend to research the same theme in the future benefit would from the results of the study, which also serve as a guide to them, and take note of areas for further studies.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

The essence of this literature review was to review previous studies that have been done on children's ministry. Reviewing existing literature would place my study into context, providing a rationale to conduct the study. Books and journals/articles gave perspective to children's ministry, inform my research, and bring more understanding to the information.

Pearce (2016), she highlights relevance of serving the young ones. Every week, as the head of a ministry, she witnessed firsthand the blessing that children were. She claims to have seen their clean hearts, their small arms lifted high, their wonderful praises to Jesus, and the love of Jesus shining through them to the instructors and fellow children.

2.1 Theoretical literature review

Piaget's four stages of cognitive development

Despite disagreement's, experts have agreed on the following five broad rules of development: "Development is a lifelong process; it is comparable for everyone; it builds upon earlier education; it proceeds at an individual rate; and the various aspects of development are interconnected" (Odesola, 2021). One researcher Piaget, was so fascinated by children's cognitive development that he researched his own, and developed the following stages, as explained below:

Cognitive stage	Explanation
Age range for the sensorimotor stage: birth to two	“The infant combines muscular movements with sensory inputs to create a comprehension of the environment”
Age range for the preoperational stage: two to seven	The youngster starts using words and drawings to depict the world. These terms demonstrate a rise in metaphorical language.
Age range for the concrete operational stage: seven to eleven	The youngster is now able to rationally reason about tangible events and classify items into various sets
Formal operational stage; Eleven to fifteen years through to adulthood	Teenagers or individual reasons in intellectual, idealistic, and abstract.

Piaget’s approach raises questions concerning the traditional belief that children were merely receivers of information. By contrast, Piaget emphasized that children’s learning is active, progressive by nature, and creative. Piaget believed that the communal or surrounding contexts contribute greatly to the learning of the youngsters (Kalangasa, 2025). This study agreed with him because according to the indicators of spiritual development, that is, wonder, awe, and creativity, practices are needed where children are actively involved. However, the researcher raised a question concerning the above statement. How many ministries are taking caution

on whether they are including practices that will promote wonder, awe, creativity, and relationality? Those might be a few.

On the contrary, Vygotsky proposed that children actively learn through exchanges with others and things in their cultures because people who do not know learn from the knowledgeable, and also that learning is based upon inventions of the society but not self-reliantly (Amongin, 2024). This study agreed with him on this, because adults need to support the spiritual development of their children.

Bronfenbrenner developed a five-system approach that influences children. One essential feature in his systems approach is that children best grow and thrive in an environment where in-person relations are amongst the youngsters and people like the family, children's ministry, schools, and neighborhoods, as explained in his first system (Amongin, 2024). In this, the social contexts in the microsystem, which also influences the lives of the youngsters. The ministries are considered among the first immediate contexts that can directly influence a child. Consequently, this study examined those practices on how they are influencing the youngster's growth.

James Fowler came up with four stages, which are to be explained below as modified by Myers (2008):

Stage	Explanation
Primal faith (From pre-birth to two years)	Trust is the most essential characteristic in this stage, which is formed through direct and loving interactions with the immediate people

Intuitive projective faith (From three to six years)	Children in this stage learn faith through what they observe in their environment
Mythic literal faith (From seven to twelve years)	Children can understand stories and recall information. And thoughts about their faith set in; however, all this is concrete.

This motivated the study to choose the 6-12 years of age because, according to the above theory, they have started to understand and believe in what is being shared with them. Therefore, children's ministries can use storytelling with metaphors to explain spiritual concepts, give room for children to ask questions, offer age-appropriate information, teach sound morals as well as establish boundaries, and encourage active participation of those children.

2.1.1 Empirical literature review

2.1.2 Spiritual development

Academic findings explained that one should have the traits and attributes of spiritual development, although this is not proven, and it is unclear (Harris, 2007; Eaude, 2024; Tacey, 2004). As seen by Reid (2011), there still is no consensus on what spiritual development is, which is certainly seconded by King (2023), saying that the word "spiritual development" completely eludes explanation. Moreover, literature generally recognizes that coming up with a single description is a challenging endeavor full of existential and logical challenges (Adams, Bull & Maynes, 2016). Undoubtedly, there is an additional challenge to the paucity of scientific data on spiritual development in children, even if some research papers have been published lately (Goodliff, Giesenberg, 2007; 2013; Sifers, Warren &

Jackson, 2012). It may be that this study will help in giving some clear definitions of what spiritual development means.

For the sake of this study, being spiritual means going through a supernatural process that causes one to display traits that are beneficial to oneself, the people in the immediate vicinity, and the public (Zimmerman, 2023). This certainly necessitates the quest for the transcendent, a productive change in one's views, mindsets, and actions. In addition, prayer and other spiritual practices help us become kind and compassionate towards one another and help us make sense of our experiences in life. Spiritual development also involves these practices. (Watson, 2017). It can be seen that this research is worth studying.

Children are spiritual creatures who have a fundamental understanding of the transcendent's existence and the capacity to have spiritual encounters with the transcendent that can fulfill that capacity. Helping children on this journey is the responsibility of those who are in charge of their spiritual growth. Scripture provides an example of Jesus developing physically and intellectually in his environment. A congregation that actively plays out this role with intention provides prospects for families to acquire around and become aware of the transcendent; serves as a living example of the transcendent's unwavering love for all of His children; encourages children to discover, develop, and share their special gifts from the transcendent; and actively listens to and responds to the needs of children (Melanie C. Gordon 2016).

Spiritual Development. In the researcher's opinion, a child's complete development involves the spiritual aspect which ought to influence their views, personality, identity, and actions for the rest of their lives. To put it more simply, as a believer,

the study recognizes that the connection originates, continues, and finishes with the Maker. Based on the findings of Robinson (2020), the excellent habits, ways, and actions to grow spiritually are clear in the Word of the transcendent. Generally speaking, the researcher agreed with Robinson because a Christian cannot become mature without reading sacred scripture. In this paper, "spiritual development" refers to a youngster's progress to a conscious relationship with the I AM through His Spirit, leading to sound morals and ethical and value-based lifestyles.

Adding information concerning spiritual development, spiritual growth happens for all people; nevertheless, it is particularly significant for the overall development of children. Scholars also elucidate that spiritual growth is the basic element for all present faiths (Bornstein et al., 2017), though the study found this to be debatable. Referring to the views of Bornstein (2017), being spiritually mature encompasses engaging in spiritual activities, reaching out to the transcendent, deepening one's knowledge, and seeking the purpose for life. In addition, the study believes consecration to the transcendent is very key to walking in holiness and service to the transcendent. Although we now observe spiritual growth as vital to natural life, models and lifetime theories related to the study of spiritual growth have barely gained any consideration (Bornstein et al., 2017). This is why this study will contribute greatly to the scientific data needed.

Referring to Tirri and Vander (2009), there was a tight relationship between spiritual development and religion. The researcher observed that these two words have been inversely used in many studies; however, according to another scholar, these two terms are independent concepts that stand opposite to each other, though they appear to be from the same family, like sisters (Kamukama, 2025). But in this case,

the two concepts are similar to contradictory sisters. Other studies have noted that in the absence of religion, there would be no divine observances to bring people together into a cohesive society; also, the absence of spiritual development would result in a lack of illumination from the transcendent and no truth to rejoice in. Perhaps, they are equally needed. Spiritual development must be very comprehensive and multifaceted because it compels people to pursue responses to the inquiries of “Who am I? Whose am I? And why am I here?” hence finding reason and sense for life. On the other hand, religion is systematically arranged with rigid sets of formalities, behaviors, and beliefs that people have to follow. To illustrate, this is more of a duty or compulsion, lacking the yearning to be intimate with the transcendent.

According to (Kamukama, 2025), not everyone religious is always spiritual, and not everyone spiritual is always religious. In agreement with him, the two concepts are indeed interlinked. Therefore, this study will perhaps give more information on these two.

Below is the summary of the connection between spiritual development and religion as modified by Rossiter (2011).

Spiritual	Religious
In the spiritual aspect, the organic component of existence involves pondering, seeking to know the supreme one; an understanding of why one was created; compassion and	In the religious aspect, people follow certain doctrines and customs based on a specific religion. They believe in the eternal being and attend a nearby place of worship, respect, and regard

concern for the person, people, and the environment. .	metaphors, prayer, ceremonies, and songs.
Spiritual development One's actions, principles, and way of life are a reflection of their spiritual development.	Religiosity (religious spiritual development) Within a particular group, religiosity is spiritual development connected to certain religious views.

The word “religiosity” is used in some published work for the intersection between religion and spiritual development. Moreover, (Zimmerman, 2023) offers a fresh understanding of the association between religion and spiritual development that offers three ways to characterize the nature of this link, thereby supporting (Okholm, 2024). Given these concepts, they are seen as distinct and as an “either/or.” The first one describes religion and spiritual development as distinct concepts, whereas the second one states that they are two concepts that could be tied to one another. Finally, the third way proposes combining the two to have a juncture (Selvam 2013). These are all great insights contributing to this study.

2.1.3 Spiritual Development about Child Development

According to Watson (2017), human development is incomplete without the spiritual development aspect. The researcher found this to be true because development is meant to be wholesome. He further states that we need to intentionally support each child in finding purpose and helping them learn to make the right choices in

life and have sound behaviors to live well in their environment. Intentionality is supported by the Bible in Deuteronomy 6:6-7 where parents were asked to intentionally use every opportunity to nurture their children. The wholesome development of children has recently caught people's attention because it determines their future lives (Pandya, 2017). Similarly, John (2020) confirms that spiritual development is also an investment for the country because they will surely see the returns in the children. This will be evidenced in the character, responsibility, integrity, and values they uphold. Furthermore, children are always curious and inquisitive about everything, so they always have many questions (Robinson, 2017). Generally speaking, the study seconds the researcher because this should be the time adults use to nurture their children to grow spiritually.

Children's spiritual development does not start from zero; this is because they are born as spiritual beings already, meaning they ought to look at this as the starting point to plan for children's activities (Zimmerman, 2023). Moreover, children are born with a spiritual component within them that just needs to be nurtured. Spiritual growth is surely important to children because it also helps them become fruitful in years to come (Robinson, 2017). In support of this, this study will identify whether the children's ministries are truly considering this.

Having examined a broad spectrum of published research, spiritual development is believed to enhance and contribute to the health and wellness of many people in the society today. The researcher had heard testimonies from many believers in agreement (Kalangasa, 2025). Because of the family of believers, they develop a sense of belonging, feel loved, discover the reason why they were created, and are also able to persevere in challenges with a sense of peace that cannot be explained.

Other studies have also reported that being spiritual also produces good psychological, social, physical, and moral wellness in people. This does not exclude the children. Therefore, spiritual development in child development is so key that children's ministries should embrace nurturing the whole child.

2.2 The face of children's ministry practices in children's ministries

One scholar mentioned that without intentionality, focus, and thoughtful planning, children's spiritual development will eventually die out, and now we will lose out on the next generation (Eaude, 2024). Similarly, King (2013) states that how children are nurtured will play a big role in their spiritual growth, which will later reflect in their identity and way of living to grow as individuals. Conversely, in the recent findings, all children have an inborn spiritual development irrespective of where they come from, live, or their social setting (Robinson, 2017), which was seconded by Hay and Nye (2006). This study agreed with them because the researcher believed that one was created with a sense of worship in response to the creator.

Firstly, play is so crucial to the youngsters. As it is often quoted, "Work without play makes Jack a dull child." Play gives children an opportunity to learn many things that they could not learn in a classroom setting. They can even grow spiritually through playing with other children who are spiritually growing, like a teacher of mine who gave her life to Christ during playing time. Likewise, according to Colliver and Fleer (2016), through nature play, children can learn to discover and understand the environment by looking at the created things like trees, stones, soil, and plants, among others, which increases their sense of spiritual development. Similarly, Hyde (2016), also supports that a child through play get actively involved, where they acquire skills like mathematics, language, problem-solving, and creativity, among others, which are all part of the development of children. The researcher had

experienced children learning to socialize with other children, learning to take turns, and improving their imagination and creativity. There is something about play that children's ministries must tap into. This study wonders whether children's ministries are embracing play to ensure the spiritual growth of their children.

Secondly, according to Mata (2014), spiritual instruction should include artistic endeavors because they enable children to act out through role play, reflect, make music, draw, and pray. In addition, drawing is also therapeutic since it enables children to express their feelings or emotions, and later this promotes emotional healing of the children. Mata (2014) also states that drawing enhances youngsters' capability to contemplate broadly and improves how they see themselves. Correspondingly, making music also influences how children see themselves and the people around them (Nortje and Van, 2016). To illustrate this, there were some children who were asked to draw the transcendent, and their drawings of who the transcendent is from their perspective were very mesmerizing. Furthermore, role plays and songs that we used to sing in Sunday school are still resounding in us; we remember them to the dot. Hence, children's ministries should embrace artistic endeavors when planning for the children.

According to Robinson (2017), having Sunday school curricula is crucial in order to intentionally plan for the development of the whole child. In addition, he said that the curriculum should never leave out the requirements and welfare of the families in their specific environment. This is true because most children's ministries in Africa perhaps teach children without a curriculum. Without curricula, how will the children's ministries know what is working well and what to improve or change

completely? Therefore, this study will find out whether those children's ministries have curricula that they are using to program for their children.

Bible studies and groups are also important. According to (Okholm, 2024), for one to grow spiritually, relate with Jesus intimately, and find the reason for living, they have to feed on the word by reading the Bible consistently. The Bible is the transcendent's way of renewing our thinking and conforming to His likeness. This confirms that the Bible is not just some set of old tales or just white and black, but life and truth that transforms us. Ruppell (2004), additionally said that Sunday school ministers ought to use the word of the transcendent to instruct and teach children to act on the word to encounter the transcendent. The researcher observed that you cannot separate the Bible from spiritual development because the word is the pure spiritual food one needs to grow and be nourished spiritually. Therefore, children's ministries should not get children to just snack on the word but feast on it through Bible study groups for the children. Furthermore, ministry leaders must ensure that teaching is according to the age groups of the children and that they are offered time to reflect on the lessons learned, as well as offer explanations that are literal to the children.

Practices that promote behavioral transformation. The Bible in many instances talks about transformation through conforming to the likeness of the Savior. According to scholarly literature, no individual can say that they are spiritually grown without transformation in their behavior (Kwikirize, 2025). Children's ministries must plan for practices that emphasize transcendent behavior, for example, honesty, mercy, dignity, self-control, and dependability, among others. Additionally, (Kwikirize, 2025) points out that ministry leaders and parents must be good role models because

children learn by imitating those around them. Spiritual growth is linked to behavioral transformation because the word of the transcendent confirms that such will experience death. In contrast, parents have become so busy with work that they no longer have time to nurture morality, and perhaps they should emphasize practices that promote behavioral transformation.

Worship activities that encourage the children's spiritual growth. In my experience worship enables children to stand in awe of the transcendent and get to be intimate with Him as individuals. Children's ministries must have very thoughtful and intentional space for children to reverence the LORD (Kalangasa, 2025). In recent children's ministry services, people worship through dance, clapping, raising hands in adoration, getting involved in missions or outreaches to help the needy, and giving testimonies to show their gratitude to the transcendent, among others. Children must be intentionally involved in all these practices as acts of worship to the transcendent. This will grow their relationship with the transcendent, with others, and with themselves. Therefore, this study suggests that children's ministries plan such activities for the children so that they get to experience the transcendent individually.

Prayer is another important practice that encourages the inner development of the children. Prayer is a spiritual discipline that brings about spiritual formation among children. Prayer is communing with GOD (Mubiru, 2024). Children ought to be taught that being consistent and persistent in cultivating a life of prayer is very important. Similarly, according to Watson (2008), children's ministries must always have prayer sessions where one gets to see them pray but also let them pray, and teach them that praying at all times regardless of the place is crucial. Prayer is not meant to be

mechanical or rote, but ministry leaders should teach children how to pray, emphasizing the importance of prayer, giving them examples of people who prayed in the Bible, and also teaching the component of faith to receive from the transcendent. Furthermore, they should teach the children that the transcendent hears and answers our prayers and so never to spend a day without communing with the transcendent.

Acts of service also promote spiritual development among children. Most of the time, children's ministries leave out children when it comes to serving people in our community. To illustrate this, when there are building projects, hospital ministry, crusades, missions, and helping the needy like in Karamoja, children are usually not involved, yet these are opportunities they also need. Such practices help them to grow in love, empathy, and kindness and have a sense of fulfillment. Serving others is as important as following the example of Jesus as seen in the Bible. Moreover, Carr (2008) emphasizes this, saying that a heart of service is cultivated in children while their hearts are still tender. This study observed that this gives children a sense of purpose, gratitude, and being a blessing to people as they live out the commandment given by Jesus to love others, also doing to others as we want them to do for us. The researcher wonders whether the children's ministries are incorporating acts of service into their practices.

Large clusters and small cluster sessions for the children. According to Yancy (2018), having large groups where children corporately come together to worship, teach them Bible lessons, give testimonies, give offertory, and praise is very important. However, there should be a time to separate children into smaller clusters according to their ages, which is also needed. On the other hand, smaller clusters encourage

effective learning, and so, they should be practiced because students can actively participate, ask questions, get time to reflect better, interact with their friends, and listen better. This study notices that smaller clusters could also help to emphasize key Bible lessons and identify disciplinary areas for correction.

Child-to-child interactions and solo moments are a practice worth including for spiritual development. According to (Amongin, 2024), having children interact with each other is important in promoting learning from one another, getting friends, learning to share, listening to each other, cooperating, and getting a deeper sense of belonging and self-esteem, among other benefits. As much as that is important, solo moments are also central for reflection, having a sense of wonder, and promoting personal competence. Here, the ministers will also get to identify the children who need more help. But do children's ministries encourage this practice?!

Partnerships with parents and schools. According to (Zalika, 2024), children's ministries must partner with schools and be active in promoting values-based learning in schools. This is because children spend 90% of their time at school, and if nothing is done about the spiritual development of the children, then the next generations will mourn. He further suggested that spiritual lessons should start in the formative years when children are still receptive and young because they are still soft clay that can still be molded. Likewise, King (2017) emphasized the importance of working with parents to ensure continual spiritual nurturing in the families because parents are the first teachers to their children concerning spiritual development. This study will find out if partnerships are going on between parents and schools.

2.3 Characteristics of spiritual development among children

Literature often notes, according to (Kamukama, 2025), that spiritual development is a crucial component of holistic development, which is by nature in every human being but needs to be stimulated or triggered in order to be fully developed. In addition, King (2013) states that nurturing the spiritual development of children when they are young is so significant. This was supported by other literature, and the study agreed with them because every human being has a spirit, which also needs attention. (Okholm, 2024) characterize spiritual development as how an individual finds meaning in life. Similarly, (Zimmerman, 2023) expands on the concept of "connotation making" by stating that human's "meaning making" is "formed by one's life mingled with communal, cultural, monetary, and severally sacred lifetime involvements." Despite the importance of spiritual development, there is a paucity of research on the aspects or characteristics to look out for in ensuring spiritual development among children. These are to be explained below:

According to Adesola (2020), connection with GOD is known as a committed interaction with a deity. In other words, this can mean "reaching from inside oneself to the one that is transcendent." A study of spiritual development that was carried out among the Jews showed that the respondents emphasized having a strong connection between a human being and the deity who is the transcendent. Moreover, it was discovered by Watson (2000), that this involves a consciousness and acknowledging that there is more and someone greater and bigger as they are looking at everything in the creation and being of a person. The researcher found this to be true because observing everything like the sun, moon, stars, mountains, rain, rivers, trees, plants among others obviously shows that there is a Big transcendent who is Great and awesome. However, relationships with the

transcendent are not restricted to the faith because “at its global, spiritual development transcends orthodoxy and can open doors for genuine dialogue between individuals with different backgrounds.” In contrast, according to Adesola (2020), some humans do not only seek for the deity but also the deeper connection to become one with Him so that they can operate in the supernatural realm. The researcher believes that the children need to know the transcendent and be transformed to become like Him. The researcher wonders if children are given opportunities to know the transcendent.

According to Kamukama (2025), children also need chances and opportunities to explore GOD so as to discover and know Him because it is very significant for their spiritual growth. Similarly, the researcher agrees with Long because children truly need to know the transcendent one who made them, and more so on a deeper level through intimacy, worship, reverence for Him, praise, thanksgiving, and total surrender. Moreover, children too can experience and grow to understand the things that pertain to the Infinite as long as they are guided and spiritually nurtured by, firstly, their parents, caregivers, and the children’s ministry. In contrast, many people have found children to be too young to teach them the things of the deity, while there are others who have actually taken advantage and taught them things pertaining to spiritual development. As a result, it is possible that children who have a connection with the Infinite will long for Him, seek Him, talk to Him, talk about Him, love Him, and also share everything with Him. Despite the above information, there could be a possibility that most children in the children’s ministries do not have a connection with the transcendent.

Knowing oneself is always significant to everyone, and that is why identity is commonly discussed to this day. This involves a knowing of what one's frame is (inside to outside), and their reason for existence makes up a sense of self. Children usually ask questions like, "Who am I?" and "Why am I here?" These questions are very important, and they need answers to help the children know themselves. Correspondingly, this is important because if they get to know who they are, they will also understand their identity (Muguluma, 2020). In addition, how one defines themselves will also have a long-lasting influence on them because it will build confidence in a child, develop a sense of self-worth and a good body image, and boost resilience among the children. But the question is, who defines us, and how do we get our identity? The answer is through our spiritual connection with the transcendent, He gets to reveal to us who we are in Him. On the other hand, many people, including children, are suffering from identity crises, and that is why there are cases of transgenderism and homosexuality in the world. Putting it all together, people just do not know who they are. Children need to understand and embrace who they are and also know that they are more than what they see in the body. Nevertheless, De Souza (2016) suggests that positive experiences of connectedness with the self will positively influence a child's life. However, are children's ministries building a strong sense of self among the children?

This is another aspect of being connected to people or with others, as most scholars have stated. This aspect is linked with having a sense of being attached and being part of a community. Based on the findings of Adesola (2020), this goes over and above bonds of affection to where an individual gets their own place or position in the society. Generally speaking, this will involve a person getting to understand others and the part they are to play in impacting their society. In child development,

we refer to this as social development, where children get to learn how to live, relate, interact, share, and contribute in the lives of others. However, the child's environment (parents, caregivers, friends, schools, children's ministry, etc.) contributes greatly to how a child develops socially. This is because some children grow up in very hostile homes, and that is all they will learn unless otherwise. A warm, loving family, school, neighborhood, children's ministry, and peers will highly kindly connect with people. Obviously, this has a link with spiritual development because through one's connection with the Transcendent, they will receive insight on how to live and connect with others. This will influence their relationships, and they will get to give to the people around them from what they have on the inside of them. In addition, this also brings in issues of how to relate well with others, bringing in areas of morals and conduct. According to Eade (2016), morals involve knowing what is noble and upright for oneself and the people around. Furthermore, referring to the view of (Zimmerman, 2023), who contributed greatly to research on the spiritual development of children, they stated that children can only relate with people based on their spiritual cup, hence building their place in the community. Conversely, there are many cases of juvenile delinquencies in the society today, even some from children's ministries. Where could the problem be?!

