

# Effects of Modernization on Youths' Morality: A Case of Karūri Catholic Parish, Kenya

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## Abstract

*It is evident in the present times in Kenyan society moral decadence among the youth is fast becoming the norm and sadly pointing to waning of the highly desired moral values. The patterns of behavior among the youth reveal morality level is at an all-time low; long regarded as a consequent factor of modernization. Therefore, this study seeks to examine the effect of modernization on moral values taught to young people in Karūri Catholic Parish. To achieve this, the study engages qualitative research and employs questionnaires, interviews, focused group discussions and review of prior literature to gather the relevant data. A sample of 115 respondents were selected comprising two elders, three priests and two family experts selected purposively and 40 mothers, 36 fathers and 34 youths selected using the snow balling sampling method. The findings confirm that modernization, through mediums such as social media and urbanization have provided new opportunities and structures which negatively influence the inculcating of moral values into young people, and as such society has lost most of its rich cultural ideals which characterized the Agĩkũyũ youth in the past. Despite most youth generally appreciating the importance values have in their lives, a number hold the notion some moral values which in earlier periods gave meaning to human life are less important. The study establishes an urgent need to fill the gap created by the changed structures of inculcating values for the purpose of healing the shaky family foundation aggravated by youths' failure to fully understand the principles of being morally right and calls for the work of redeeming the lost youth to intensify.*

**Key Words:** Modernization, Youth, Moral Values

## 1. Introduction

Today the effects of modernization are being blamed for the moral crisis the youth are currently facing. A core argument has been modernization effect produces pervasive social and cultural consequences, and affects how values are being taught to and perceived by the youth. From many sources it does appear modernization is a threat to maintaining those values

necessary for the survival of the people (Ime & Unwanabong, 2014). A related and popular view has been the youth no longer know how they ought to conduct themselves as individuals and members of society; neither do they seem to know what values should inform their behavior (Gitonga, Mbugua & Ogenda, 2013; Ime & Unwanabong, 2014; Mugambi, 2002). Ideally, it is universally established there is no group of people which can survive without a set of values that hold them together and guarantees their continued existence (Etuk, 2002).

In the Agĩkũyũ society, boys and girls were made aware having moral values was a quality pursued by all (Leakey, 1977). For this reason the parents schooled their children to cultivate behavior that earned them people's respect and gratefulness (Kinoti, 2013:26). Raising responsible children who ensured harmony and continuity of the family and society was treasured by all. As both gender children continued to grow in the traditional Agĩkũyũ society, they kept acquiring a mass of knowledge all the time. The knowledge was practical and pre-conditioned by behaviour, where children learnt mainly by being allowed or barred from doing certain things in particular occasions, things that were within their experiences. The boys and the girls, in the process of growing up, realized they had one thing to learn which sums up all the others, that is, "the manners and deportment proper to their station in the community" (Kenyatta, 2015:72). Over the years though, the rapidly changing social and cultural circumstances caused by modernization have adversely affected what and how values are passed down to the children (Zani, 1999:49).

Even as the society continues to change there are certain values, moral standards, or principles responsible for holding its fabric together and must be adhered to as the prosperity of the society depends on it. Ime & Unwanabong quotes Aminigo who notes that when an individual understands the principles of moral conduct and commits to behaving morally in his dealings with others he is said to manifest moral health; to the traditional Agĩkũyũ, the ideal was rightly relating and behaving towards other people as opposed to the western philosophy of individualism (Kenyatta, 2015; Idang, 2015). Hence as Anadi continues to highlight, members of the society, most importantly, the youth need to imbibe moral values that will enhance their character development and position them to become positively oriented (Ime & Unwanabong 2014:40). Unfortunately, sizeable literature report the existence of widespread irresponsible and unacceptable behaviour of young people (Gitonga et al., 2013). This makes one wonder what moral values the youth of today have been taught even as modernization effect is being blamed for the unacceptable state of affairs, including in Karũri Catholic Parish in the heartland of the Agĩkũyũ community within Kĩambu County. In this article the authors delve into the Agĩkũyũ system of informal education, scale of moral values in Agĩkũyũ society and effects of modernization on youth morals. Appropriate recommendations are made and finally the conclusion is drawn from the deliberations.

## **2. The Agĩkũyũ System of Informal Education**

The Agĩkũyũ had an informal system of education which relied on kinship ties, age grouping, gender and family ties (Waweru 2011). The system aimed at the formation and growth of an individual's character principally through relationships with other persons and not just a mere accumulation of knowledge. Good character is the essence and basic crucial element of the

African ethics and moral system necessary for the community's self-maintenance and continuation (Kenyatta, 2015; Gyekye, 2010). Acquiring values of honesty, respect, kindness, obedience, generosity and compassion would make one to be judged as good and having the necessary skills, beliefs and habits to guarantee his/her commitment to society's ideals and acceptable behaviour. The important aspects of traditional education which were used to impart values included story-telling, teaching, practical training, rite of initiation and other methods (Kenyatta, 2015). The Gĩkũyũ stories were packed with messages on honesty, hard work and self-control which are commended to any community since they are judged to have a universal appeal (Gachiri, 1996).

Story telling was an effective method of communicating moral values that involved fully the educator, effective faculties of the learner, the community and the environment. In a deliberate manner, this method made use of the emotional participation of the listeners in the shaping of moral behaviour and attitudes (Gachiri, 1996). In the early stages of a child, the mother sung lullabies which lay emphases on tribal values. The child grew listening intently to tales, riddle and proverbs having moral messages (Kenyatta, 2015). A little baby on the mother's back felt the rhythm produced by the mother while grinding grain for making gruel. The baby was exposed to the aromas, sounds and commotion of the entire process without ability to know. The bigger child followed the process with the awareness that she does not know and so eager to learn (Gĩkũyũ Centre for Cultural Studies, 2017).

The boys played games involving spears, bows and arrows and slings to learn marksmanship skills and develop leadership role as girls pulverized grains, made pots and cooked imaginary dishes, helping to dispose them to management and harmonization of the affairs of a homestead. As the children matured, boys were taught by their fathers and grandfathers and other male relatives such skills like to differentiate large herds of cattle by their horn size and/or colour, techniques for preparing land, boundaries and family genealogy. With time children grew to be of age for initiation and the process of education still continued in this stage (Kenyatta, 2015).

Parrinder observed that education and