As explained by Mayer (2004), the aspect of connection with the environment that is recognized to be a component of being spiritual is one's ability to be conscious and responsive and appreciate the beauty of the creation in the environment everywhere. Scholars note and emphasize that being spiritual links human beings to appreciate wildlife and creation (Bone, 2008). Scientific research done by Schein (2013) on people's thoughts on the youngsters concerning their spiritual growth discovered that "constantly linked youngsters' involvements with landscape by way

of containing sacred instants.” According to the findings of this study, being linked to the environment can help youngsters develop their spiritual development. The researcher recognized that the connection to the environments builds awe, wonder, and imagination of who the transcendent is and His marvelous works. The researcher marvels at the sounds that some trees produce when wind blows on them, the sweet smell from certain flowers that is distinct, and how beautifully some things look. In other words, it deepens the children’s spiritual development as they stare at the great things that the transcendent has created, which in turn moves the children to love, appreciate, preserve, and take good care of the environment. This is so because it stimulates in them a sense of compassion and tenderness towards plants, trees, animals, flowers, crops, mountains, hills, water bodies, etc., and their inhabitants. But is this aspect considered in spiritual development?!

As we discussed in the above literature, children are believed to be spiritual beings by nature. And so, we see that children have an innate curiosity, and this is evidently true because of the many questions they always ask, showing how curious they are about certain things like why they exist and why things are the way they are. Awe, curiosity and joy are aspects of spiritual development because there is a way children’s ability to imagine and be creative is strengthened as these children grow in their knowledge of the transcendent. Additionally, (Kamukama, 2025) found that children are “imaginative, creative, expressive, and analytical,” which makes up their spiritual development. Furthermore, he mentioned that “stillness, sense, enquiring, kinesthetic alertness, concentrating, reflection, and use of one’s mind” are activities that enabled children to show their spirituality. This suggests that awe, curiosity, and joy are means that youngsters feel as well as show their spiritual development, as explained by (Kamukama, 2025). The more the children relate with

the transcendent, the more they will increase in their curiosity to know Him more, and the more they will be fulfilled in life to have exceeding joy and also to search or seek. This is perhaps achieved when we give children opportunities to meditate, have quiet time with the transcendent, and ask them questions to get them to be imaginative and explore more, among others. However, is this happening in the children's ministries today?

This has also been found to be one of the aspects of a child being spiritual. One's spiritual development must influence how they behave, carry themselves, and what they believe to be true (Eaude, 2024). So, what do children believe to be true to them, how do they showcase their lives, how do they treat other people, and what are their principles or standards? To be a person of character means to have a certain set of guiding principles or standards, and this should be in line with obedience and following the transcendent. Children ought to exhibit a transformation in their character, values, and mindset shift as also cited from the Bible in Galatians 5:21-23. Spiritual development is mostly renewal and transformation of the mindset and character development. This means that without them, no one can claim to be spiritually grown. There has to be change from the inside to the outside. There is a saying that people normally use to defend themselves for character flaws, and that "the transcendent looks at the heart." Obviously true; however, change starts from the inside all the way to the outside in how we dress, walk, eat, live, treat people around us, and do everything. Our character is like a fruit that people get to see and taste almost every day of their lives. According to Watson (2000), a child needs to learn how to put into practice what they say they believe and their principles, and this is showcased in how they act. Your actions and deeds show who you are, what you believe, and where your heart is. This study therefore sought to find out whether

children's ministries understand these aspects and if their children are exhibiting them.

The researcher foresaw that the children who are not involved in these practices might be creative and have a sense of wonder and morality; however, spiritual development is not just these. These other aspects must be influenced firstly by having a relationship with the transcendent. The other aspects of spiritual development flow from having a connection with the transcendent.

2.4 Benefits of developing spiritual development in young children

According to the article by Petra Institute, spiritual development equips children for life: "Compared to children who are not raised with a strong and blossoming belief system or faith, those who are optimistic, joyful, adaptable, thriving, and more resilient or better equipped to overcome challenges and uncertainties. According to psychologist Lisa Miller, teenagers, in particular benefit much from spiritual development since they are less prone to abuse alcohol and drugs, participate in unsafe sex, or suffer from stress. And yet when nurtured holistically, they would be shielded from such.

Spiritual development helps to maintain healthy self-esteem. According to Adesola (2020), people who are matured spiritually recognize that everything has a holy value. This understanding contributes to a sense of self and other importance. This comprises a positive self-image, thoughtfulness, compassion, and empathy for others, as well as a fundamental concern for the well-being of family and community. The consequences of these beliefs for the individual, family, and society cannot be overstated.

Developing respect for authority. According to Adesola (2020), this is the ability to recognize that it is important to honor and respect people in all categories despite the different statuses. When children are nurtured spiritually, they also learn to submit to one another since submission is very key in spiritual growth. Honor and respect are essential in helping children to grow up when they not only respect others but also themselves, hence living in harmony with one another. This will eventually reduce cases of riots in Uganda and other crimes.

Furthermore, spiritual development also contributes to the well-being of the youngsters (Zalika, 2024). This is because it encourages love for one another, being kind, being gracious, empathy, forgiveness, tolerance, humility, servanthood, patience, goodness, and gentleness, among many others. Such a way of living equips children for their early years but also for the future years as adults (Dowling, 2010). Similarly, this also enables the children who treat others with love and respect to live sensibly and later become sensible people who influence others and impact their societies positively.

In addition, spiritual development also builds resilience to overcome obstacles in life. On the contrary, children too face obstacles which bring pain and hurting just like adults. Children face issues like trauma, death of loved ones, child abuse, bullying at school, abandonment, neglect, failure in academics, and rejection, among many others. Due to spiritual development, children will gain muscle and strength to overcome obstacles that might come their way through prayer and reading the word of the transcendent. Relying or consistent dependence on the transcendent will provide children supernatural strength, an unexplainable peace, a joy unspeakable, wisdom, hope, comfort, help, and support during the hard times

they might face (Amongin, 2024). This will eventually reduce issues of suicide, mental breakdown, and depression among children and adults.

People, even youngsters, intermingle in a harmonic "sharing-caring" manner as a result of communal interactions in the form of social well-being (Amongin, 2024). This form of communal connectivity, according to Lunn (2015), is essential to children's spiritual growth and ought to be evident in every interaction. Many scholars have emphasized the need to teach children when they are still young on how to build healthy lasting connections, stressing and teaching them to learn to trust, be attentive, have compassion, and have dignity for self and others (Okholm, 2024). Social connections build social capital, which is essential in the lives of children and also as adults, resulting in beneficial interactions, which are not limited to the caregiver-child relationship alone but also extend to parents and the larger community. Social connections give children a sense of belonging and security and build self-esteem, and these connections are built in spiritual growth because of the fellowships and gatherings with other children.

Zimmerman (2023), asserts that children require a strong basis or beginning. She emphasized that all things that children learn when they are still young stick, and they will remember them. The study attests to this because the songs, the scriptures, and the things that were always emphasized to me in my childhood, the researcher still remembers them. According to Pearce (2016), children's ministries can instill these fundamental principles when children are young, and those things they will not forget. Spiritual development gives children a solid beginning or ground on which they will build their lives.

Additionally, Pearce (2016) states that youngsters are the “present day” people. Though most people refer to children as the future of humanity, they are people now who need to be trained to know their purpose and also impact the society around them. Children can also bring change or transformation even when they are still young. Spiritual development gives children that kind of capacity to also make a change where they are now in schools, families, and communities.

Turning to Lateju (2012) in *Children’s Ministry and Nation Building*, in his research study in Ogbomoso, we learn that youngsters are the upcoming leaders. This study noticed that children can benefit themselves, their loved ones, and the community as a whole when they are adequately equipped for the future. He says there is no doubt that the future of a nation is contingent on their young ones, and the future starts as today’s adults begin to train, nurture, and prepare children for tomorrow. This shows the importance of nurturing children in order for them to contribute positively to their community.

Based on findings of a researcher (Mubiru, 2024), he recommended that there should be specialized training for children’s ministers. There should be programs for children’s workers; workshops, refreshers, and seminars should be organized and carried out regularly to help those interested in ministering to children.

2.5 Obstacles faced by children's ministries

Many ministries that have children's ministries are also going through different challenges. Some of the challenges are financial, others are relational, and others have to do with children and the skills of the volunteers. These are explained as follows:

Henney (2022) said that Sunday school programs have limited financial resources. She said that many children's ministries are struggling financially and are looking to spend less on Sunday school curriculums, structures, materials, and supplies. In agreement, this is very true because this study observed that most children's ministries in Mbale may not have budgets for children's ministry, which makes them not plan for the activities for the children. Lack of enough funds can also hinder the ministers from using appropriate materials to engage children in all the senses, like paintings or visual aids.

According to Hudson (2021), there is a lack of volunteers/human resources. This is due to the fact that willing workers are particularly significant to children's ministries, so significant that they would not exist without them (Kamukama, 2025). He said that the challenge is how they recruit the volunteers, how they equip them, and how they retain them. (Kamukama, 2025), also noticed that most children's ministries do not have a means of motivating their Sunday school teachers, and they just accept anyone with passion but no training. In the end, these teachers end up doing their best to teach children. Similarly, Debbie Kolacki also said that many Sunday schools struggle to get enough teachers and other helpers. She emphasizes that teaching is a ministry and a calling. A study done in West Ankole Diocese in Uganda stated that often we belittle it and tell people that "anyone can do it" or that "it doesn't require much time." This is wrong (Kamukama, 2025). She could not think of any ministry in the children's ministry that is more important than teaching our children and youth.

Absenteeism of children. Hudson (2021) also asserts that there are less frequent attendance patterns in the children's ministry. He said that families are attending

children's ministry less frequently, which makes many children absent. However, "faithful attendance" can be the whole month; it then shifts to a few days. The cause of this usually comes from many things, like shifting from one location to another and the unavailability of caregivers to take children to children's ministry, among other reasons. The study realized that when children are absent, they miss out on a lot, which they may not repeat for them.

Hudson (2021) also asserts that regarding the curriculum, there is a loss of actuality because of the modernist movement that has caused many people to believe that "there is no absolute truth." And now they claim that personal tastes determine what is true. As it is said, "What is right for you is right for you, and what is right for me is right for me." But the truth should be taught as it is in the Bible, and that is why curricula should be based on the holy word of the transcendent. Though most Ugandan children's ministries do not have a curriculum but just teach whatever they see fit, and even the children's ministry leaders do not know what is being taught in Sunday school (Kamukama, 2025).

Furthermore, Lawless (2021), said that not equipping parents on the spiritual nurturing and disciplining their children is a growing issue in the children's ministry. Most times, we think that parents are mature enough and knowledgeable, and yet it is the opposite because most parents have not been equipped and have less knowledge on how to help their children to grow spiritually. The researcher agreed with Lawless because most children's ministries do not even have discipleship classes for the adults as well, which shows itself in the failure of these parents to disciple their children. But the children's ministry should also have discipleship groups for children who receive Jesus Christ to grow.

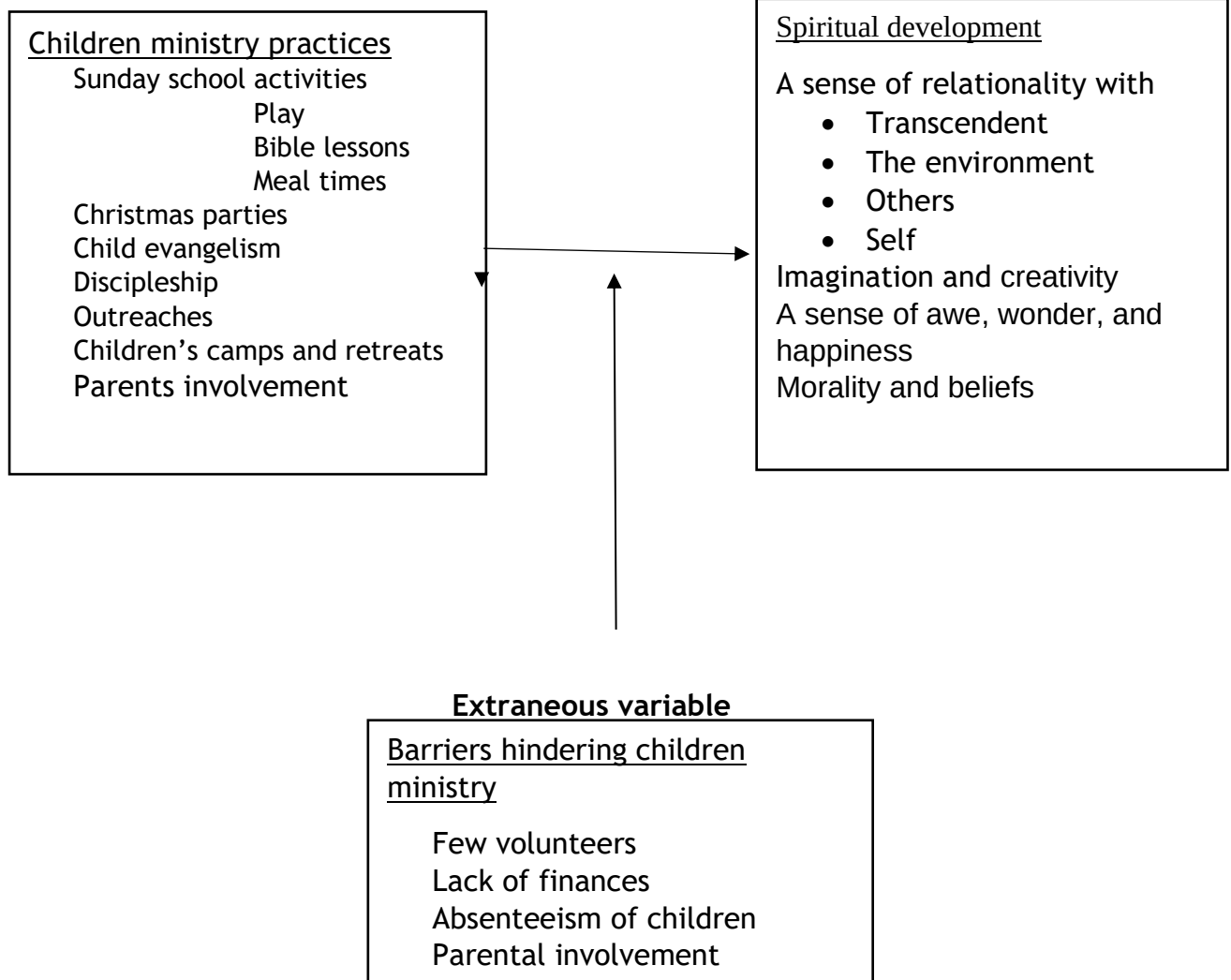
According to Chuck (2021), the children's ministry leaders are leaving children's ministry to the volunteers since they do not have a hands-on role regarding children. This obviously indicates a gap, which is also affecting the children's ministries, and so children's ministry leaders need to take on this key responsibility as active members. They will be losing out on a fantastic chance to connect with the children and also impact them. This study agreed with Chuck on this because when the children's ministry leaders are not involved, the volunteers feel so alone, and they can never appreciate the relevance of the ministries. The researcher believes it is important for the children's ministry leaders to be known by the children in Sunday school.

2.6 Conceptual framework

This framework shows how the children's ministry practices impact the development of the children, and the intervening variable shows the strategies to improve ministry to children.

Independent variable

Dependent variable



In this study, children's ministry practices serve as the independent variable, as they represent the various programs, activities, and teaching methods implemented by children's ministries to nurture the spiritual growth of children. These practices include Sunday school activities, which have play, Bible lessons, and meal times; Christmas parties; child evangelism; discipleship; outreaches; and children's camps and retreats. The central concern of the study is to investigate the influence of the children's ministry practices on the dependent variable, which is children's spiritual development. This encompasses the spiritual development aspects such as a sense of relationality with the transcendent, the environment, others, and self;

imagination and creativity; a sense of happiness, wonder, and awe; and morality and beliefs. However, the relationship between children's ministry practices and children's spiritual development does not exist in isolation. There are several extraneous variables that may affect the outcome. Key among these is parental involvement, as parents play a significant role in reinforcing or neglecting the spiritual lessons imparted at children's ministry. Others are few volunteers, lack of finances, and absenteeism of children. Therefore, it is important to identify, control, or account for these extraneous variables, as their presence could either amplify or diminish the other variables.

Theoretical Framework

The ecological systems theory of Urie Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory (micro, meso, exo, and macrosystems) explained how a child's development is influenced by multiple systems. This relates to this study in the way that children's ministries exist within the microsystem and are directly involved in shaping spiritual values and experiences. Moreover, according to Odesola (2021), the interaction between children's ministries, family, and community (mesosystem) can amplify or hinder the impact of spiritual teaching. This theory supports the idea that a child's spiritual development is not isolated but deeply influenced by structured ministry practices. Piaget was one of the theorists who was so intrigued by the cognitive development of children that he studied his own children. Piaget believed that the communal or surrounding contexts contribute greatly to the youngster's education (Woolfolk, 2011). This study agreed with him because according to the indicators of

spiritual development, that is, wonder, awe, and creativity, practices are needed where children are actively involved.

Children's ministry is defined as welcoming children, loving them, and developing them into persons who attend to others in the way of Christ.

In this paper, "spiritual development" refers to a youngster's progress to a conscious relationship with GOD through His Spirit, leading to sound morals and ethical and value-based lifestyles.

In this study, spiritual development refers to the process through which children grow in their understanding of themselves, their relationship with God, other people, and the world around them, resulting in the formation of values, beliefs, purpose, character, and spiritual awareness. The concept was viewed as a multidimensional construct encompassing both personal and relational aspects of children's spiritual growth.

Each and all that people undertake to nourish youngsters as they travel spiritually is considered children's ministry.

A child is referred to as an individual under eighteen years, as stipulated in Article 1. However, this study focused on the age group of children attending Sunday school. These are youngsters aged 6- 12 years, and beyond this age, they join the youth.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

The chapter describes the research design, area of study, population and sampling techniques, variables and indicators, the procedure of data collection, data collection instruments, quality and error control, strategies for data processing, methods of analysis, ethical considerations, anticipated methodological constraints, and a work plan.

3.1 Research design

The study employed the mixed approach, which interweaves both quantitative and qualitative data so that research questions were implicitly elucidated. According to Maxwell (2016), the approach used offered a reasonable analysis level, a scientific adaptability, and a thorough comprehension of the current study. Furthermore, both methods enabled the researcher to respond to study queries with adequate depth and extensiveness (Enosh, Tzafrir, & Stolovy, 2014).

The study under investigation used the cross-sectional research design in assessing the influence of the practices on the spiritual development for children 6-12 years old: a case of children's ministries in Mbale. "The cross-sectional study is a type of study design in which one collects data from many different people at a single point in time" (Thomas 2020), and additionally, it supports using a mixed approach. The researcher chose this design because the study collected data from different children's ministries in the same period in time. (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018).

3.2 Area of study

Mbale District, in southeastern Uganda, is surrounded by other districts like Manafwa, Sironko, Tororo, Butaleja, Budaka, and Kumi District. The place covers 2,468 square kilometers (UN HABITAT, 2024). It is commonly known to have a nearby mountain called “Wanale” and also known to be close to the famous Mount Elgon, and it is a place also famously known for growing coffee and for “malewa,” a traditional sauce that is found in their mountainous places. (UN HABITAT, 2024) Their main economic activity is agriculture, which contributes greatly to the economy of Uganda. The researcher involved only four children’s ministries: Deliverance Children’s Ministry Mbale, Elgon Seventh-day Adventist, Living Word of Faith, and St. Andrew’s Cathedral Mbale Diocese. This study involved these four children’s ministries because they have existed for more than 30 years, have existing children’s ministries, and have nurtured many children through the years (Maisha Children’s Ministry).

3.3. Population and sampling techniques

According to Leedy (2025), a study population refers to a collection of individuals who are comparable and who are the subject of the study in a specific study (Leedy, 2025). The population of this study consisted of children’s ministries, where the members involved were, children’s ministry leaders, Sunday school teachers, and parents.

This study used the simple random sampling technique, where each individual of the population has an equal and impartial chance, or probability, of being selected to minimize sampling bias. The population of the study was 66 people and the researcher randomly selected 57 respondents. The researcher also chose

respondents regardless of their educational levels and socioeconomic status; however, they need to have ample knowledge of the subject of my research. However, an efficient and comprehensive literature review has been conducted to minimize selection bias.

In the inclusion criteria, the population of this study consisted of children's ministries, where members involved were children's ministers, parents and children's ministry leaders, and Sunday school teachers who have served for at least two years or more and are actively participating, where the age of children is 6-12 years.

The exclusion criteria in this study were that children above the age of 12 and below 6 years of age, as well as non-participants in the children's ministries, plus those that have not consented.

3.3.1 Sample size

The researcher used Yamane's formula, which is commonly used in social sciences in field research settings for calculating sample sizes when the total population is known, but detailed sampling frames are unavailable (Asiamah, Mensah, & Oteng, 2017). In this study, the total population consisted of 66 individuals engaged in children's ministries across the selected ministries. Reliable estimates were obtained through key informants such as leaders, ministers, and teachers. Etikan and Bela (2017) observed that many social science and field researchers could use the formula, and so they supported using Yamane's formula because it is both scientifically defensible and ethically reliable.

Yamane's formula where:

n = sample size

N = total population

e is the margin of error, $5\% = 0.05$, for a confidence level of 95%

$$\begin{aligned} & \frac{N}{1 + N(e^2)} \\ & \frac{66}{1 + 66(0.0025)} \\ & \frac{66}{1.165} \\ & = 56.65 \\ & = 57 \end{aligned}$$

According to Mugenda and Mugenda (2019), having a total population of sample size above 30 people is enough.

The study also cross-checked to confirm the sample size by using Cochran's formula as a supporting method alongside Yamane's formula because the sampling frame was absent, and where the sampling frames are not present, appropriate population assumptions and standard statistical figures can guide the sample size estimates (Cochran, 1977). Faber & Fonseca (2014) stated that a sample that is greater than thirty is not small; therefore, the study did not do the finite population correction. This ensured that the calculated sample is both statistically valid and contextually efficient (Singh & Masuku, 2014), as seen in the calculation below;

e is the margin of error, $5\% = 0.05$

Z is the confidence level of 95% = 1.96.

p = the estimated proportion = 0.039

$q = 1 - p = 1 - 0.039 = 0.961$

$$\begin{aligned}
& \frac{Z^2 \cdot p \cdot q}{e^2} \\
& \frac{(1.96)^2 \cdot 0.039 \cdot 0.961}{(0.05)^2} \\
& \frac{3.8416 \cdot 0.037479}{0.0025} \\
& \frac{0.14391}{0.0025} \\
& =57.6
\end{aligned}$$

Therefore, the Yamane sample size after cross-checking with the Cochran's formula still falls close to the Cochran's formula; therefore, the final sample size was 57 respondents.

3.4. Variables and indicators

The study examined the influence of the children's ministry practices on the spiritual development of children aged 6-12 years, a case of children's ministries in Mbale city. Therefore, the dependent variable of this study is spiritual development, and the first indicator was, according to Hay and Nye (2006), a sense of relationality with the transcendent, with the environment, with others, and with self; creativity and imagination; a sense of wonder, awe, and happiness; and morality and beliefs (Odesola, 2021). The independent variable is the children's ministry practices, and the indicators include Sunday school activities, which include play, Bible lessons, and meal times; Christmas parties; child evangelism; discipleship; outreach; and children's camps and retreats (King, 2015; Colliver and Fleer, 2016).

Measurement of the dependent variables. Spiritual development cannot be measured quantitatively but only qualitatively by observation of the transformation among the children in the aspects mentioned above (Odesola, 2021).

The primary outcomes of this study are increased knowledge and awareness of the spiritual development of children, improvement in the children's ministry practices,

awareness of characteristics or areas of spiritual development of children, and children's ministry leaders fully supporting children's ministries (De Souza, 2016).

The secondary outcomes of this might be children's ministry leaders, elders, and parents' involvement in children's ministry practices and planning for the children's ministries in children's (King, 2015).

3.5. Procedure for data collection

The procedure started with acquiring a letter from the university allowing me to collect data from the respondents from children's ministries selected in Mbale. This was followed by photocopying the letter, which was presented to the lead children's ministry leaders in the different children's ministries selected to seek permission to present me to the children's ministry to meet the Sunday school teachers, parents, children's ministry leaders. The researcher also asked the respondents to fill the consent forms and sign them individually.

3.6. Data collection instruments and equipment

The study used interview guides and questionnaires. The researcher used these collection tools to complement each other for the reliability of the information gathered. Questionnaires were given to parents, and Sunday school teachers. Interview guides were administered to the children's ministry leaders, as well as recipients who did not have sufficient time to fill out the questionnaires.

For purposes of guiding this study, the designed questionnaires were consistent with the data sought, largely engaging open-ended questions with a few close-ended questions for easy analysis of data. Interview guides were prearranged similar to the questionnaires for consistency of the information to be collected.

Before the distribution of the data collection tools, the researcher inquired from the respondents regarding their most convenient time and way of delivery and receipt of questionnaires. This is because some might prefer hard copies and others soft copies due to technology issues.

How interviews were conducted. These were mainly with senior children's ministry leaders and children's ministry leaders. The interviews were conducted face-to-face depending on the availability of the respondents. The researcher included open-ended interview questions to enable the respondents to freely express their thoughts in detail. To ensure accuracy, the interviews were voice obtained and transcribed, and their responses were categorized into themes based on the study objectives. And so, the thematic analysis was used to identify recurring patterns, aligning responses with literature and survey data.

3.7. Quality/Error Control

To ensure the quality and reliability and validity of the data to be collected, the researcher carried out a pretest where questionnaires were given to 10 respondents before being issued to the final respondents. This was to check for reliability. This test was carried out twice to ensure consistency. Feedback obtained from the respondents was used to revise ambiguous items and improve the quality of the instrument before the main data collection exercise.

In ensuring validity, the researcher consulted with two experts in child development who reviewed the data for relevance and alignment with the theoretical framework of Hay and Nye (2006). Furthermore, quantitative data were used to gather numerical insights on children's ministry practices and their perceived effectiveness, whereas qualitative data provided in-depth perspectives from the

respondents, and then a document review of existing literature helped to contextualize findings within previous research. This helped to validate my findings by cross-checking from different methods, as well as reduce bias.

The study used several sources of data, which are the direct recipients, their paternities, their ministry teachers, elders, deacons, lead children's ministry leaders, and the leaders, and the documentation review. The aim of this is to avoid partiality, which arises from solitary information sources, and means to reveal different aspects of the same reality, thereby enhancing the credibility of the findings.

3.8 Strategy for data processing and analysis

After collecting data, the data was systematically organized for accuracy and completeness by comparing and summarizing responses from the informants according to the study objectives. All valid responses were coded numerically and entered into SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) for statistical analysis.

Qualitative data analysis was when data was transcribed, where each transcript was read and reread to ensure transcription accuracy, and then codes and assigned themes were made for each. Through coding, the researcher was able to eliminate errors and manipulate the data into tabular and graphical forms, enabling clear analysis and interpretation of the subsequent chapters. On the other hand, for the quantitative data analysis, descriptive statistics, including mean, standard deviation, frequencies, and percentages, were used to summarize responses.

The regression test analysis was used to assess whether current children's ministry practice (independent variable) significantly influences the different aspects of spiritual development (dependent variables), such as relationality with the

transcendent, sense of creativity, and morality. It was also used to test for significance, to measure the strength and direction of the relationship, to estimate how much of the outcome is explained by the predictor, and to build predictor models.

3.9. Ethical considerations

The researcher got ethical clearance from the research ethics board at Uganda Christian University. The researcher also honored confidentiality to the respondents involved in the study.

Each of the participants consented to engage in the study because each signed a consent form and returned it to the researcher. The consent form included the following: the right to share willingly and the right to pull out so they are not coerced to participate. The reason for the research was made known to the individuals so that they comprehend the study and its possible influence on them. The measures of the study were made clear so that persons can rationally assume what to get ahead as they are involved. Following their agreement, the researcher involved them in the study to collect the data. In information scrutiny and explanation, the concealment of the persons, parts, and occurrences in the venture was preserved.

3.10. Limitations of the study

Limited geographic scope. This study focused only on children's ministries in Mbale, which may limit the generalizability of findings to other regions in Uganda or beyond. This is because different cultural contexts may yield varying results, requiring broader comparative studies.

Short-term assessment of spiritual development. This is because spiritual growth is a long-term process, but this study captured only a snapshot in time, which shows that a longitudinal study would be needed.

Limited representation of children's voices. This study mainly focused on adults and did not fully incorporate children's personal experiences and views on their spiritual growth.

3. 11. Delimitations

The study was delimited to examining the influence of children's ministry practices on the spiritual development of the children aged 6-12 years in selected children's ministries in Mbale city.

The study focused specifically on children's ministry practices as the independent variable and spiritual development aspects as the dependent variable. Other factors that may influence spiritual development such as family, school experiences, peer relationships, socioeconomic status, and cultural influences, were not examined in depth.

Geographically, the study focused on selected children's ministries within Mbale city, and did not include ministries from other districts or regions in Uganda.

3.12. Assumptions

The study assumed that respondents understood the questionnaire items and provided honest and accurate responses regarding children's ministry practices and spiritual development.

Secondly, the study assumed that the selected children's ministries were implementing identifiable ministry practices that could influence children's spiritual development.

Finally, it was assumed that the sample selected was sufficiently representative of the target population to permit meaningful conclusions regarding children's ministry practices and spiritual development within the study area.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS, AND INTERPRETATION

4.0 Introduction

This chapter focuses on presenting, analyzing, and interpreting the information that this study collected from the respondents in the four children's ministries in Mbale City. That is children's ministries in Deliverance Mbale, St. Andrews Cathedral, SDA Mount Elgon Field, and Living Word of Faith. This data looked more at children's ministries in those selected children's ministries, so as to get information on the influence of children's ministry practices on the spiritual development of children aged 6-12 years. The information is presented, analyzed, and interpreted as follows:

4.1 Response rate

According to Bryman (2016), a response rate contributes to the internal and external validity of the research by improving the trustworthiness and repeatability of the data. Research studies that have a high response rate boost the numerical influence of the study, which would help in detecting any effects (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). A response rate also reduces the non-response bias, which could affect the results. In the data collection process, the researcher distributed a total of 52 questionnaires, of which 52 were successfully retrieved. Additionally, eight interview appointments were scheduled with children's ministry leaders, but only four were conducted. In total, the researcher managed to collect data from 56 respondents out of the 57, resulting in a response rate of 98%. According to Kwizera (2018), a response rate exceeding 70% is considered sufficient for reliable data analysis. Consequently, the researcher proceeded with data analysis, as the attained

response rate was within the acceptable range for meaningful interpretation of the study findings.

Table 4.1: Response rate

Category	Target sample size	Response rate	% of response rate
Ministry leaders	6	5	83
Children's ministers	40	40	100
Parents	11	11	100

Source: Primary data

4.2 Demographic characteristics of respondents

According to Babbie (2020), demographic data gives essential variables that influence individual behavior and attitudes in social research. Creswell & Creswell (2018) mentioned that demographic data support contextualizing the results and assessing the respondents of the sample. The study looked at information of the respondents who got involved in this study. It had information for the four children's ministries, but was not characterized separately. So, this study presented the marital status, age, gender, and level of education. The data is presented in tables using percentages and frequencies as follows:

Table 4.2 Characteristics of the socio-demographics of the respondents

Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Male	16	28.6
Female	40	71.4

Total	56	100
Age		
15-20 years	1	1.9
21-25 years	4	7.4
26-30 years	8	14.8
31-35 years	8	14.8
36-40 years	13	24
41-45 years	5	9.3
46-50 years	5	9.3
51-above	10	18.5
	54	100
Education level		
Primary	1	1.9
Secondary	4	7.5
University	38	71.7
Tertiary	10	18.9
	53	100
Marital status		
Single	13	23.2
Married	42	75
Separated/divorced	1	1.8
	56	100
Occupation		
Employed	43	76.8
Self-employed	10	17.9

Not employed	3	5.4
	56	100
Responsibility held at the children's ministry		
Children's ministry leader	11	20.4
Sunday school teacher	20	37
Technical support	4	7.4
Worship leader	5	9.3
Parents	12	22.2
Pastor/children's ministry leader	2	3.7
	54	100
Years of service		
1-5 years	22	42.3
6-10 years	9	17.3
11-15 years	5	9.6
16-20 years	3	5.8
21-25 years	4	7.7
26-30 years	2	3.8
31-35 years	1	1.9
36 and above	5	9.6
	52	100

Source: primary data

The result that is presented in table 4.2 revealed that the mainstream of the respondents was female, with 71%, whereas 29% were male. Evidence held that the

female is more likely than the male to join and get involved in the children's ministry (Pew Research Center, 2016).

Further results presented in Table 4.2 showed that the mainstream of the age group respondents was 24% who were in the age group of 36-40 years; this was followed by 19% who were in the age group of 50 years and above. And these were children's ministry teachers who have served in the ministry since their youth. They were followed by 15% in the age groups of 26-30 years as well as 31-35 years, while the respondents who were 41-45 years and 46-50 years were both represented by 9%. They were followed by 21-25 years with 7% and lastly the age group of 15-20 years with 2%. The dominance of the respondents was within the age group of 36-40 years, who are believed to still have the physical energy, zeal, and sense of purpose, and the fact that the majority are married, they are believed to be in a better position to handle children. Evidence showed that this was so because, according to Barna Group (2019), adults between 25-45 years were mostly engaged in children's ministry.

Also, Table 4.1 showed that the majority of the respondents, with 72%, had attained a university level of education, followed by 19% who had attained a tertiary level, followed by 8% who had attained a secondary school level, and lastly 2% who had a primary education level. Most of the people who responded had completed their higher studies, which means that most of them are literate because children's ministries require children to read and write, and so the teachers must be knowledgeable and know how to plan. This is backed up by evidence from Barna Group (2016) that many of the children's ministry workers have completed

secondary education, and a significant number have a tertiary qualification; however, this is so for semi-urban and urban children's ministries.

In addition, the majority of the respondents were married, according to table 4.2 with 75%, followed by singles with 23% and lastly separated/divorced with 2%. The mainstream respondents were the married people; this means that they believed they had the knowledge and skills of nurturing children since they are also parents. This was also reflected in the study by the Barna Group (2016), who reported that married individuals were likely to volunteer in children's ministry, viewing it as an extension of their responsibilities.

Furthermore, most of the people who responded were working with 77%, while 18% were self-employed and 5% were not employed. This means that the mainstream was employed in different jobs, which also shows that they could bring their different expertise. As evidenced by Barna Group (2016), professionals are more likely to participate in children's ministry.

Additionally, 37% of the people who responded were Sunday school teachers, followed by parents with 22%, followed by children's ministry leaders with 20%, whereas the worship leaders had 9% representation and lastly children's ministry leaders with 4%. The most widely held respondents were Sunday school teachers because they were the main respondents on this Sunday.

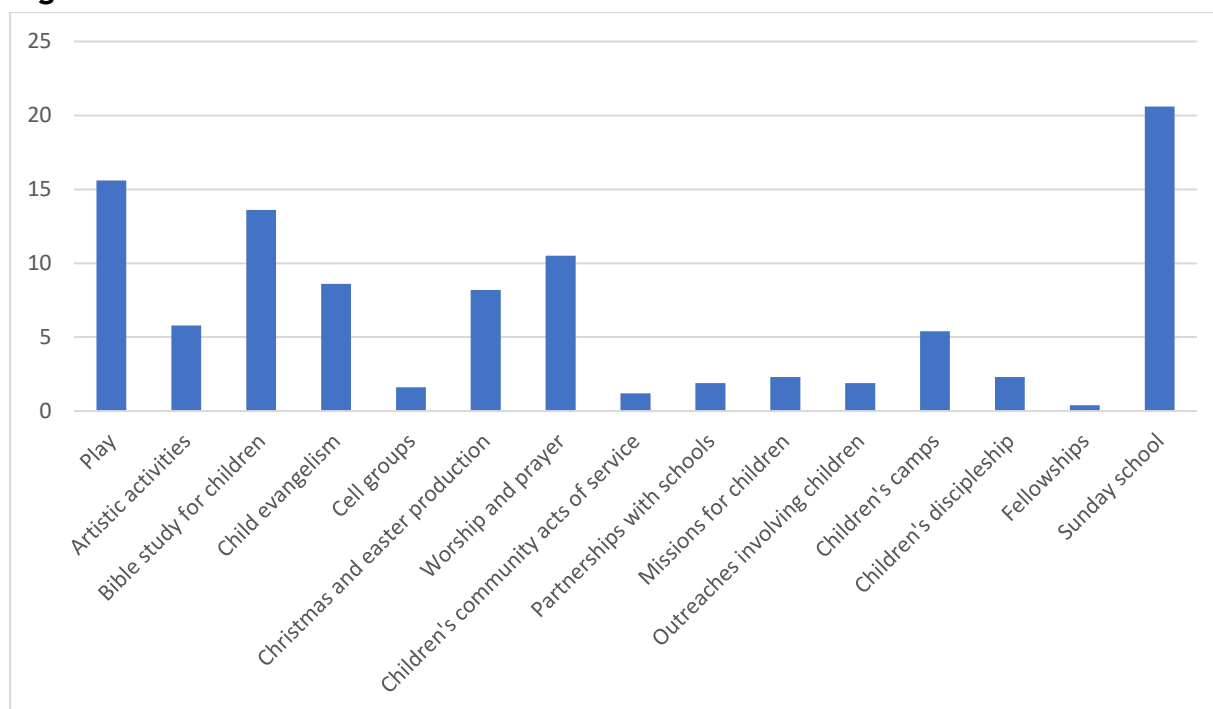
Lastly, the majority of them had served in children's ministry for one to five years, with 42%, followed by 6-10 years with 17%, then by 11-15 years and 36+ years, both with 10%, then 21-25 years with 8%, then 26-30 years, and lastly 31-35 years with 2%. This means the majority, with 42%, have spent a short time in the children's ministry due to transfers from one place to another. This is supported by Dean

(2010), that many children’s ministers leave and are not committed because of burnout, life changes, and unmet expectations.

4.3 Results for objective one: To ascertain the children's ministry practices for children 6-12 years in children’s ministries of Mbale.

The majority of the respondents viewed children’s ministry as Sunday school, and yet it is only one component in it. This implies many of the children’s ministries do not have an established children’s ministry with clear practices for their children. These results suggest that some children’s ministries do not have a thorough or structured and wide-ranging children’s ministry that incorporates a diversity of practices to ensure holistic spiritual development, as shown below:

Figure 4.1 Activities in the children’s ministries of Mbale



Source: primary data

The results presented in pie chart 4.9 revealed that the majority, with 21%, mentioned that Sunday school is their current practice. 16% have play as part of their current practice, then 14% have Bible study for the children, then 11% have worship and prayer, 5% have children's camps, 2% have children's discipleship and missions for children, 2% have partnerships with schools and outreaches involving children, then 1% have children's community acts of service, 2% have cell groups with children, and then lastly 0.4% have fellowships for children. The majority of the respondents viewed children's ministry as Sunday school, and yet it is only one component in it. This implies many of the children's ministries lack an established and clear practices for their children.

“.....they sing songs, memorize scriptures, are given opportunity to preach on the children's Sunday and you see them replaying you.....” (Pastor X)

Table 4.3 Whether the attendance of children is taken

Category	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	20	37.7
No	33	62.3
Total	53	100.0

Source: primary data

The above table 4.4 revealed that 62% of the respondents do not take attendance of the children, whereas 38% said yes to taking the attendance of the children. However, even those who take their attendance agreed that it is not done often. Taking the attendance of the children is an important practice often ignored in the

children’s ministries. They often miss out on tracking children who could be missing out and then taking necessary steps to support them.

Qualitative findings matched the quantitative findings, as the children’s ministers noted that they do not take the attendance of the children consistently. The quotes from the interview are here below:

“...we have a register and we keep adding but we do not do it daily because it would take more time registering and the children do not come at the same time, which makes them lag behind in taking attendance...” (children’s minister)

“...we sometimes write their names, but it is not every Sunday...” (children’s minister)

“...Children keep coming and going; there are so many, even those who are not of our religion that just come to eat food...” (Children’s minister).

Table 4.4 whether senior children’s ministry leaders visit the children’s ministry.

Category	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	16	30.8
No	36	69.2
Total	52	100.0

Source: primary data

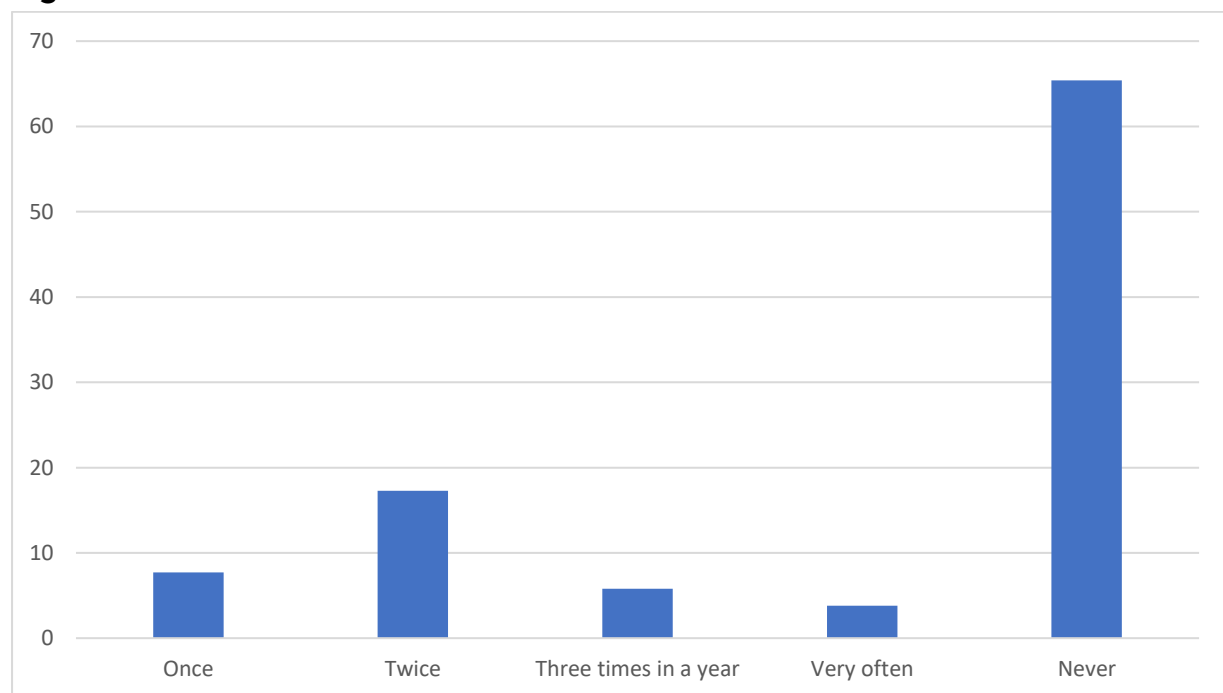
The results in table 4.5 revealed that the majority of the respondents, with 69%, revealed that the children’s ministry is not visited by the senior children’s ministry leaders, and 31% indicated that the senior children’s ministry leaders visited. This implies that there are many senior children’s ministry leaders who literally have

never stepped in the children’s ministry, and it could be that they do not know what happens there, and this implies that there was limited backing from the leaders in the youngsters’ ministry practices.

“...I must confess that I have not gone to the children’s ministry classes but they have teachers that attend to the children...” (Pastor X)

“...Personally, I have not gone to their church in a while but I admit that is important...” (Pastor Z).

Figure 4.2 Number of times the senior leaders visit them.



Source: primary data

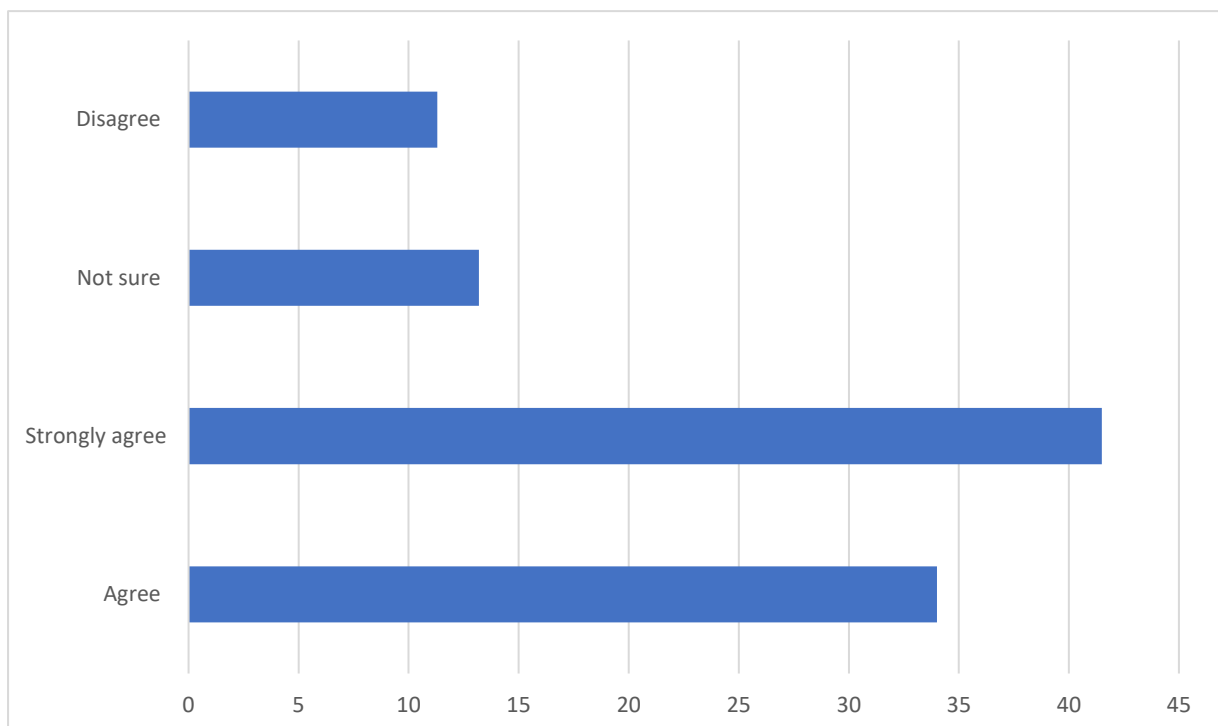
Graph 4.10 revealed that 64%, never see their children’s ministry leaders visit them, whereas 17% indicated that their senior children’s ministry leaders visited twice in a year, 8% indicated that the senior children’s ministry leaders visit the children’s ministry once, 6% indicated that senior children’s ministry leaders visit three times in a year, and lastly 4% said it is often. This implies that the lack of the senior

children's ministry leaders will also influence and have an effect on the children's ministry practices.

4.3.1 Understanding spiritual development

One of the main concepts in this study is understanding spiritual development and also being able to understand the difference between spiritual development and religion. Understanding spiritual development will help us comprehend better spiritual development of children better.

Figure 4.3 Spiritual development involves having an understanding of why one was created.

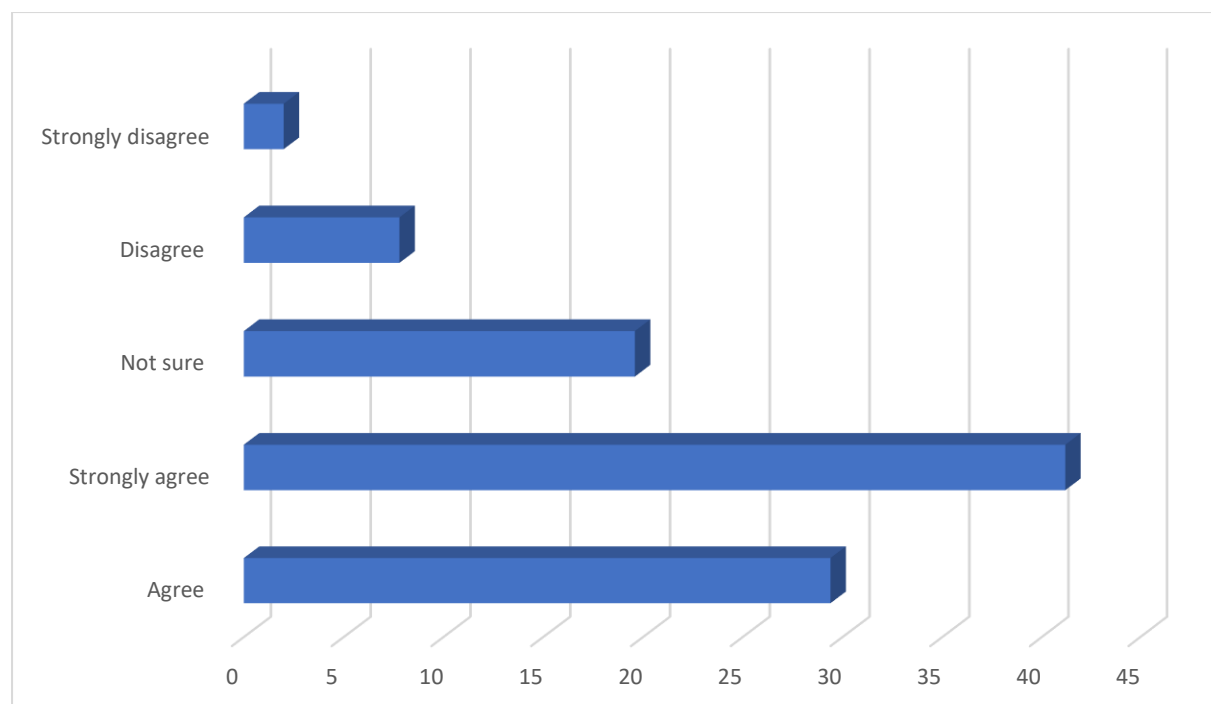


Source: primary data

The results in graph 4.1 revealed that the majority strongly believed that spiritual development involved the understanding of why one was created, with 42%, followed by those who agreed with 34%, then followed by those who were not sure with 13%, and lastly by those who disagreed with 11%. This means that the majority

acknowledge that children's spiritual development should enable them to discover their purpose and so desire to pursue it.

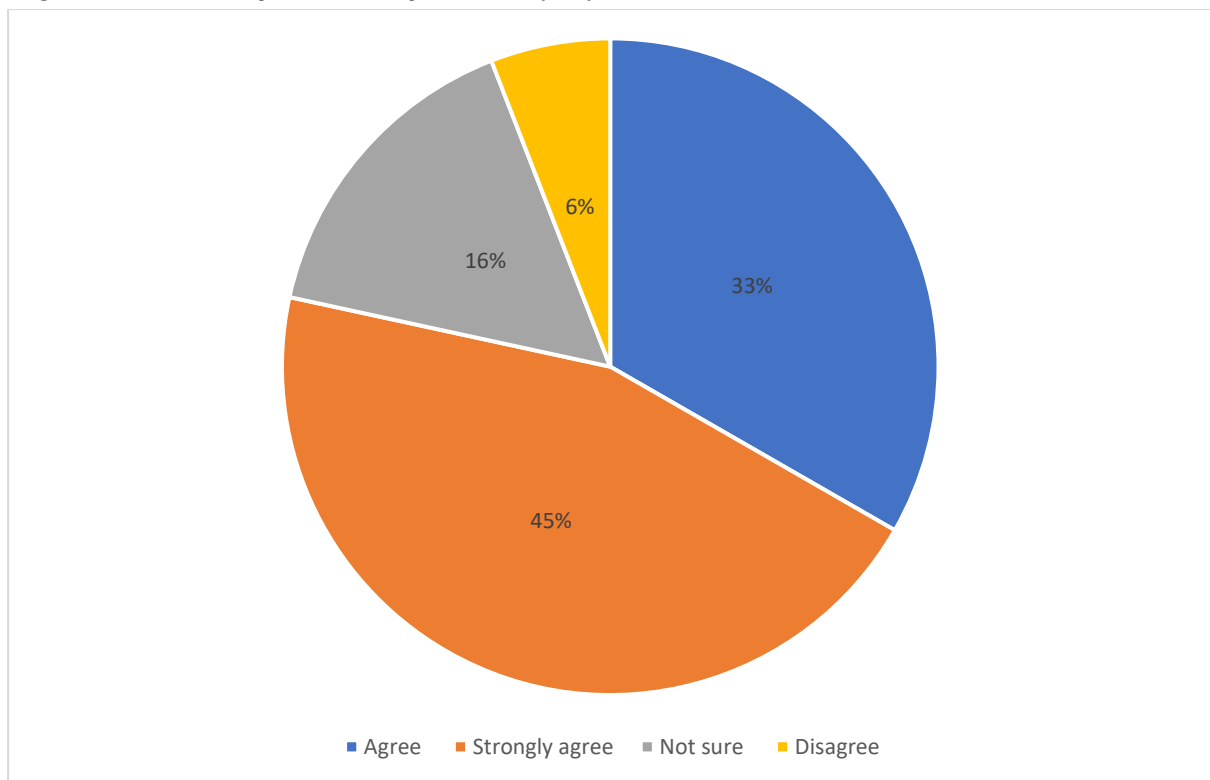
Figure 4.4 Spiritual development involves compassion and concern for people and the environment.



Source: primary data

The results presented in graph 4.2 revealed that 41% strongly agreed that spiritual development involves compassion and concern for the people and the environment, followed by 29% who agreed, then 20% who were not sure, and lastly 8% who disagreed. This also means that the mainstream acknowledged that children's spiritual development involves having compassion for others and their own surroundings, which must be portrayed through their attitudes and actions.

Figure 4.5 Perception on Spirituality By Ministers

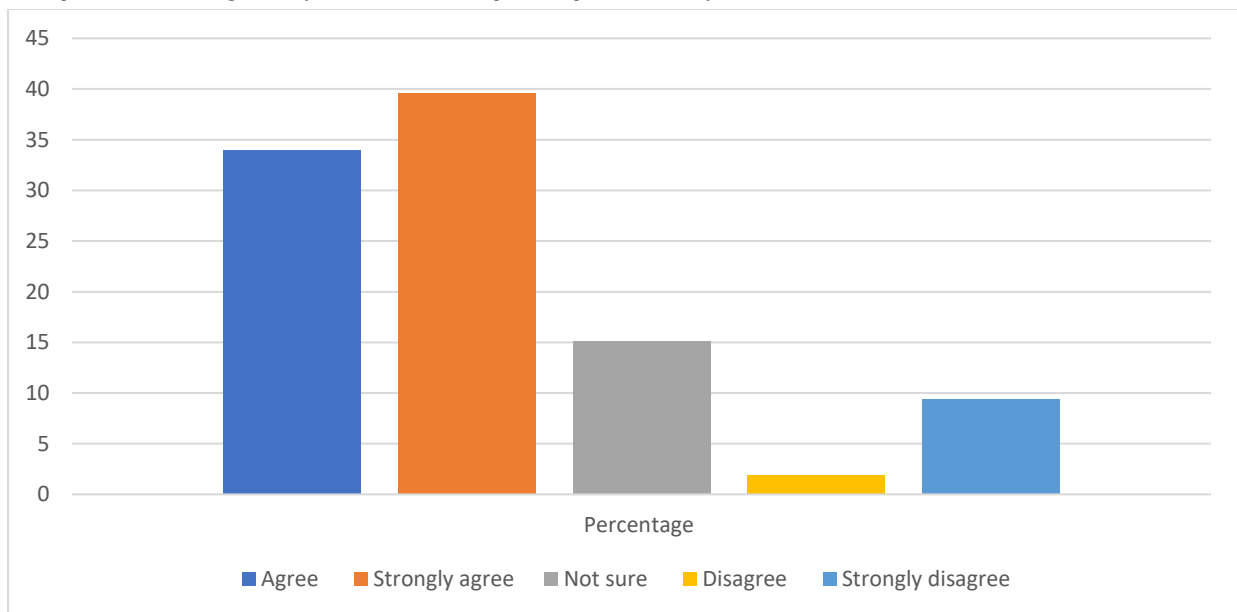


Source: primary data

The results presented in Figure 4.3 revealed that 45% strongly agreed with the religious aspect, people follow doctrines and customs based on a specific religion, followed by 33% who agreed, 16% who were not sure, and 6% who disagreed. This revealed that the biggest number agreed and acknowledged that religious people follow certain doctrines and customs. However, on the hand of spiritual development, they follow the person of the transcendent.

“...religion is influenced by man, and spiritual development is influenced by the transcendent...” (Pastor Y).

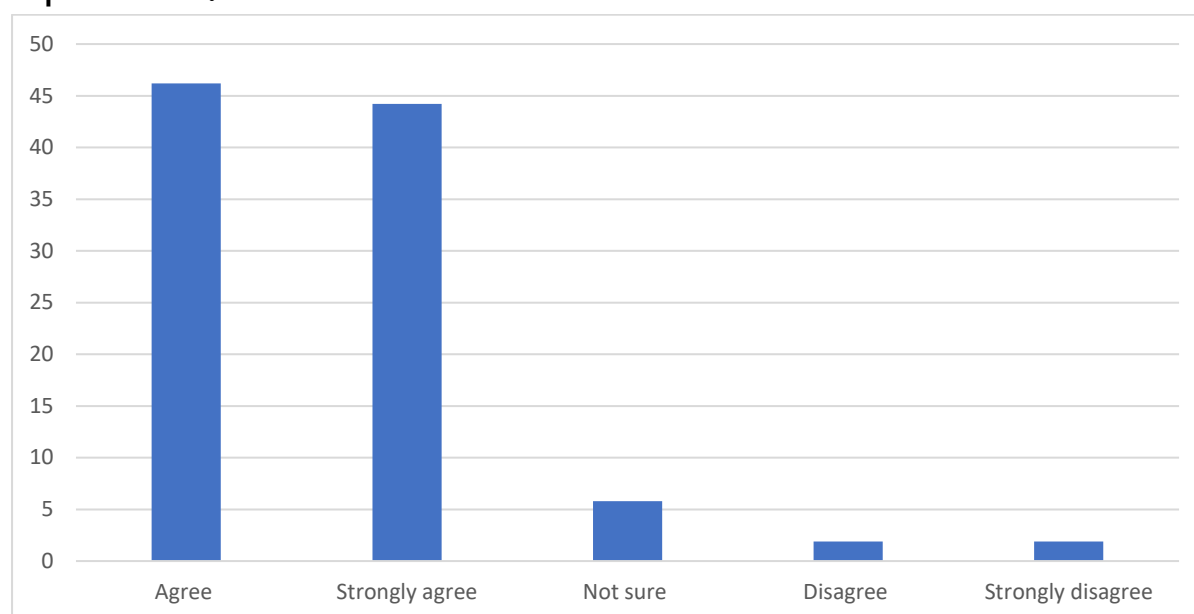
Graph 4.6 Religiosity and worship in spirituality



Source: primary data

The results presented in graph 4.4 revealed that 40% strongly agreed that in religions, they believe in the eternal being, attend a nearby place of worship, and respect and regard metaphors, prayer, ceremonies, and songs; they were followed by 34% who agreed, 15% who were not sure, 2% who disagreed, and 9% who strongly disagreed. This indicated that the majority acknowledged that religious people believe in the transcendent one and pay close attention to certain things in their religions.

Figure 4.7 Spiritual development involves pondering, seeking to know the supreme one.



Source: primary data

The results presented in graph 4.5 revealed that 46% of respondents agreed spiritual development involves pondering and seeking to know the supreme one, followed by 44% who strongly agreed, followed by 6% and then 2% who disagreed, and lastly another 2% who strongly disagreed. This implies that the majority acknowledged that spiritual development includes meditation and seeking after the transcendent for the purpose of knowing HIM.

Table 4.5 whether there is an assessment to examine the spiritual development of children

Category	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	33	63.5
No	11	21.2
Not sure	8	15.4
Total	52	100

Source: primary data

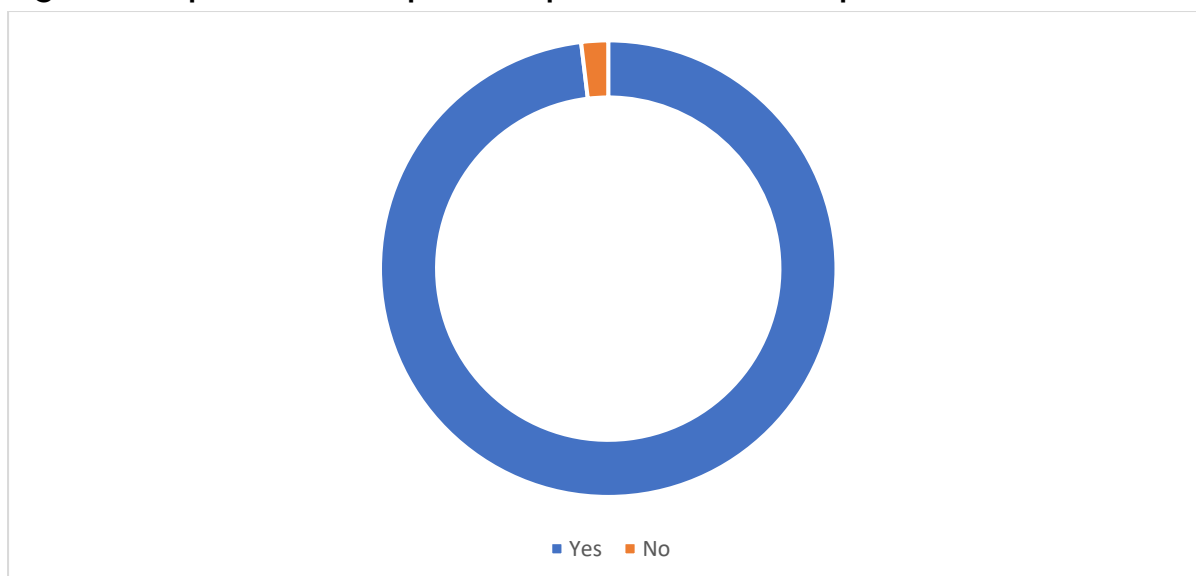
The results in Table 4.3 revealed that 64% approved by saying yes to having an assessment to examine the spiritual development of children in their children's ministries. However, after the interactions with the children's ministry leaders, it was confirmed that those children's ministries had never had an assessment in regard to the spiritual development of the children. Whereas 21% acknowledged that there has not been any assessment of the spiritual development of the children, and 15% were not sure. This shows that there were some who might have said yes because a neighbor said yes.

The evidence from the qualitative findings matches the quantitative findings. The children's ministers stated that they have not found a lot of assessments being done concerning the spiritual development of the children. The extracts from the interviews are as follows:

"...this is even my first time to see someone doing research in this area or even coming to our children's ministry concerning children's ministry..."
(children's minister).

"...there is a document we are currently working on after research that was done in Kenya..." (Pastor Z).

Figure 4.8 Spiritual development is part of child development



Source: primary data

The results in Figure 4.6 revealed that 98% said yes that spiritual development is part of child development, whereas 2% said it is not part of it. This implies that the majority acknowledged that child development is holistic, and so a child is complete when they are also spiritually developed.

Evidence from the qualitative findings works together so well with the quantitative findings. The children's ministers and children's ministry leaders agreed that spiritual development is part of child development, and so the quotes from the interviews are as follows:

"...it contributes to the development of the children, even to the other aspects of child development, to be whole. For anyone to be healthy, they need to be a whole person, so the spiritual part needs to be nurtured to be whole..." (children's minister leader).

“...Man has five aspects, one of which is spiritual, then physical, social, mental, and emotional...So we can separate the spiritual from the other aspects; they are intertwined...” (Pastor X).

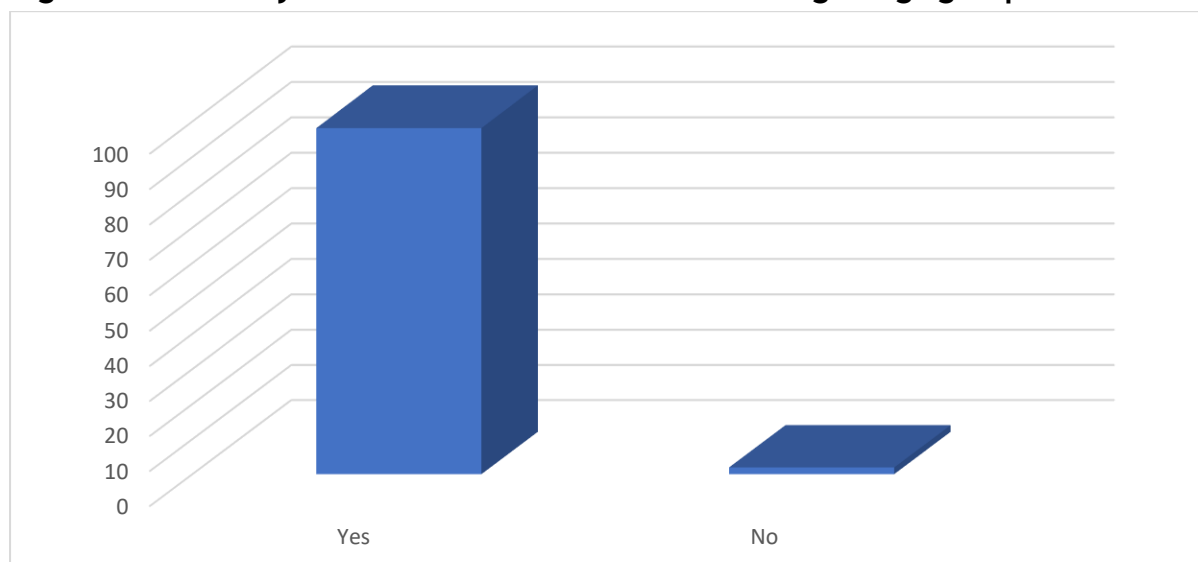
“...Spiritual development is in all the disciplines, and so it is in child development... the transcendent is in mathematics...” (Pastor Y).

“...for one to be whole, the spiritual aspect has to be nurtured...” (Children’s minister).

“...I had not thought about it before, but thinking about it now, the spiritual part is as important as the other part of development...” (Children’s minister).

“...actually, the spiritual aspect directly or indirectly influences the other aspects of development...” (Children’s minister).

Figure 4.9 Ministry to children is distributed according to age groups.



Source: primary data

The results in graph 4.7 revealed that the majority, with 98%, said yes to having a ministry to children according to age groups. However, the majority still mentioned

that this was not always consistent in their children's ministry because of having a few volunteers and absenteeism of the teachers, as well as a lack of infrastructure for the children. And then some have those age groups, but not grouped according to the children's cognitive ability. Only 2% said no to having age groups in the children's ministry.

The qualitative findings matched the quantitative findings because the children's ministers agreed to have ministries for children according to age groups. The interview quotes are illustrated below:

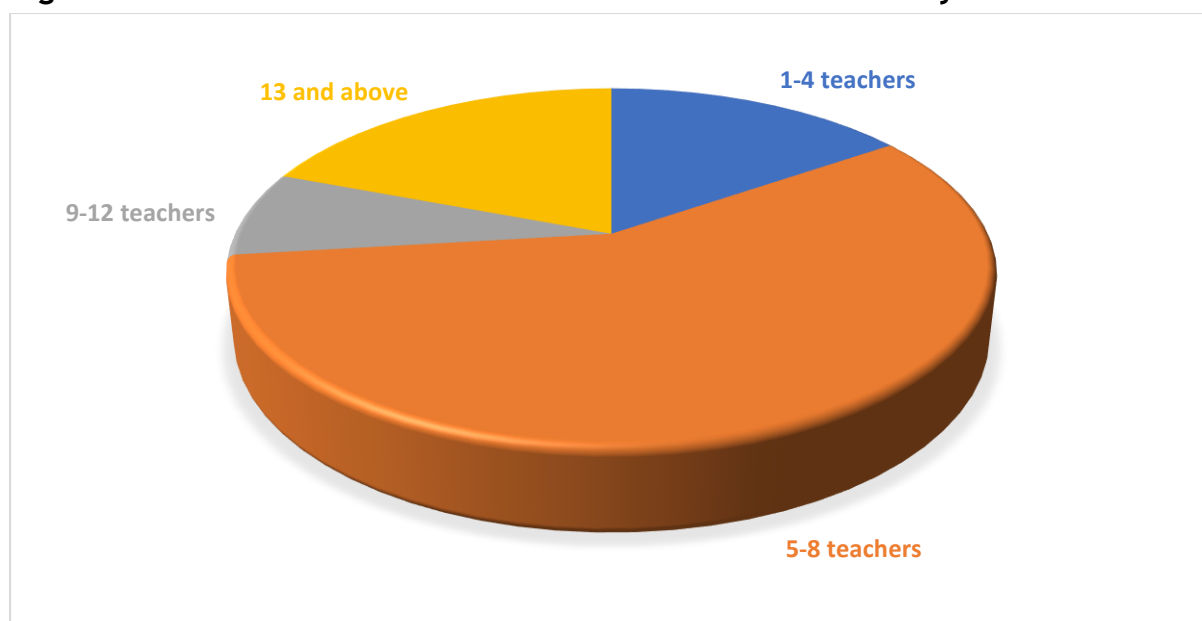
"...we have the specific age groups of 3-5 years, 6-8 years, 9-10 years, and 11-12 years, but at times when we have few teachers, we put them together due to manpower..." (children's ministry leaders).

"...yes, we have groups that are the 2-8 and 9-12 years old..." (children's minister).

"...we have three groups, that is 2-5 years, 6-9 years, 10-13 years..." (children's minister).

"...we minister to children according to primary classes, and then we group them..." (children's minister).

Figure 4.10 Number of teachers involved in children's ministry



Source: primary data

The results presented in Figure 4.8 revealed that the majority, with 58%, have 5-8 teachers in the children's ministry, followed by 19% that have 13 or more teachers, then 15% that have 1-4 teachers, and lastly 8% that have 9-12 teachers. However, those who are the majority, with 57%, also mentioned that most of them are always absent or in the main children's ministry, which still affects the children's ministry. The number of teachers has an impact on the children's ministry practice. Even those with many teachers of 13 and above still mentioned that all of them are fully engaged and active in the ministry, which again affects the children's ministry, and there is no accountability.

One of the respondents who was interviewed mentioned this:

"...the issue of the number of teachers is always up and down because ministers keep leaving the children's ministry because of marriage, going to university, changing jobs, and shifting to different places, others just stop showing up in the children's ministry..." (children's minister).

4.4 Results for objective two: To investigate the spiritual development aspects exhibited among children of 6-12 years in the children's ministries of Mbale

This was basically to explain how children expressed their spiritual development according to the respondents. The results presented showed that certain respondents were not sure about the concept presented. This showed that the majority acknowledged that a child's ability to express their relationship with the transcendent is very crucial in the spiritual development of children. Relationality with the transcendent had the highest respondents with the cumulative percent of 90.4%, with others had 88%, morality and beliefs had 84%, then with self-had 70.4%, then with environment 67%, then sense of wonder and awe with 65%, then sense of creativity and imagination with 61%. These results show that most respondents recognize that a child's connection with the transcendent is a crucial element of spiritual development, as shown below:

Table 4.6 Spiritual development aspect of the relationship with the transcendent

Category	Frequency	Percentage
Agree	23	44.2
Strongly agree	24	46.2
Not sure	5	9.6
Total	52	100.0

Source: primary data

The results presented in Table 4.6 revealed that 46% strongly agreed with the aspect of the relationship with the transcendent, whereas 44% agreed with it, and lastly, 10% were not sure about it. This showed that the majority acknowledged that a child's ability to express their relationship with the transcendent is very crucial in

the spiritual development of children. The qualitative findings quote one of the respondents below as follows:

“...we are spiritual beings created by the transcendent, and since we are spirit beings, we are expected to live and grow spiritually...and I can connect to the Spirit power that has higher power because of the spirit in me and helps me to have a relationship with a higher power...” (pastor X).

Table 4.7 Spiritual development aspect of the Relationship with self

Category	Frequency	Percentage
Agree	27	50.0
Strongly agree	11	20.4
Not sure	14	25.9
Disagree	2	3.7
Total	54	100.0

Source: primary data

The results presented in Table 4.7 revealed that 50% agreed with the spiritual development aspect of the relationship with self; in addition, 20% strongly agreed, whereas 26% were not sure and 4% disagreed. As a researcher, the number of those who were not sure is big because they are ignorant about the relationship with self as a spiritual aspect, and this also makes me doubt even those who agreed, because many people do not fully understand the spiritual development aspects of children.

One of the respondents who was interviewed mentioned this, as quoted below:

“... they begin to value themselves... they know how to respond when one says they are dogs...” (Pastor X).

Table 4.8 Spiritual development aspect of the Relationship with others

Category	Frequency	Percentage
Agree	23	45.1
Strongly agree	22	43.1
Not sure	6	11.8
Total	51	100.0

Source: primary data

The above results in Table 4.8 revealed that 45% of the respondents agree with the spiritual development aspect of relationships with others, and in addition 43% strongly agreed, whereas 12% were not sure. These results indicate that this aspect is well known and acknowledged by the majority because it is believed that how one treats others reveals their spiritual development, and also everyone loves to be treated well.

Table 4.9 Spiritual development aspect of the Relationship with the environment

Category	Frequency	Percentage
Agree	18	40.0
Strongly agree	12	26.7
Not sure	13	28.9
Disagree	2	4.4
Total	45	100.0

Source: primary data

The results presented in Table 4.9 revealed that the majority of the respondents, with 40%, agreed with the spiritual development aspect of the relationship with the environment, whereas 29% were not sure, 27% strongly agreed, and 4% disagreed.

The above results indicate that, as much as there were 40% who agreed, the next highest percentage was for those who were not sure; it could be that some who indicated agreement were probably not sure as well, and yet this aspect is also important in expressing spiritual development among children.

The evidence from the qualitative findings proved the spiritual development aspect of relationality with the environment, as one respondent mentioned this, as shown below:

“...these kinds of children begin to value the environment, nature, and things in their home area...they do take care of things around them; they do not just stone animals...” (Pastor B).

Table 4.10 Spiritual development aspect of the Sense of creativity and imagination

Category	Frequency	Percentage
Agree	18	34.6
Strongly agree	14	26.9
Not sure	16	30.8
Disagree	3	5.8
Strongly disagree	1	1.9
Total	52	100.0

Source: primary data

The results presented in Table 4.10 revealed that the majority of the respondents agreed with the spiritual development aspect of the sense of creativity and wonder, with 35%, whereas 31% were not sure, 27% strongly agreed, 6% disagreed, and 2% strongly disagreed concerning the aspect. These results indicate that the majority

agreed to the aspect, but even those who were not sure were quite many, and upon the interviews, there was very little understanding of the sense of creativity and wonder being an aspect of spiritual development.

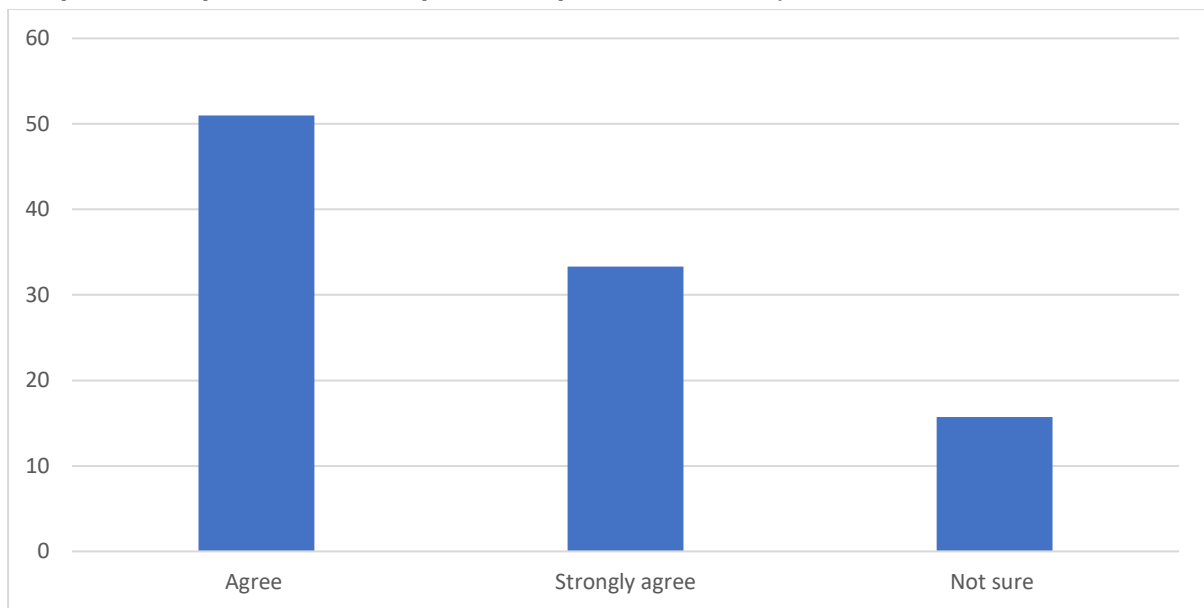
Table 4.11 Spiritual development aspect of Sense of wonder, awe, and happiness

Category	Frequency	Percentage
Agree	20	38.5
Strongly agree	14	26.9
Not sure	16	30.8
Disagree	2	3.8
Total	52	100.0

Source: primary data

The results presented in Table 4.11 revealed that 39% agreed that the sense of wonder, awe, and happiness is a spiritual development aspect, whereas 31% were not sure. Then 27% strongly agreed, whereas 4% disagreed with the aspect. As much as 40% agreed; upon asking them questions, I realized they were not sure because they did not know about it. This implies that many children's ministry leaders are not aware of the spiritual development aspects, which are meant to help them in programming for the children.

Graph 4.11 Spiritual development aspect of Morality and beliefs



Source: primary data

The results presented in graph 4.11 revealed that the majority of the respondents agreed, with 51%, that the spiritual development aspect of morality and beliefs is expressed in a child who is spiritually developed. Then followed by 33% who strongly agreed, whereas 16% were not sure. The above results indicate that many of the respondents are very much aware of the aspect of morality that is portrayed in the behavior and conduct of the children.

Evidence from the qualitative findings works very well in partnership with the quantitative findings. Children's ministry workers stated that spiritual development significantly supports the morality and conduct of the children. The excerpts from the children's ministry interviews below illustrate this:

"...spiritual development is a characteristic that helps children to be spiritually holy, to exhibit Christlike behaviors and character..." (children's minister).

"... you start seeing the fruit of change in behavior..." (Pastor Z).

4.4 Results for objective three: To examine the relationship between children's ministry practices and the spiritual development of children in children's ministries of Mbale

The majority of respondents said yes to the relationship between children's ministry practices and the spiritual development of children, with 86%, whereas 14% were not sure. The results below indicate there is truly a definite relationship between the practices and the spiritual development of children, as follows:

Table 4.12 Whether there is a relationship between children's ministry practices and spiritual development

Category	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	45	86.5
Not sure	7	13.5
Total	52	100.0

Source: primary data

The results presented in Table 4.23 revealed that the majority of respondents said yes to the relationship between children's ministry practices and the spiritual development of children, with 86%, whereas 14% were not sure. The above results indicate there is truly a definite relationship between the practices and the spiritual development of children.

The qualitative findings also showed that there is a relationship between children's ministry practices and spiritual development, and some quotes are as follows:

“...ministry practices like prayer, Bible study, and others support children in knowing their THE TRANSCENDENT...” (Children's minister).

“...yes, ministry practices help children to know how to conduct themselves...” (Pastor X).

4.4.1 Results from the regression test.

Relationship between the children’s ministry practices and the spiritual development aspect of relationality with the transcendent

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.214 ^a	.046	.027	.64450

a. Predictors: (Constant), Current practices for the children

According to the model summary table, the Pearson correlation coefficient (R) of 0.124 and R-squared of 0.046 show that the model's explanatory power is more accurately measured by the adjusted R-squared value of 0.027 with standard error. The error estimate of 0.64450 indicates the average distance observed values fall from the regression line.

The R-square (0.046) indicates that only 4.6% of the variance in the dependent variable (relationality with the transcendent) is explained by the independent variable (current practices for the children). The sample shows that this is a very weak relationship. The adjusted R-square corrects for the number of predictors and sample size; here, it is even lower (2.7%), which further confirms that the sample did not have children’s ministry practices that would influence the relationality with the transcendent.

ANOVA^a

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1 Regression	1.000	1	1.000	2.408	.127 ^b
Residual	20.769	50	.415		
Total	21.769	51			

a. Dependent Variable: Relationality with the transcendent

b. Predictors: (Constant), Current practices for the children

The ANOVA table indicates a p-value significance of 0.127, which is greater than 0.05, meaning that the overall regression model is not statistically significant. This implies that there is sufficient evidence to conclude that current practices for children significantly predict relationality with the transcendent from the sample.

Coefficients^a

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	1.277	.259		4.935	.000
Current practices for the children	.037	.024	.214	1.552	.127

a. Dependent Variable: Relationality with the transcendent

The coefficient table provides detailed information about the regression equation. The coefficient for "Current practices for the children" is 0.037, meaning a 1-unit increase in this variable is associated with a 0.037-unit increase in "Relationality with the transcendent." However, the p-value is 0.127, so this relationship is not statistically significant at the 0.05 level. The t-value (1.552) also supports that the coefficient is not significantly different from zero. Therefore, the regression model is weak and has very low explanatory power (R^2 of 4.6%) and no statistical significance. The predictor variable of current practices for children does not significantly explain or predict the dependent variable of relationality with the transcendent. This confirms that other factors or variables, like family and schools, among others, also actively influence the spiritual development of the children.

4.4.2 Relationship between children's ministry practices and the spiritual development aspect of Relationality with self

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.529 ^a	.280	.266	.81106

a. Predictors: (Constant), Current practices for the children

The model summary shows a Pearson correlation coefficient R of 0.529, showing a moderate positive correlation between current practices for the children and relationality with self. The R-square of 0.280, which is about 28% of the variation in the dependent variable of relationality with self, is explained by the independent

variable of current practices for the children. However, the adjusted R-square of 0.266 indicates that the slightly lower value accounts for the number of predictors and sample size, still indicating a fairly meaningful model fit.

ANOVA^a

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1 Regression	13.293	1	13.293	20.208	.000 ^b
Residual	34.207	52	.658		
Total	47.500	53			

a. Dependent Variable: Relationality with self

b. Predictors: (Constant), Current practices for the children

The ANOVA table indicates that the F-statistic of 20.208 with a p-value of 0.000 is highly significant ($p < 0.05$). This indicates that the regression model is statistically significant, meaning current practices for the children significantly predict relationality with self.

Coefficients^a

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	.580	.300		1.934	.059

Current practices for the children	.126	.028	.529	4.495	.000
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a. Dependent Variable: Relationality with self

The coefficient table provides detailed information about the regression equation. The unstandardized coefficient B of 0.126 means that for each one-unit increase in current practices for children, there is a 0.126-unit increase in relationality with self. The t-value of 4.495 and p-value of 0.000 indicate that this coefficient is statistically significant ($p < 0.05$). A standardized beta of 0.529, which suggests that the predictor has a moderate to strong influence on the outcome variable. However, the intercept (constant) is not significant; p is 0.059, but that does not affect the significance of the relationship between the predictor and the outcome. The model is statistically significant, with 28% of the variation in relationality with self being explained by current practices for the children. Current practices for the children have a significant and positive effect on individuals' relationality with self. This finding suggests that as practices for children improve, individuals' ability to relate to themselves, for example, self-awareness and self-acceptance, among others, also improves.

4.4.3 Relationship between children's ministry practices and the spiritual development aspect of Relationship with others

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.110 ^a	.012	-.008	.68590

a. Predictors: (Constant), Current practices for the children

The model summary shows a Pearson correlation coefficient R of 0.110, showing a very weak positive correlation between *current practices for the children* and *relationality with others*. And then the R-square of 0.012 means that only 1.2% of the variation in *relationality with others* is explained by the predictor variable, showing that it is very low. The adjusted R-squared is -0.008, and so the negative value suggests that the model is no better than using the mean of the dependent variable alone to predict outcomes. And then the standard error of estimate is 0.68590, indicating the average error in prediction using the model.

ANOVA^a

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1 Regression	.281	1	.281	.597	.443 ^b
Residual	23.052	49	.470		
Total	23.333	50			

a. Dependent Variable: Relationality with others

b. Predictors: (Constant), Current practices for the children

The ANOVA table indicates that the F value of 0.597 with a p-value significance is 0.443, indicating that the regression model is not statistically significant ($p > 0.05$). This means that current practices for the children do not significantly predict relationality with others.

Coefficients^a

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	1.459	.285		5.110	.000
Current practices for the children	.020	.026	.110	.773	.443

a. Dependent Variable: Relationality with others

The coefficients table provides detailed information about the regression equation. The unstandardized coefficient B of 0.020 indicates that for each one-unit increase in *current practices for the children*, there is an estimated 0.020-unit increase in *relationality with others*. However, this effect is not statistically significant. Then the standardized beta of 0.110, which confirms a very weak effect. Then the t is 0.773, and p is 0.443 (> 0.05), which means the relationship is not significant. The model explains very little variance, only 1.2% in relationality with others. And so, the relationship between current practices for the children and relationality with others is weak and not statistically significant. Therefore, the study cannot conclude that the current practices for children have any meaningful influence on how individuals relate with others based on the respondents.

4.4.4 The relationship between the children's ministry and the spiritual development aspect of relationality with the environment

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.234 ^a	.055	.033	.92557

a. Predictors: (Constant), Current practices for the children

The model summary shows a Pearson correlation coefficient R of 0.234, showing a weak positive correlation between *current practices for the children* and *relationality with the environment*. The R-square of 0.055 implies that only 5.5% of the variance in *relationality with the environment* is explained by the predictor (current *practices for the children*). The adjusted R-square of 0.033: after adjusting for sample size and number of predictors, the model still explains only 3.3% of the variance, indicating a weak model. The standard error of 0.92557 suggests the average distance between the actual data points and the regression line predictions is quite large.

ANOVA^a

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	2.140	1	2.140	2.498	.121 ^b
	Residual	36.838	43	.857		
	Total	38.978	44			

a. Dependent Variable: Relationality with the environment

b. Predictors: (Constant), Current practices for the children

The ANOVA table indicates that the F-value is 2.498 and the p-value significance is 0.121, showing that since the p-value is greater than 0.05, the regression model is not statistically significant. This means that there is no strong evidence that *current practices for the children* predict *relationality with the environment* in the population studied.

Coefficients^a

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	1.057	.599		1.764	.085
1 Current practices for the children	.081	.051	.234	1.581	.121

a. Dependent Variable: Relationality with the environment

The coefficients table provides detailed information about the regression equation. The unstandardized coefficient B of 0.081 indicates that for every 1-unit increase in *current practices for the children*, *relationality with the environment* increases by 0.081 units on average. The standardized beta of 0.234 reflects a weak positive effect. The t = 1.581, p = 0.121: The p-value is not statistically significant, so the

predictor variable does not have a significant impact on the outcome variable. This implies that there is a weak and statistically insignificant relationship between current practices for the children and their relationship with the environment. Though the model explains only 5.5% of the variation in the dependent variable, the predictor variable of current practices for the children does not significantly influence how individuals relate to the environment in this sample.

4.4.5 The relationship between children's ministry practices and the spiritual development aspect of sense of creativity and imagination

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.563 ^a	.317	.303	.85937

a. Predictors: (Constant), Current practices for the children

The model summary shows a Pearson correlation coefficient R of 0.563, which shows a moderate to strong positive correlation between *current practices for the children* and *sense of creativity and imagination*. The R² of 0.317 reveals that about 31.7% of the variation in *sense of creativity and imagination* is explained by the independent variable. The adjusted R² of 0.303 shows that after adjusting for the number of predictors and sample size, the model still explains 30.3% of the variance, indicating a fairly good model fit. Standard Error of 0.85937, implying that this is

the average deviation between observed and predicted values. It shows how far the actual values typically are from the regression line.

ANOVA^a

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1 Regression	17.132	1	17.132	23.198	.000 ^b
Residual	36.926	50	.739		
Total	54.058	51			

a. Dependent Variable: Sense of creativity and imagination

b. Predictors: (Constant), Current practices for the children

The ANOVA table shows an F of 23.198 and a p of 0.000, indicating that the regression model is statistically significant ($p < 0.05$). This means that *current practices for the children* significantly predict the *sense of creativity and imagination*.

Coefficients^a

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	.575	.345		1.667	.102
Current practices for the children	.152	.032	.563	4.816	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Sense of creativity and imagination

The coefficients table provides detailed information about the regression equation. The unstandardized coefficient B of 0.152 indicates that for every one-unit increase in *current practices for the children*, the *sense of creativity and imagination* increases by 0.152 units. The standardized beta of 0.563 reflects a strong positive effect of the predictor variable. The t of 4.816 and the p of 0.000 reveal that the relationship is highly statistically significant ($p < 0.05$), confirming the predictor has a real and measurable effect. Therefore, the model is statistically significant and explains a moderate proportion of 31.7% of the variation in sense of creativity and imagination. It also revealed that there is a strong and positive relationship between current practices for the children and the dependent variable. Therefore, improved or enhanced practices for children are likely to lead to higher levels of creativity and imagination in individuals.

4.4.6 The relationship between the children's ministry practices and the spiritual development of a sense of wonder, awe, and happiness.

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted Square	RStd. Error of the Estimate
1	.550 ^a	.302	.288	.78365

a. Predictors: (Constant), Current practices for the children

The model summary shows a Pearson correlation coefficient R of 0.550, showing a moderate to strong positive correlation between *current practices for the children* and *sense of wonder, awe, and happiness*. The R Square of 0.302 shows that about

30.2% of the variance in the dependent variable is explained by the independent variable. The adjusted R-square of 0.288 revealed that even after adjusting for sample size and model complexity, the predictor still explains a substantial portion (28.8%) of the variation. The standard error of 0.78365 indicates the average distance between actual and predicted values. Lower values suggest better model fit.

ANOVA^a

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1 Regression	13.294	1	13.294	21.648	.000 ^b
Residual	30.706	50	.614		
Total	44.000	51			

a. Dependent Variable: Sense of wonder, awe, and happiness

b. Predictors: (Constant), Current practices for the children

The ANOVA table shows the F of 21.648 and the p of 0.000, indicating that the regression model is highly statistically significant ($p < 0.05$). This confirms that *the current practices for the children significantly predict a sense of wonder, awe, and happiness*.

Coefficients^a

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients	Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.

	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	.626	.315		1.990	.052
1 Current practices for the children	.134	.029	.550	4.653	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Sense of wonder, awe, and happiness

The coefficients table provides detailed information about the regression equation. The unstandardized coefficient B of 0.134 indicates that for each one-unit increase in *current practices for the children*, *sense of wonder, awe, and happiness* increases by 0.134 units. The standardized beta of 0.550 indicates a strong positive influence of the predictor variable on the outcome. The t of 4.653 and the p of 0.000 indicate that the predictor is highly statistically significant, meaning the relationship is not due to chance. However, the constant (intercept) is not significant (p of 0.052), but this does not affect the significance of the main predictor. Therefore, the model is statistically significant and explains a moderate proportion (30.2%) of the variation in *sense of wonder, awe, and happiness*. There is a strong, positive, and statistically significant relationship between *current practices for the children* and the outcome variable. This suggests that improved practices for children contribute meaningfully to increasing their sense of joy, amazement, and emotional well-being.

4.4.7 The relationship between children's ministry practices and the spiritual development aspect of morality and beliefs

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.391 ^a	.153	.136	.69123

a. Predictors: (Constant), Current practices for the children

The model summary shows a Pearson correlation R of 0.391, indicating a moderate positive correlation between *current practices for the children* and *morality and beliefs*. The R² of 0.153 shows that about 15.3% of the variance in *morality and beliefs* is explained by *current practices for the children*. The adjusted R² of 0.136 indicates that after adjusting for sample size and number of predictors, the model still explains 13.6% of the variance, which suggests a modest model fit. The standard error of 0.69123 shows that this is the average distance between actual values and predicted values; lower values indicate better accuracy.

ANOVA^a

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1 Regression	4.235	1	4.235	8.863	.005 ^b
Residual	23.412	49	.478		
Total	27.647	50			

a. Dependent Variable: Morality and beliefs

b. Predictors: (Constant), Current practices for the children

The ANOVA table indicates the F of 8.863 and the p-value of 0.005, indicating the model is statistically significant at the 0.05 level. This means that *current practices for the children* significantly predict *morality and beliefs*.

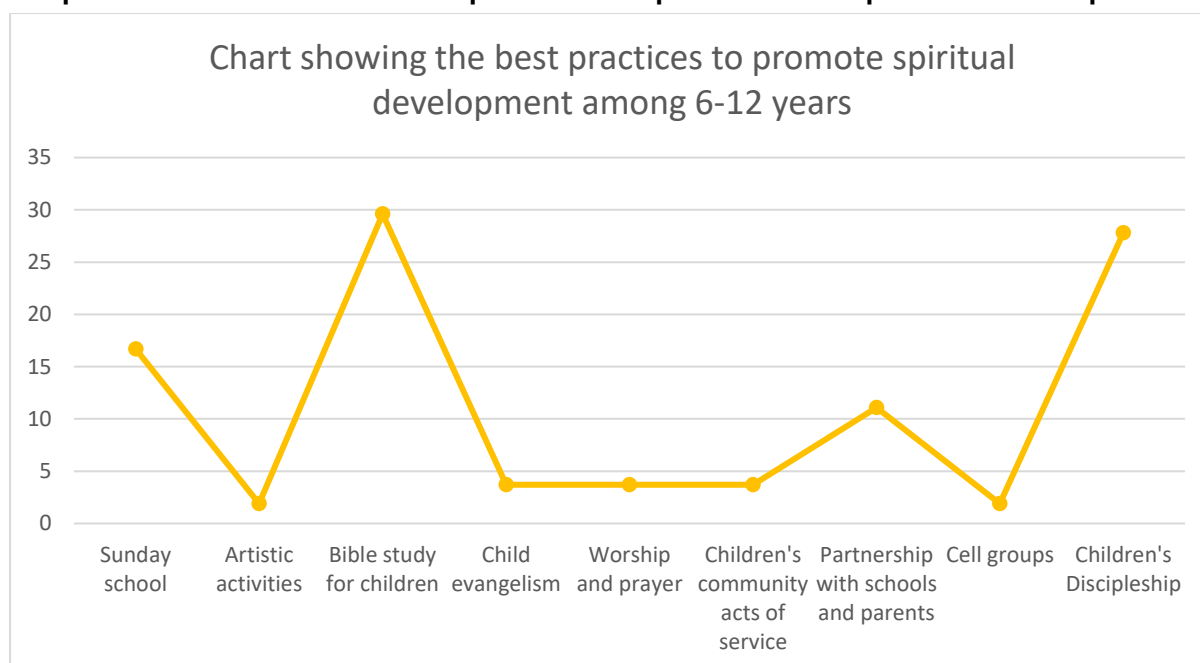
Coefficients^a

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	.840	.288		2.921	.005
Current practices for the children	.078	.026	.391	2.977	.005

a. Dependent Variable: Morality and beliefs

The coefficient table provides detailed information about the regression equation. The unstandardized coefficient B of 0.078 shows that for every one-unit increase in *current practices for the children*, *morality and beliefs* increase by 0.078 units on average. The standardized beta of 0.391 indicates a moderate effect size. And the t of 2.977 and the p of 0.005 indicate that the effect of the predictor is statistically significant. Therefore, there is a moderate, positive, and statistically significant relationship between current practices for the children and morality and beliefs. The model shows that 15.3% of the variation in children's morality and belief systems can be explained by current practices directed at them. This suggests that enhancing current practices for children could contribute positively to the development of their moral values and belief systems.

Graph 4.12 Best and effective practices to promote the spiritual development



Source: primary data

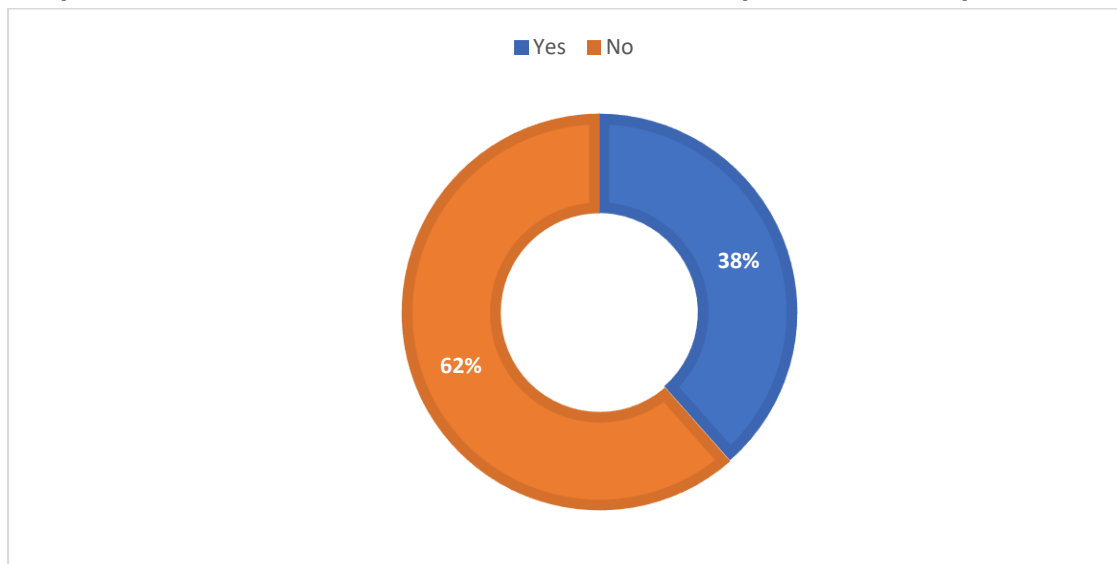
The results in Figure 4.12 presented that the majority of the respondents believed that Bible study for children, with 30%, is the best and most effective practice to promote spiritual development. This was followed by children's discipleship with 28%, followed by Sunday school with 17%, then partnerships with schools and parents with 11%, then children's community acts of service and child evangelism with worship and prayer with 4% each, then cell groups and artistic activities with 2% respectively. This shows that the highest response was Bible study for children as the most effective practice to ensure the spiritual development of the children.

The qualitative findings have some excerpts as shown below:

"...there is another practice like using online engagement using media because these days some children have phones, and media could be of help..."
(Children's minister)

“... Bible-engaging activities are so crucial in ensuring spiritual development of the children...” (Pastor X)

Graph 4.13 Parents’ interest in their children’s spiritual development



Source: primary data

The results in graph 4.13 revealed that the majority of the respondents said no to the parents showing interest in their children’s spiritual development, with 62%, whereas those who said yes had 39%. This clearly indicates how most parents are not very intentional about their children’s spiritual development.

Table 4.13 Children’s ministries host trainings and conferences about the spiritual development of children

Category	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	13	25.0
No	39	75.0
Total	52	100

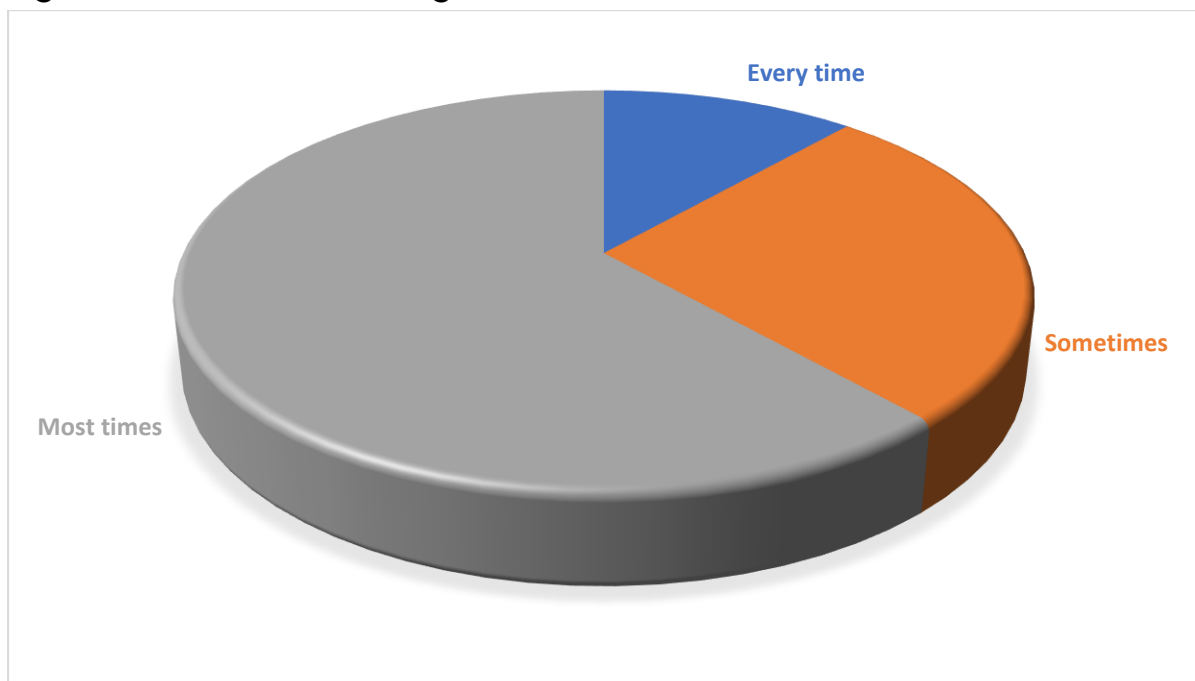
Source: primary data

The results in Table 4.13 revealed that the majority of the respondents said no to hosting trainings and conferences about spiritual development, with 75% responses, whereas those who said yes were at 25%. These results also indicate that some children's ministries do not have training for their teachers and parents on spiritual development, yet this is also a crucial issue to be put into consideration.

4.5 Results for objective four: To examine the barriers hindering the sustaining of the children's ministry practices for the spiritual development of 6-12-year-olds in children's ministries of Mbale.

The barriers that were hindering the children's ministries, some of which were limited finances, lack of motivation, having no specified rooms for the children, lack of support from parents, as well as the leaders of the ministries, and many more, as shown below:

Figure 4.14 Barriers is having limited finances.



Source: primary data

The results in graph 4.14 revealed that the majority of the respondents mentioned they have limited finances most time, with 62%; then 30% said it happens sometimes, and then 12% said it happens every time. These results indicate that most children's ministries face a challenge of limited finances for the children's ministry practices, which later becomes a problem for the consistency of the ministry, which could also hinder them from implementing some practices that could be effective in the spiritual development of the children.

Table 4.14 Another barrier: having no specified rooms for children

Category	Frequency	Percentage
Every time	20	38.5
Sometimes	12	23.1
Most times	19	36.5
Never	1	1.9
Total	52	100.0

Source: primary data

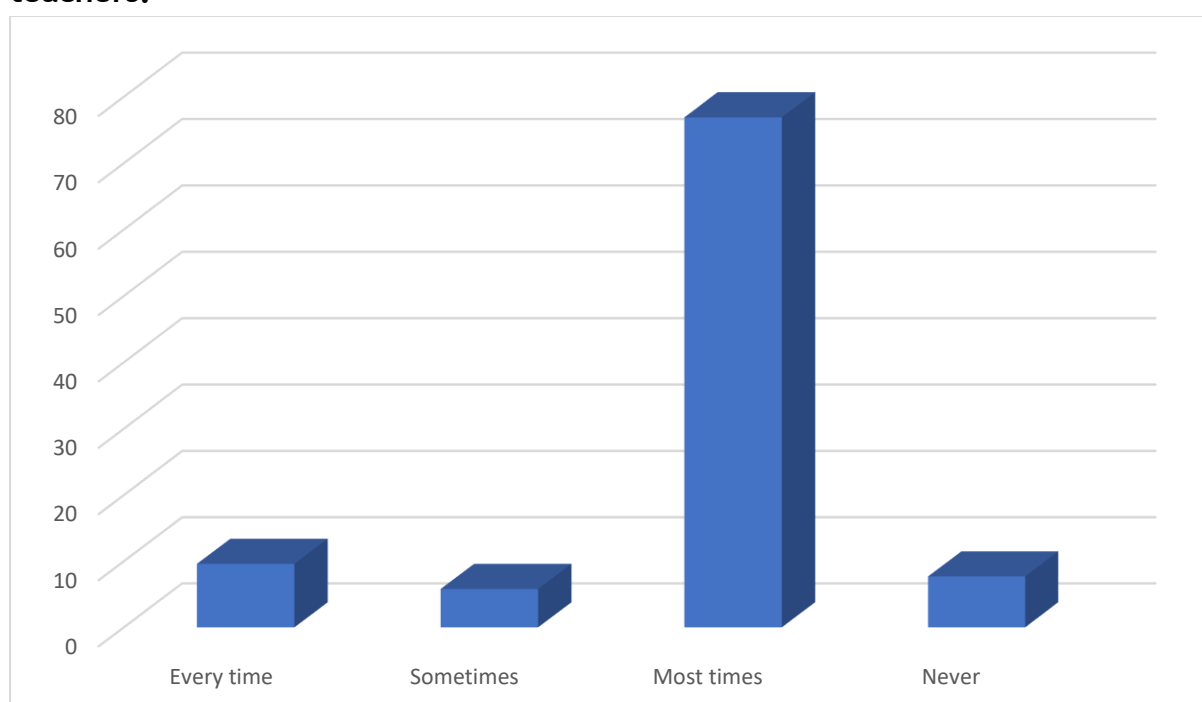
The results in Table 4.14 revealed that the majority of the respondents mentioned the barrier of having no specified rooms for children, with 39%, followed by those who said it happens most times, with 37%, then those who said it sometimes happens, with 23%, and then 2% who said it never happens. The above results indicate that some children's ministries still do not have the infrastructure of the children's ministry, which could affect the practices to be done. The qualitative findings give some of the quotes as shown below:

"... our children are taught under the trees, which is not favorable at all..."
(Children's minister).

“...we have been disturbed by rain and sunshine because our classes are under the tree....” (Children’s minister).

“...as you see, this one big hall is used for children, but it is not child-friendly because it was not constructed for them but for another purpose...”
(children’s minister).

Figure 4.15 Barrier of having no motivation for the children’s ministry teachers.



Source: primary data

The results in graph 4.15 revealed that the majority of the respondents indicated the barrier of having no motivation of the children’s ministry teacher, with 77%, followed by 10% for those who said it happens every time, 8% who said it never happens, and 6% who said it happens sometimes. These results reveal that some children’s ministries do not consider motivating or giving any appreciation in kind or anything to encourage the children’s ministry teachers.

Table 4.15 Barrier of Technology issues in the children's ministry

Category	Frequency	Percentage
Every time	10	20.0
Sometimes	2	4.0
Most times	37	74.0
Never	1	2.0
Total	50	100

Source: primary data

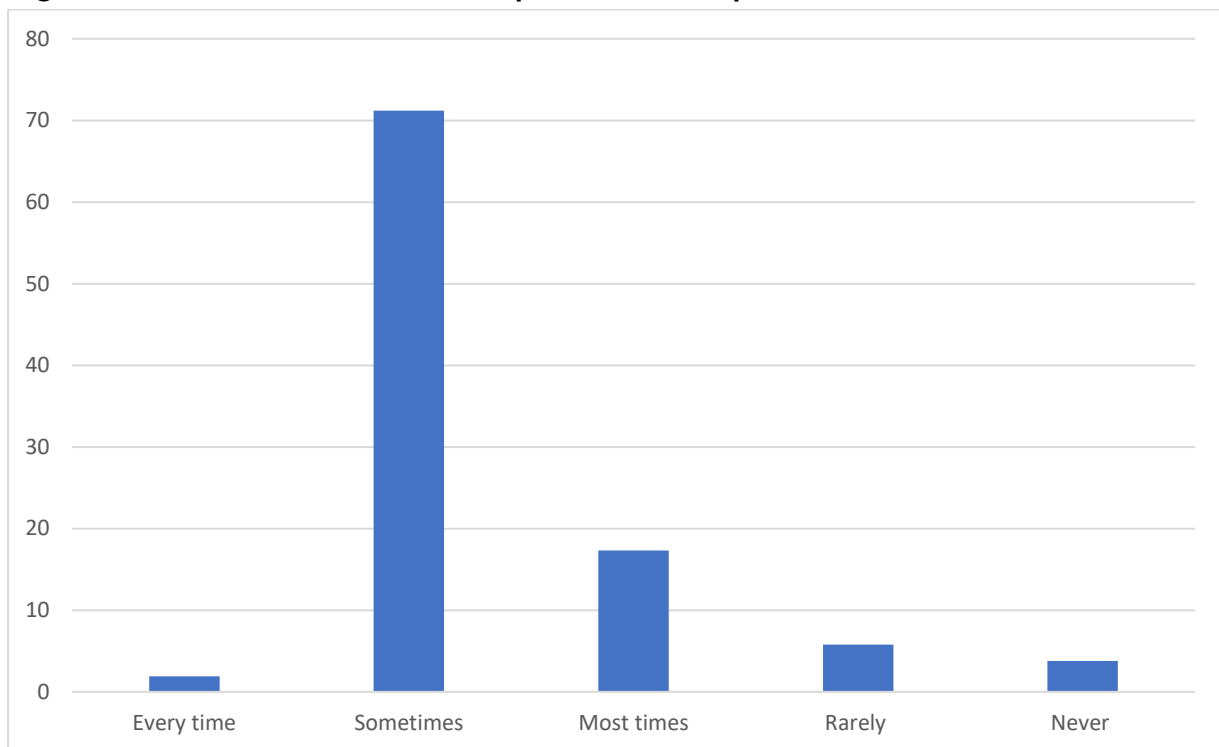
The results in table 4.15 revealed that the majority of the respondents indicated that this barrier happens most times with 74%, followed by those who said it happens every time with 20%, followed by those who said it happens sometimes with 4%, whereas 2% said that it never happens. Despite the fact that we are in the technological era, these children's ministries have bigger issues with technology, which affect their effective implementation of some practices.

Evidence from the qualitative findings agrees so well with the quantitative findings. The children's ministry leaders emphasized technology is a barrier in the ministry. The quotes from the children's ministry leaders are here below:

"...Our leaders think when we ask for a television, it is for showing off, and they refuse to attend to our technology needs..." (Children's minister).

"...there are many resources online, but our children's ministry has not invested in technology, which is affecting the ministry..." (Children's minister).

Figure 4.16 Barrier of Lack of cooperation from parents



Source: primary data

Graph 4.16 revealed that the majority of the respondents indicated the barrier of lack of cooperation from parents happens sometimes with 71%, followed by those that said it happens most times with 17%, whereas those who said it rarely happens were 6%, then 4% said it never happens, yet 2% said it happens every time. These results still indicate that most parents do not cooperate with the children's ministry teachers to promote the practices that could enhance the spiritual development of their children. This was further emphasized by some of the Sunday school teachers, who stated:

“... Many parents assume that spiritual teaching is only the children’s ministry’s responsibility. They rarely reinforce what we teach at home...”
(Pastor X).

“...even when we have activities at children’s ministry, parents keep refusing to send their children so that they can participate in those activities...”
(Children’s minister).

“...Many parents do not want to continue with what we have taught the children during the week.... They are not doing what we teach children at children’s ministry...” *(Children’s minister).*

“...When you speak of parents contributing for the children’s activities, they go silent on you...” *(Children’s minister).*

Table 4.16 Barrier of Absenteeism of children's ministry teachers

Category	Frequency	Percentage
Sometimes	29	55.8
Most times	10	19.2
Rarely	8	15.4
Never	5	9.6
Total	52	100.0

Source: primary data

The results in table 4.16 revealed that the majority of the respondents said that the barrier of absenteeism of the children's ministry teachers happens sometimes with 56%, followed by those who said it happens most times with 19%, whereas 15% said it happens rarely and 10% said it never happens. This shows absenteeism of the

teachers is also a barrier in implementing some of the practices or could affect the quality of the programs.

The qualitative findings agreed with the quantitative findings, where they also mentioned that there is a barrier of absenteeism of teachers, and some of the quotes are below:

“...Some teachers are not committed enough, but others just lose the morale to continue, which later affects the ministry because there are times you come and you find that you are alone with over 80 children, yet other teachers are in the main children’s ministry...” (children’s ministry leader).

“... there are times when we are also tired of doing the same thing every week, and it becomes exhausting at times...” (Children’s minister).

“...we also want to be in the main children’s ministry because it feels like we are not eating the food from our children’s ministry leaders...” (Children’s minister).

“...There are times when I see children outside playing, and others are in children’s ministry playing around, and when you try to find out, the teachers have not come or they did but do not go to meet the children...” (Children’s minister).

Table 4.17 Barrier of the Lack of support from children’s ministry leaders

Category	Frequency	Percentage
Sometimes	20	40.0
Most times	24	48.0
Rarely	6	12.0

Total	50	100.0
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Source: primary data

The results of Table 4.17 revealed that 48% of the respondents, who are the majority, said that most times they lack the support from the children's ministry leaders, then 40% said they lack the support sometimes, whereas 12% said that it rarely happens. These results reveal that most leaders do not support the children's ministry, which could affect other areas of the ministry, like planning for the children and budgeting for the ministry.

Evidence from the qualitative findings was so much in sync with the quantitative findings. The children's ministry leaders also mentioned that there was a lack of support from the children's ministry leaders, and their views are shown below:

"...many times, our ministry needs are not included in the budget..."
(children's ministry leader).

"...our needs are not put into consideration at times..." (Children's minister).

"... They sometimes do not even come to check or ask where you need help....." (Children's minister).

Table 4.18 Barrier of having no programs to engage parents

Category	Frequency	Percentage
Sometimes	15	30.6
Most times	27	55.1
Rarely	7	14.3
Total	49	100.0

Source: primary data

The results of 4.18 revealed that the majority of the respondents said that the barrier of not having programs to engage parents in the children's ministry happens most times with 55%, then 31% said it happens sometimes, whereas 14% said it rarely happens. Parents are very crucial when we talk about the spiritual development of children, yet the above results show that they are not engaged in the children's ministry, which could help to raise their interest in the spiritual development of their children. Unlike Odesola (2021), who suggested that most African children's ministries actively integrate parents into ministry, the findings of this study suggest that children's ministries in Mbale lack structured programs to do so.

Table 4.19 Whether the children's ministry has a budget for children's ministry

Category	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	20	38.5
No	32	61.5
Total	52	100.0
Total		

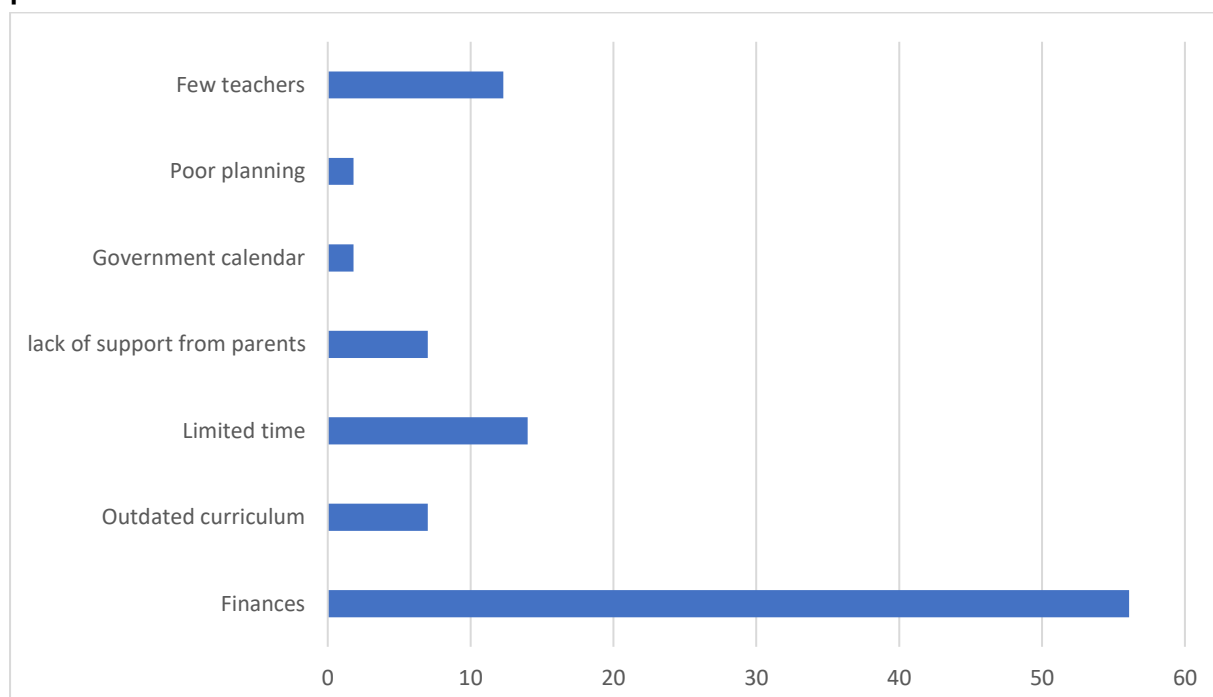
Source: primary data

The results in Table 4.19 revealed that the majority of the respondents said that they do not have a budget for the children's ministry, whereas 39% said they have a budget for the children's ministry. The above results show that some children's ministries do not have budgets for the children's programming, which affects their programming and certain practices that could benefit the spiritual development of the children. Some of the qualitative quotes are mentioned below:

“...there was a time I needed something to carry out a particular activity, but because it was not on budget, I could not get it....” (Children’s minister).

“...we actually have a budget, but to get money from the leaders is very hard. ...” (Children’s minister).

Figure 4.17 Problems hindering the implementation of the children ministry practices



Source: primary data

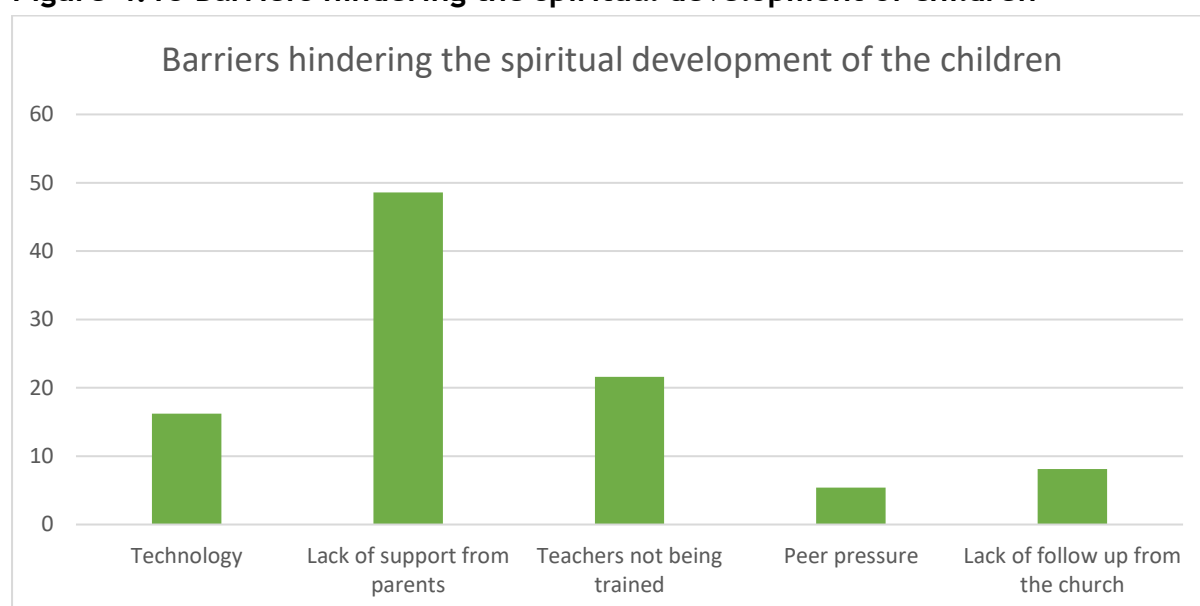
The results in graph 4.17 revealed that the majority of the respondents said that finances hinder the implementation of the children’s ministry practices with 56%, followed by those that said they had limited time with the children with 14%, followed by those who said it is due to having few teachers with 12%, whereas 7% said it is because of lack of support from parents, and 7% said it is the outdated curriculum. Then 2% said it is because of the government calendar and poor planning, respectively. This reveals that many practices require finances to be

implemented, but they are not availed for them to effectively implement their programs for the children’s ministry. Data from the qualitative findings from those who were interviewed have some extracts below:

“...During the holidays, we have many children, but when schools open, they become few because the majority are in boarding schools, and some parents do not allow their children to come to the children’s ministry during school time. ...” (Children's ministry leader).

“... some schools have classes on Sundays, which hinders the children from coming to children’s ministry. ...” (children’s ministry leader).

Figure 4.18 Barriers hindering the spiritual development of children



Source: primary data

The results in graph 4.18 revealed that the majority of the respondents said that the biggest barrier hindering the spiritual development of the children is the lack of support from the parents, with 49%; then 22% said it is because teachers are not trained; then 16% said it is technology; then 8% said it is the lack of follow-up from

the children's ministry; and then 5% said it is peer pressure. One of the respondents that was interviewed mentioned this below:

"...Children today are hooked on televisions and phones that even when they come to the children's ministry, it is hard for them to concentrate without those media gadgets, and it is parents who have left these children to the TVs. ..." (Pastor X).

Table 4.20 Recommendations to the children's ministry leadership

Category	Frequency	Percentage
Budget and fundraise	9	17.6
Support of children's ministry leadership	18	35.3
Build the children's ministry	6	11.8
Development curriculum	8	15.7
Train the children's ministry workers	6	11.8
Establish leadership for the children's ministry	4	7.8
Total	51	100.0

Source: primary data

The results in table 4.20 revealed that the majority of the respondents recommended support from the children's ministry leadership with 35%, followed by budgeting and fundraising for the ministry with 18%, then development of curricula

with 12%, building children's ministries with 12%, and lastly establishing leadership for the children's ministry.

“... we have for the youth, but having the children's conference for children in Sunday school is something that I encourage all children's ministries to start including mine...”

Table 4.21 Other factors that influence the spiritual development of children

Category	Frequency	Percentage
Parents	18	31.6
Schools	11	19.3
Community	17	29.8
Media	4	7.0
Peers	5	8.8
Culture	2	3.5
Total	57	100.0

Source: primary data

The results in table 4.21 revealed that the majority of the respondents indicated that the highest other factor that influences spiritual development of children is the parents, with 32%, then followed by the community, with 30%, then schools, with 19%, then peers, with 9%, then media, with 7%, and lastly culture, with 4%. This clearly shows that there are key factors that also influence the spiritual development of the children.

“... children today are hooked on televisions and phones that even when they come to the children's ministry, it is hard for them to concentrate without

those media gadgets, and it is parents who have left these children to the TVs. ...” (Pastor X).

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

5.1 Introduction

This study specifically focused on the four objectives, which are stated below. 1. To ascertain the children's ministry practices for children 6-12 years in children's ministries of Mbale; 2. To determine the spiritual development aspects exhibited among children aged 6-12 years in the children's ministries of Mbale 3. To examine the relationship between children's ministry practices and the spiritual development of children in children's ministries of Mbale 4. To examine the barriers hindering the sustenance of the children's ministry practices for the spiritual development of 6-12-year-olds in children's ministries of Mbale. The findings are discussed according to the objectives of the study, and details are presented below.

5.2 Discussion of results for objective one: To ascertain the children's ministry practices for children 6-12 years in children's ministries of Mbale.

The majority of the respondents viewed children's ministry as Sunday school, and yet it is only one component of it. This implies that many of the children's ministries do not have an established children's ministry with clear practices for their children. These results suggest that some children's ministries do not have a thorough or structured, and wide-ranging children's ministry that incorporates a diversity of practices to ensure holistic spiritual development. The limited scope of children's ministry practices may lead to an inadequate spiritual foundation for the children. Since most respondents were Sunday school teachers, the findings largely reflect the experiences and perspectives of frontline ministry workers who interact directly with children. This may explain why Sunday school emerged as the most recognized

and dominant ministry practice. The finding also supports the conclusion that many respondents equated children's ministry with Sunday school, suggesting limited exposure to broader ministry approaches.

Additionally, the results showed that the majority of respondents (69%) reported that senior leaders do not visit children's ministry activities, while only 31% indicated that they do. Yet literature emphasizes the importance of leadership involvement in children's ministry (King, 2013; Helm, 2008). However, the results implied that there are many senior leaders who literally have never stepped into the children's ministry, and it could be that they do not know what happens there. This implies that there will be limited support from the leaders in the children's ministry practices. Also, it reveals that many senior leaders in Mbale are not prioritizing children's ministry. Chuck (2021) asserts that leaders should not leave children's ministry entirely to volunteers, which is also noticed in my study results. This also shows that a lack of pastoral oversight and assistance can be detrimental to the growth and effectiveness of children's ministry. And if leaders do not actively participate in children's ministry, resource allocation, training, and program extension will likely be limited. That is why scholars advocate for children's ministry leaders to provide direct mentorship and oversight (Robinson, 2017).

From the literature review, there is an emphasis on the importance of diverse children's ministry practices, including Bible study, worship, play, discipleship, outreaches, and acts of service (Robinson, 2017; Myers, 2009). Similarly, this study's results confirm that some of these practices are present in the children's ministries of Mbale city, with Sunday school being the highest. However, scholars like Pearce (2016) highlight those children need structured spiritual engagement, and the results

show that children's ministries in Mbale have some structured activities but lack consistency and variety.

Furthermore, from the results, most of the children's ministries in Mbale are not holistic in nature, yet literature suggests that children's ministries should be holistic, engaging all the domains of child development. (Mata, 2014; May, 2006). The findings show that children's ministries in Mbale have a narrow definition of children's ministry because they only look at Sunday school, with limited discipleship (2%), and mission outreaches (2%). While literature advocates for active parental involvement, the study results reveal that parents are not fully engaged in their children's ministry.

Selvam (2013) and Watson (2017) assert that diverse ministry practices contribute to well-rounded spiritual growth. I have observed that this study's findings support those of children's ministries with fewer practices that may not effectively nurture all aspects of children's spiritual development. On the contrary, literature highlights the transformative power of children's ministry (Bornstein et al., 2017), but the study findings show that children's ministry in Mbale is often not taken seriously, leading to minimal spiritual transformation.

5.3 Discussion of results for objective two: To investigate the spiritual development aspects exhibited among children of 6-12 years in children's ministries of Mbale.

The results presented showed certain respondents were not sure about the concept presented. This showed that the majority acknowledged that a child's ability to express their relationship with the transcendent is very crucial in the spiritual development of children. These results show that most respondents recognize that

a child's connection with the transcendent is crucial element of spiritual development. This is strongly in agreement with the literature, which emphasized that relationship with the transcendent is central in the spiritual development of children (Fowler, 1981).

The largest proportion (42.3%) had served in children's ministry for 1-5 years. The finding that most respondents had served for only one to five years suggests a relatively inexperienced workforce within children's ministry. This may partly explain the limited understanding of certain aspects of spiritual development and the overreliance on traditional practices such as Sunday school. The short duration of service may also be associated with volunteer turnover, burnout, and challenges in sustaining innovative ministry practices.

Some scholars argue that relationships with the transcendent should be nurtured through structured discipleship programs (Mata, 2014). However, the findings show that discipleship is rarely emphasized. This gap suggests that while children express spiritual development through faith, there is limited formal guidance to deepen their relationship with the transcendent.

As a researcher, the number of those who were not sure is big because they are ignorant about the relationship with self as a spiritual aspect, and this also makes me doubt even those who agreed, because many people do not fully understand the spiritual development aspects of children. Relationship with self is an integral part of spiritual development. This aspect helps children to develop self-awareness, identity, confidence, and decision-making skills guided by faith. This also indicates that some children's ministries could be focusing on external expressions of faith like prayer and Bible study, and less on inner self-reflection (King, 2013). These

findings highlight a significant knowledge gap, as over a quarter of the respondents were unsure about the concept of the relationship with self. This suggests that there are many children's ministries that do not actively teach or emphasize self-awareness or a relationship with self as a spiritual growth characteristic. Yet children who have a good relationship with themselves develop moral values, confidence, and purpose. Therefore, this study confirms that a child's ability to understand themselves spiritually influences their moral decisions and overall character (Hyde, 2008).

These results indicate that this aspect of morality was well known and acknowledged by the majority because it is believed that how one treats others reveals their spiritual development, and also everyone loves to be treated well. This highlights how spiritual development shapes children's behavior, such as kindness, respect, cooperation, and empathy, in children aged 6-12 years old. This supports the idea that spiritual development promotes social virtues by emphasizing love, forgiveness, and unity. These findings align with Erikson's psychosocial development theory, which suggests that children learn trust and cooperation through social interactions influenced by cultural and spiritual values (King, 2017). This spiritual aspect indicates that children's ministry activities that take place in Sunday school encourage children to interact with peers and also learn how to relate with others. However, some children still struggle with social interactions despite the children's ministry involvement because of factors like family background, personality differences, and exposure to conflicting social influences. The findings show that children's ministries in Mbale actively implement such structured approaches, but with a lack of formal social engagement programs for children.

Scholars argue that awareness and respect for nature are key aspects of spiritual development (Hay & Nye, 2006). My study findings partially support this, as a significant number of respondents recognized environmental care as a spiritual value. A high percentage of 29% were unsure, which suggests that many people do not associate environmental stewardship with spiritual development. The high level of education among respondents suggests that participants were capable of providing informed responses regarding children's ministry practices and spiritual development. Educated ministry workers are more likely to appreciate the importance of structured ministry programs, curriculum development, and holistic child development. However, despite the high educational attainment, the study still found limited understanding of some aspects of spiritual development, indicating a need for specialized training in children's spiritual formation rather than general academic qualifications alone.

These results indicate that the majority agreed to the aspect, but even those who were not sure were quite many, and upon the interviews, there was very little understanding of the sense of creativity and wonder being an aspect of spiritual development. Scholars from literature review highlight those children can experience spiritual development through curiosity, imagination, and creative expression (Hart, 2006). However, the high level of uncertainty of 31% suggests that many children's ministries do not integrate creative activities like storytelling, music, and art into spiritual programs. Upon asking them questions, the researcher realized they were not sure because they did not know about it. This implies that many children's ministry leaders are not aware of the spiritual development aspects that are meant to help them in programming for the children.

The results indicated that many of the respondents are very much aware of the aspect of morality that is portrayed in the behavior and conduct of the children. In agreement, research supports that spiritual development is reflected in ethical behavior, decision-making, and personal integrity (Watson, 2027). This truly aligns with the respondents who recognized that moral conduct reflects spiritual development. The 16% uncertainty suggests that some ministry leaders may lack training in understanding moral and spiritual development.

According to Lawless (2021), children's ministries that neglect to monitor their children's spiritual development frequently have high dropout rates in their ministry practices. In addition, Hudson (2021) emphasized the importance of ongoing training for the children's ministry teachers because inexperienced teachers frequently find it difficult to effectively engage children.

5.4 Discussion of results for objective three: To examine the relationship between children's ministry practices and the spiritual development of children in children's ministries of Mbale

The majority of respondents said yes to the relationship between children's ministry practices and the spiritual development of children, with 86%, whereas 14% were not sure. The above results indicate there is truly a definite relationship between the practices and the spiritual development of children.

The main objective of this study was to examine the relationship between current children's ministry practices and the spiritual development of children, specifically focusing on the aspect of relationality with the transcendent. The regression analysis conducted yielded insights into how effective these practices are in nurturing spiritual growth among children aged 6-12 years. The results from the model

summary indicated a weak and practically insignificant relationship between the independent and dependent variables. The insignificance of current ministry practices in influencing spiritual development may be attributed to several factors, such as a lack of intentionality or structure in children's programs. If programs are more activity-based rather than spiritually formative, they may fail to foster relational depth with the transcendent; Limited engagement of children in meaningful spiritual practices such as prayer, worship, reflection, and Bible study; Insufficient involvement of parents and caregivers, who are critical in reinforcing faith at home; Over-reliance on volunteer workers who may not be adequately trained in child development and theology; One-size-fits-all approaches that do not address the diverse spiritual needs of children in different age brackets or cultural contexts.

These factors align with literature that development (Hay & Nye, 2006), which is shaped not only by church programs but also by family, school, peers, and socio-cultural influences (Benson et al., 2003). The weak relationship observed in this study confirms that ministry practices, in isolation, may not be sufficient to promote deep relationality with the transcendent among children. Previous studies have emphasized that effective spiritual formation requires holistic engagement, including cognitive, emotional, relational, and behavioral dimensions (Ratcliff, 2008; Stonehouse & May, 2010). This echoes the faith formation models that highlight the "church-home partnership" as essential for spiritual development (Barna Group, 2019), where churches equip parents. If churches fail to adopt this approach, their standalone efforts may remain weak and disconnected from children's daily experiences.

In the relationship with self, the model summary indicated a moderate positive correlation, R of 0.529, between current ministry practices and children's relationality with self. This suggests that the practices implemented within children's ministries in the sampled churches are meaningfully associated with how children perceive and relate to themselves. These findings align with contemporary spiritual formation theories that emphasize the intrinsic link between spiritual development and identity development (Fowler, 1981; Ratcliff, 2008). Ministry practices that affirm children's worth, encourage reflection, teach biblical truths about identity, and foster participation in community activities contribute significantly to their ability to understand themselves as valued, loved, and purposeful.

Moreover, these results suggest that children's ministries can play a pivotal role in shaping self-concept and emotional well-being. By creating spaces where children are heard, respected, taught, and mentored, ministries lay the foundation for children to develop spiritually rooted self-esteem and internal security. This also supports the notion that spiritual development is not only about one's relationship with the divine but also about fostering a healthy intrapersonal connection.

This finding is consistent with studies that have found a positive link between spiritual involvement and psychological well-being in children (King & Boyatzis, 2004; Benson et al., 2003). Spiritual practices such as prayer, journaling, and worship, when integrated meaningfully into children's ministry, have been shown to increase emotional regulation, resilience, and self-reflection. The current study reinforces this by empirically confirming the predictive power of ministry practices on relationality with self. The result also complements the findings of the Faith Maturity Scale (Benson et al., 1993), which underscores that spiritual maturity

includes dimensions of both transcendent-awareness and self-awareness, with self-awareness being strongly influenced by spiritual input during formative years.

The findings on relationality with environment suggest that the current practices within programs amongst studied churches are not effectively fostering interpersonal spiritual development. While children may be taught biblical stories or personal devotion skills, there appears to be a lack of structured emphasis on relational competencies such as teamwork, conflict resolution, empathy, and community engagement. Ministry activities may be focused more on individual spiritual development, for example, Bible memorization and prayer. Rather than community-based practices. This limitation reflects what scholars like Stonehouse and May (2010) argue: that children's spiritual growth should include both personal piety and communal expression.

Moreover, the findings resonate with Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (1979), which posits that children are influenced by multiple environments. The weak influence of ministry practices on relationality with others may be due to the dominant role of family, school, and peer groups in shaping relational behavior. In many cases, children's ability to relate with others is first formed and most actively reinforced in the home and school, not the church setting.

Other studies support this interpretation. For example, Benson et al. (2003) and King & Furrow (2004) found that youth who develop strong relational skills often do so in contexts where both faith and interpersonal modeling are consistently integrated. When ministry programs lack interactive, collaborative, and service-oriented components, their capacity to influence relational outcomes diminishes. Furthermore, research on holistic Christian education stresses the importance of

engaging not only the mind (biblical knowledge) and heart (personal faith) but also the hands (social responsibility and relationships) (Van Brummelen, 2009). If current children's ministry practices are heavily weighted toward the cognitive or personal spiritual aspects and neglect relational dimensions, this could explain the findings of the present study.

The findings revealed a weak and statistically insignificant relationship between current children's ministry practices and relationality with the environment. This suggests that, within the studied churches, environmental stewardship is not a significant component of spiritual formation for children. As global environmental concerns continue to grow, churches must reconsider and expand their discipleship approaches to include teachings that promote an ethic of care for creation, an essential aspect of holistic spiritual development. Moreover, children's environmental attitudes are often shaped more directly by schools, families, media, and broader social movements, rather than church programs. This could explain the weak correlation observed in this study. As research by Chawla (2009) and Palmer (1993) suggests, early experiences with nature, family modeling, and environmental education are the most influential predictors of environmental concern and behavior.

The findings of the study reveal a statistically significant and moderately strong positive relationship between current practices for children and their sense of wonder, awe, and happiness. These results strongly align with existing theoretical perspectives in the literature that emphasize the spiritual and psychological value of awe and joy in early faith formation, while also providing new empirical data to support these claims. The study's findings also echo insights from developmental

psychology. Research by Piaget and later Vygotsky supports the idea that awe and curiosity play key roles in early cognitive development. More recent work in positive psychology (Seligman, 2011) identifies happiness, awe, and gratitude as markers of flourishing in children. Ministry programs that promote these emotional states not only support spiritual growth but also contribute to mental and emotional well-being. While empirical research emphasizes the value of multisensory learning, such as music, art, nature exploration, and acting in spiritual development, this study placed a strong emphasis on Bible study and discipleship as essential ministry practices. This implies that rather than using interactive learning strategies, children's ministries in Mbale might be depending on the usual, typical ministry practices.

The study revealed a moderate, positive, and statistically significant relationship between current practices for children and their development of morality and beliefs. The observed relationship supports key ideas in the literature that argue for the formative role of children's ministry and spiritual education in shaping moral and ethical behavior. Researchers such as James Fowler (1981) and John Westerhoff (1980) have emphasized that faith and moral development occur through intentional exposure to religious practices, values, narratives, and relationships. Despite the significant results, it should be noted that the model explains only 15.3% of the variance in morality and beliefs. This implies that while current ministry practices have a meaningful role, they are not the sole contributors to moral and spiritual formation. Other influential factors, such as family influence, peer interactions, schooling environment, media exposure, and personal experiences, may also play substantial roles in shaping a child's moral worldview. This limitation is consistent with the literature suggesting that moral and faith development is a multifactorial

process. For example, Hay and Nye (2006) emphasize the critical role of parents and caregivers in modelling morality. Similarly, Bandura's social learning theory (1977) underscores the importance of observational learning from multiple agents in a child's environment. Therefore, ministry practices must be understood as one crucial but not exclusive component of a child's moral ecosystem.

The highest response was Bible study for children as the most effective practice. In agreement with majority of those respondents, Piaget's cognitive development theory suggested that children aged 6-12 years learn best through engaging and practical learning, of which Bible study and discipleship for children, when designed well, can be engaging for the children. Similarly, Vygotsky's theory emphasized that spiritual growth can best be nurtured through social interactions and guided learning practices. These study findings also suggest that children's ministries in Mbale may not be using diverse methods such as play-based learning, storytelling, and creative arts, which are essential in engaging children holistically.

The results revealed that the majority of the respondents said no to the parents showing interest in their children's spiritual development. This clearly indicates how most parents are not very intentional about their children's spiritual development. This agrees with some scholars who mentioned that without deliberate parental involvement, spiritual development is incomplete, according to Watson (2017) and Robinson (2020). In order to ensure constant faith development at home, parents are essential in reinforcing the spiritual truths taught at the children's ministry. Children who do not receive regular reinforcement of Christian ideals may experience fractured spiritual growth as a result of parental disengagement.

The results revealed that the majority of the respondents said no to hosting training and conferences about spiritual development. These results also indicate that some children's ministries do not have training for their teachers and parents on spiritual development, yet this is also a crucial issue to be put into consideration. King (2013) also pointed out that a lot of children's ministry leaders do not understand how significant parental involvement is, which results in poor relationships between children's ministries and families. This supports the conclusion of my study that teaching parents spiritual nurturing techniques is not the uppermost priority in many Mbale children's ministries.

5.5 Discussion of results for objective four: To examine the barriers hindering the sustaining of the children's ministry practices for the spiritual development of 6-12-year-olds in children's ministries of Mbale.

The majority of the respondents mentioned they have limited finances most time. These results indicate that most children's ministries face a challenge of limited finances for the children's ministry practices, which later becomes a problem for the consistency of the ministry, which could also hinder them from implementing some practices that could be effective in the spiritual development of the children.

This study revealed that financial constraints are a key barrier, and this shows that Mbale children's ministries may not be seeking new ways or funding options to support children's ministry, such as donor partnerships, community fundraising, and volunteer-driven programs.

Some children's ministries still do not have the infrastructure, which could affect their practices being done. The results revealed that the majority of the respondents indicated that the barrier to motivation of the children's ministry teacher. These

results reveal that some children's ministries do not consider motivating or giving any appreciation in kind or anything to encourage those with working.

Despite the rapid advancement of technology and the increasing digitalization of society, the study found that many children's ministries face significant technological challenges that hinder the effective implementation of their programs and activities. Limited access to technological resources, inadequate digital infrastructure, and insufficient integration of technology into ministry practices restrict children's ministries from engaging children through contemporary and innovative approaches. As children are increasingly exposed to digital content and online influences, the inability of children's ministries to effectively utilize technology may weaken their capacity to communicate biblical values and provide relevant spiritual guidance. This finding suggests that children's ministries in Mbale are struggling to adapt to the demands of the digital age, thereby limiting their effectiveness in nurturing children's spiritual development within an increasingly technology-driven environment.

These results still indicate that most parents do not cooperate with the children's ministry teachers to promote the practices that could enhance the spiritual development of their children. The results revealed that the majority of the respondents said that the barrier of absenteeism of the children's ministry teachers happens sometimes, with 56%, followed by those who said it happens most times, with 19%, whereas 15% said it happens rarely, and 10% said it never happens. This shows that the absenteeism of teachers is also a barrier to implementing some of the practices, or could affect the quality of the programs. The high proportion of employed respondents suggests that children's ministry workers bring diverse

professional experiences and skills into ministry. However, employment commitments may also contribute to some of the barriers identified in the study, such as limited time for ministry activities, volunteer fatigue, and absenteeism among children's ministry workers.

According to Euade (2016) and King (2013), children's spiritual development will decline in the absence of intentionality and leadership support. Children's ministry leaders are held responsible for creating a culture in which children's ministry is valued equally with adult ministry. In addition, Chuck (2021) asserted that children's ministry leaders who fail to partake in children's ministry are missing out on an opportunity to shape the next generation of believers. This study validates this, since many children's ministry leaders in these children's ministries were assigning responsibilities totally toward volunteers, with little monitoring or participation.

Parents are very crucial when we talk about youngsters, yet the above results show their disengaged, which could help to raise their interest in the spiritual development of their children. This study distinctly highlights the total lack of organized children's ministry initiatives intended to involve parents, despite previous literature recognizing their influence on children's spiritual development. The predominance of female respondents suggests that women play a more active role in children's ministry than men. This may explain the continuity of children's ministry programs, as women have traditionally been more involved in caregiving and child nurturing roles. The finding is consistent with previous studies indicating that females are more likely to participate in children's ministry activities than males. However, the low participation of men may limit children's exposure to diverse role models within ministry settings.

Finances hinder implementation of the children's ministry practices with 56%, followed by those that said they had limited time with the children with 14%, followed by those who said it is due to having few teachers with 12%, whereas 7% said it is because of lack of support from parents, and 7% said it is the outdated curriculum. Then 2% said it is because of the government calendar and poor planning, respectively. This reveals that many practices require finances to be implemented, but they are not available to them to effectively implement their programs for the children's ministry.

Henney (2022) and Hudson (2021) both point out how financial constraints hinder children's ministries' capacity to sustain children's ministry practices. Many children's ministries are currently struggling to allocate resources, favoring adult ministries over children's programming. Furthermore, Lawless (2021) claims that many children's ministries dedicate a small budget, so becoming secondary among other children's ministry activities. This supports the results of this study that children's ministry leaders do not prioritize financial investments in children's programming.

Interviews played an important role in complementing the survey data by providing qualitative insights into the lived experiences of children's ministry leaders, parents, and children ministry leaders. Their responses guided the explanation of why certain trends emerged in the findings, such as the lack of parental engagement and financial constraints. Additionally, interview data highlighted the absence of structured parent-child spiritual programs in Mbale children's ministries, a gap not widely discussed in existing Ugandan literature.

The majority of respondents were female, married, university-educated, employed, and aged between 36 and 40 years, suggesting that the study drew insights from mature and relatively educated individuals actively involved in children's ministry. However, despite their educational qualifications and life experience, the study revealed limited understanding of some dimensions of children's spiritual development, indicating the need for specialized training in spiritual formation. Furthermore, the dominance of Sunday school teachers and respondents with only one to five years of ministry experience may explain the continued reliance on Sunday school as the primary ministry practice and the limited adoption of more comprehensive approaches to children's spiritual development.

CHAPTER SIX

Conclusions and recommendations

6.1 Introduction

This chapter encompasses the study conclusions and recommendations from the findings that were discovered during data collection and analysis.

6.2 Summary of the findings

The study found that Sunday school was the dominant and most common practice in the children's ministries, with many respondents equating children's ministry solely with Sunday school. Other practices such as Vacation Bible School, outreach programs, cell fellowships, Bible study, discipleship, and midweek programs existed but were less emphasized. The findings revealed that children exhibited various aspects of spiritual development, particularly morality and beliefs, relationality with self, creativity and imagination, wonder, awe, and happiness. Respondents generally acknowledged that spiritual development is an integral component of holistic child development. However, many ministry workers demonstrated limited awareness of some spiritual development dimensions, especially creativity, imagination, and relational aspects, suggesting knowledge gaps among children's ministry leaders. The study established that a relationship exists between children's ministry practices and children's spiritual development. However, regression analysis revealed that current children's ministry practices had weak predictive power on the various aspects of spiritual development. The major barriers included limited finances, inadequate parental involvement, absenteeism of children's ministry teachers, lack of motivation for volunteers, inadequate infrastructure, limited technological resources, insufficient leadership support, and absence of structured programs for engaging parents.

6.3 Conclusions of the study

1. The findings reveal that Sunday school is most practiced in the children's ministries in Mbale children's, though there are many other practices
2. This reveals that the majority of the children's ministries in Mbale base only rely on Sunday school as their main practice for the children's spiritual engagement, with limited utilization of other practices.
3. Leadership involvement in children's ministry is generally low, resulting in limited support, oversight, and resource allocation.
4. This study found most leaders, including the senior children's ministry leaders, rarely visit and minister in Sunday school.
5. Some of these children's ministries lack structured curricula, and do not have consistency in planning, which eventually affects the quality and consistency.
6. The situation was also noticed that certain ministries were failing to adapt to new ways of engaging children, but were stuck in the old methods and practices.
7. Additionally, this study proves that most children's ministries do not take attendance of the children, which is a very important practice in the children's ministry.
8. It revealed how some teachers are very inconsistent and always absent, and there was no structure to keep them accountable.
9. This study also revealed that most of the children's ministries are still stuck with the old-style teaching practices.

10. Through this study, it was discovered that outreach programs and acts of service involving children are limited in most children's ministries.
11. Many children's ministry workers have limited understanding of the aspects of children's spiritual development, which may affect programming and ministry effectiveness.
12. The findings revealed that there is a significant gap in understanding of the relationship with self as a component of spiritual development.
13. Gaps exist in structured programs or practices to nurture these aspects. Many respondents were uncertain about less conventional aspects of spiritual development
14. Furthermore, this study revealed that the spiritual aspect of the sense of creativity, awe, and wonder is not known and understood by the children's ministry teachers.
15. This study proved that there is a relationship between children's ministry practices and spiritual development.
16. Current children's ministry practices have limited overall influence on the spiritual development because they are not sufficiently comprehensive.
17. Financial limitations are the most significant barrier affecting the implementation and sustainability of the children's ministry practices.
18. One of the most intriguing barriers is the limited involvement of the parents in the children's ministry
19. Additionally, this study reveals that there is a paucity of structured programs to engage parents in the children's ministry.
20. Teacher absenteeism, inadequate motivation, insufficient infrastructure, and limited leadership support negatively affect ministry effectiveness

21. Limited time with the children due to the government calendar; children spend more time at school and less time at home during holidays.
22. The absence of structured parent-engagement programs limits collaboration between children's ministries and families in nurturing children's spiritual development.

6.4 Recommendations of the study

1. Children's ministries should diversify their practices beyond Sunday school by incorporating other ministry practices like cell group fellowships, discipleship, Bible study, outreaches, and experiential learning opportunities
2. Church leaders and senior children's ministry leaders, elders, deacons, bishops, and reverends, together with leadership, should take a more active service to youngsters as seriously as they do the adult ministry through regular supervision, participation, strategic planning, and allocation adequate resources.
3. Children's ministries should develop and implement structured curricula and ministry practices that clearly outline the spiritual development goals, content, teaching methods and expected outcomes for different age groups.
4. Children's ministries should organize several trainings through workshops, seminars, and conferences for training leaders on children's spiritual development aspects, and age-appropriate practices.
5. Ministry workers should intentionally incorporate activities that nurture all aspects of the children's spiritual development
6. Additionally, children's ministry leaders should partner with other children's ministries and Christian organizations that work with children to train their ministry teachers and parents on these aspects of spiritual development.

7. Furthermore, the study recommends that children's ministries also consider the aspect of the sense of creativity, awe, and wonder that is not known and understood by teachers.
8. Furthermore, children's ministries need to develop parent-child spiritual training programs, home devotion guides, and workshops that teach parents how to nurture the spiritual development of their children
9. Additionally, children's ministries should incorporate more interactive practices like teamwork projects, group discussions, and mentorship programs to strengthen children's relationships with others.
10. In agreement with scholars, the study recommends that children's ministries should have structured programs for relationships with self.
11. Children's ministries should strengthen bible study and discipleship programs since they were identified as the most effective practices for nurturing spiritual development.
12. Children's ministries ought to start fundraising campaigns, seek outside sponsorship, and push for children's ministry financing within their own congregations.
13. Churches should establish parent-engagement programs that equip parents with skills and resources to support their children's spiritual development at home.
14. Furthermore, the researcher recommends that children's ministries educate children's ministry leaders, elders, deacons, parents, and ministry leaders on the vitality of children's ministry.
15. Ministries mobilize additional financial resources through fundraising initiatives, partnerships, and community support.

16. Church leaders should develop strategies to motivate and retain children's ministry teachers and volunteers through training, recognition, mentorship, and support systems.
17. Children's ministries should invest in appropriate infrastructure, learning materials, and technology to enhance ministry delivery and children's engagement.
18. Future ministry programming should adopt a holistic approach that recognizes the influence of parents, schools, peers, and communities in shaping children's spiritual development.
19. In order to make spiritual learning more interesting, children's ministries could create mentorship programs, train teachers, and include digital resources such as Bible apps, Christian animation, and digital storytelling in children's ministry.

6.5 Recommendations for Further Research

Future studies should examine the influence of other factors such as parental involvement, family environment, peer relationships, school experiences, and socioeconomic conditions on children's spiritual development, as these factors may explain aspects of spiritual growth not accounted for by children's ministry practices alone.

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Appendix A: Consent form

TITLE OF RESEARCH:

**THE INFLUENCE OF CHILDREN'S MINISTRY PRACTICES ON THE SPIRITUAL
DEVELOPMENT OF CHILDREN 6-12 YEARS; A CASE OF CHILDREN'S MINISTRIES IN
MBALE**

PRINCIPAL SUPERVISOR: Madam Doreen Kukugiza

STUDENT RESEARCHER: Peace Tibagonzeka

I (respondent) have reread, and perused through, and I have apprehended the data given in this Letter to Respondents. All concerns and inquiries that I had have been responded to my approval. Therefore, willing to approve and decide to engage in this research data collection through interviews that will be digitally recorded, or fill out and answer the questionnaires, and have my practices watched. I realize that I can withdraw my consent at any time without adverse consequences. I accept that the information collected for the study may be published or may be provided to other researchers in a form that does not identify me in any way.

NAME OF PARTICIPANT:

SIGNATUREDATE:

SIGNATURE OF RESEARCH SUPERVISOR:

DATE.....

SIGNATURE OF STUDENT RESEARCHER:

DATE:

Appendix B: Approval notice and acceptances

 **UGANDA CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY**
A Centre of Excellence in the Heart of Africa
Office of the Vice Chancellor
Research Ethics Committee UG-026



20th January, 2025

PEACE TIBAGONZEKA
Uganda Christian University
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Email: ptibagonzeka@afu.ac.ug

UG-REC-026 APPROVAL NOTICE

To: Peace Tibagonzeka, Principal Investigator

Re: UCU-REC Application titled: *The Influence of Children's Ministry Practices on the Spiritual Development of Children 6-12 Years; A Case Of Churches In Mbale.*
Application Number: **UCUREC-2024-1147**
Version: 4.1

Type: ☐ INITIAL REVIEW
☐ 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 approved the above referenced application.

Approval of the research is for the period from 20th January, 2025, to 20th January, 2026
This research is considered minimal risk category.
As Principal Investigator of the research, you are responsible for fulfilling the following requirements of approval:

1. All co-investigators must be kept informed of the status of the research.
2. Changes, amendments, and additions to the protocol or the consent form must be submitted to the REC for re-review and approval prior to the activation of the changes. The REC application number assigned to the research should be cited in any correspondence.
3. Reports of unanticipated problems involving risks to participants or other must be submitted to the REC. New information that becomes available which could change the risk: benefit ratio must be submitted promptly for REC review.

1 of 2

Research and Ethics



UGANDA CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY

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Office of the Vice Chancellor
Research Ethics Committee UG-026



4. Only approved consent forms are to be used in the enrollment of participants. All consent forms signed by subjects and/or witnesses should be retained on file. The REC may conduct audits of all study records, and consent documentation may be part of such audits.
5. Regulations require review of an approved 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 20th January, 2026 in order to continue the study beyond the approved period. Failure to submit a continuing review application in a timely fashion may result in suspension or termination of the study, at which point new participants may not be enrolled and currently enrolled participants must be taken off the study.
6. The REC application number assigned to the research should be cited in any correspondence with the REC of record.
7. Your research details have been shared with the Executive secretary of Uganda National Council for Science and Technology (UNCST) and you are not required to get clearance since you are a Master's Degree research. Refer to UNCST Research registration and clearance Policy and guidelines (July 2016) in Uganda section 6(e).

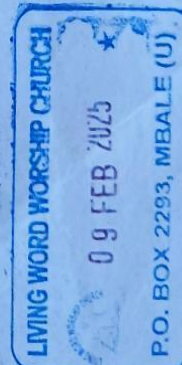
The following is the list of all documents approved in this application by UG-REC _026:

	Document Title	Language	Version	Version Date
1.	Protocol	English	1.0	2024-12-09
2	Data Collection tools	English	1.0	2024-12-09
3	Informed Consent Form	English	1.0	2024-12-09

Signed and Stamped

[Signature]

Prof. Peter Waiswa,
UCUREC Chairperson,
pwaiswa@musph.ac.ug



Permission granted for her to collect whatever information needed for her research work.

sm aschwomp.
Permission granted for this Student to collect information 2 of 2 on her research work. By Sub-Dean/Vicar The Very Rev. Can. Pam Masete



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February 10, 2025

Professor Peter Waiswa
Chairperson, Uganda Christian University Research Ethics Committee (UCUREC)
Uganda Christian University

Dear Professor Waiswa,

Re: UCU-REC Application - "The Influence of Children's Ministry Practice on the Spiritual Development of Children 6-12 Years; A Case Study at Deliverance Church Mbale"

I am writing to acknowledge receipt of your letter dated 20th January 2025 regarding the above-mentioned research study, for which Miss Peace Tibagonzeka is the principal investigator.

I am pleased to inform you that Miss Tibagonzeka's request to conduct research at Deliverance Church Mbale was honored. She had the opportunity to interview all the individuals she wished to meet, and we appreciated her professionalism throughout the process.

We wish Miss Tibagonzeka success in her Master's program at Uganda Christian University and appreciate her interest in researching the spiritual development of children within our church community.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Yours sincerely,

Pastor Silver Wanzala
Lead Pastor, Deliverance Church Mbale



"The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me.....He has anointed Me.....to preach deliverance" Luke 4:18

Appendix C: Research questionnaire

UGANDA CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY

SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

RESEARCH QUESTIONNAIRE TO BE ADMINISTERED TO CHILDREN'S MINISTRY WORKERS, CHILDREN'S MINISTRY LEADERS, AND PARENTS IN CHILDREN'S MINISTRY

My name is Tibagonzeka Peace, a student of the Masters of Arts in Child Development, researching "The influence of children ministry practices on the spiritual development of children 6-12 years, a case of children's ministries in Mbale city." I kindly request you to fill in this questionnaire as honestly as you can. Your information is set to help children's ministries and children's ministries in laying better practices to encourage the spiritual development of the children as a foundational ministry to the children's ministry. The data will be preserved with utmost confidentiality.

Section A- respondent's particulars

Age of respondent

Age bracket	Tick where appropriate
15 - 20 years	
21 - 25 years	
26 - 30 years	
31 - 35 years	
36 - 40 years	
41 - 45 years	
46 - 50 years	

51 - above	
------------	--

What is your occupation?

.....

Gender of respondent (Tick) Male ☐ Female ☐

Level of Education

Level	Tick where appropriate
Primary	
Secondary	
University	
Tertiary	
None	

Marital status of respondent

Status	Tick where appropriate
Single	
Married	
Separated/Divorced	
Widowed	

Occupation of the respondent

Occupation	Tick where appropriate
------------	------------------------

Employed	
Self-employed	
Not employed	
Other -specify.....	

Place of residence

.....

How long have you served in the ministry or children's ministry? Tick where appropriate

Less than a year	
2 - 5 years	
6 - 10 years	
11 - 15 years	
16 - 20 years	
21 - 25 years	
26 - 30 years	
35 and above	

Responsibility held at the ministry in the children's ministry?

Responsibility	Tick where appropriate
Children's children's ministry leader	
Sunday school teacher	

Technical support (sound, video, etc.)	
Worship leader	
Others (specify).....	

Section B- Understanding of spiritual development

How do you understand the term “spiritual development”?

.....

.....

What is the difference between spiritual development and religion? Tick where appropriate

	Agree	Strongly agree	Not sure	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Spiritual development involves having an understanding of why one was created					
Spiritual development involves pondering,					

seeking to know the supreme. one					
Spiritual development involves compassion and concern for the person, people, and the environment.					
In the religious aspect, people follow certain doctrines and customs based on a specific religion.					
In religion, they believe in the eternal being, attend a nearby place of worship,					

respect, and regard metaphors, prayer, ceremonies, and songs.					
--	--	--	--	--	--

Has there been an assessment to examine the spiritual development of children in this children's ministry?

☐ Yes

☐ No

☐ Not sure

Please support your choice of answer

.....
.....

Is spiritual development part of child development?

☐ Yes

☐ No

Section C- Children's Ministry practices

Do you minister to children according to their age groups?

☐ Yes

☐ No

☐ Not sure

Please support your choice of answer

.....

What are the current practices for the children in your children's ministry? Tick where appropriate

Sunday school	
Play	
Artistic activities	
Bible study for children	
Child evangelism	
Parents' participation in children's programs	
Cell groups	
Christmas and Easter production involving children	
Worship and prayer	
Children's community acts of service and volunteerism	
Partnerships with schools and parents	
Missions for children	
Outreaches involving children (hospitals, etc.)	
Children's camps	
Children's discipleship	
Others (specify).....	

Are there specific practices for the 6-12-year-olds in your children's ministry?

☐ Yes

☐ No

What practices are they?

.....

.....

Do you have a curriculum for the children in Sunday school?

☐ Yes

☐ No

If yes, who designed it? If not, why?

.....

.....

Do you take the children's attendance in the children's ministry?

☐ Yes

☐ No

How many teachers are involved in children's ministry?

Number of teachers	Tick where appropriate
1 - 4 teachers	
5 - 8 teachers	
9 - 12 teachers	

13 - above	
------------	--

Do you have a yearly program planned for children in your children's ministry?

☐ Yes

☐ No

If yes, what are the programs you planned for the children this year?

.....

.....

Does the senior pastor visit the children's ministry?

☐ Yes

☐ No

How many times in a year?

Number of times	Tick where appropriate
Once a year	
Twice in a year	
Three times a year	
Very often	
Never	

Section Characteristics of spiritual development

How do children express their spiritual development? Tick where appropriate

	Agree	Strongly agree	Not sure	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Relationality with the transcendent					
Relationality with self					
Relationality with others					
Relationality with the environment					
Sense of creativity and imagination.					
Sense of wonder, awe, and happiness					
Morality and beliefs					

In what other ways can you nurture spiritual development in children of 6-12 years old?

.....

.....

Section E- Relationship between children's ministry practices and spiritual development of children

Do you believe that there is a relationship between children's ministry practices and spiritual development?

☐ Yes

☐ No

Please support your choice of answer

.....

What practices can best bring out the spiritual development of children?

Practice	Tick where appropriate
Sunday school	
Play	
Artistic activities	
Bible study for children	
Child evangelism	
Worship and prayer	
Christmas and easter production involving children	
Parents' participation in children's programs	
Children's community acts of service and volunteerism	
Partnerships with schools and parents	

Missions for children	
Outreaches involving children	
Cell groups	
Children's camps	
Children's discipleship	
Others (specify).....	

What is the best/most effective practice to promote the spiritual development of children? **Tick only one or specify when necessary**

Practice	Tick only one
Sunday school	
Play	
Artistic activities	
Bible study for children	
Child evangelism	
Worship and prayer	
Children's community acts of service and volunteerism	
Partnerships with schools and parents	
Missions for children	
Cell groups	
Children's camps	
Children's discipleship	
Others (specify).....	

What new practices can your children's ministry start using/implementing that can help promote the spiritual development of children?

.....

.....

Do you work with the parents to help them understand how to promote the spiritual development of their children?

☐ Yes

☐ No

If yes, explain how.

.....

.....

Are parents in your children's ministry talked to about the spiritual growth of their children?

☐ Yes

☐ No

Do parents in your children's ministry express interest in their children's spiritual development?

☐ Yes

☐ No

Are there trainings/conferences about the spiritual development of children

☐ Yes

☐ No

What is the children's ministry's mission statement?

.....

.....

How has it influenced the children's ministry practices in your children's ministry?

.....

.....

Section F- Barriers faced in children's ministry

What challenges is your children's ministry facing

Challenges	Every time	Sometimes	Most times	Rarely	Never
Limited financial resources					
Lack of volunteers					
No specified rooms/classes for children					
Burnout					
Few or limited staff					

No specific children's ministry leadership					
No motivation measures for teachers					
Cultural and societal issues					
Technology issues					
Lack of cooperation from parents					
Absenteeism of children					
Absenteeism of Sunday school teachers					
No specific curriculum					
Lack of support from the					

children's ministry leaders					
No children's ministry programs to engage parents					

Does the budget of the children's ministry provide for the children's ministry?

☐ Yes

☐ No

What problems are hindering the implementation of the children's ministry practices

.....
.....

What barriers are hindering the spiritual development of the children

.....
.....

What are your recommendations to the children's ministry leadership regarding children's ministry?

.....
.....

Apart from the children's ministry, what other factors can influence the spiritual development of the children

.....

.....

THANK YOU

GOD BLESS YOU

Appendix D: Research interview guide

UGANDA CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY

SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

RESEARCH INTERVIEW TO BE ADMINISTERED TO CHILDREN'S MINISTRY WORKERS AND CHILDREN'S MINISTRY LEADERS IN CHILDREN'S MINISTRY

I am a student of the Master of Arts in Child Development, researching “The influence of children ministry practices on the spiritual development of children 6-12 years, a case of children’s ministries in Mbale city.” I kindly request you to fill in this questionnaire as honestly as you can. Your information is set to help children’s ministries and children’s ministries in laying better practices to encourage the spiritual development of the children as a foundational ministry to the children’s ministry. The data will be preserved with utmost confidentiality.

Section A- respondent's particulars

1. Age
2. What is your occupation?
3. What is the sex of the respondent?
4. Place of residence
5. What responsibilities are held at the children’s ministry?

Section B- Understanding of spiritual development

6. How do you understand the term “spiritual development”?
7. What is the difference between spiritual development and religion? Can you explain their relationship?

8. Has there been an assessment to examine the spiritual development of children in this children's ministry?

Section C- Children's Ministry Practices

11. Do you minister to children according to their age groups?
12. What are the current practices for the children in your children's ministry?
18. How many teachers are involved in children's ministry?
19. Do you have a yearly program planned for children in your children's ministry? b). If yes, what are the programs you planned for the children this year?
20. Does the senior pastor visit the children's ministry?
- b) How often?

Section Characteristics of spiritual development

21. How do children express their spiritual development?
22. What can you see in the life of a child of 6-12 years that will make you know
23. How can you nurture a child spiritually? How can you support spiritual development in children 6-12 years old?

Section E- Relationship between children's ministry practices and the spiritual development of children

26. Do you believe that there is a relationship between children's ministry practices and spiritual development? b) Please support your choice of answer
27. What practices can best bring out the spiritual development of children?

32. Do parents in your children's ministry express interest in their children's spiritual development?

Ministry?

36. What practices have you put in place to promote the spiritual development of children in the following areas?

Section F- Barriers faced in children's ministry

37. What challenges is the children's ministry facing

38. What problems are hindering the implementation of the children's ministry practices

40. What barriers are hindering the spiritual development of the children

41. What are your recommendations to the children's ministry leadership and the children's ministers?

43. Apart from the children's ministry, what other factors can influence the spiritual development of the children

THANK YOU

GOD BLESS YOU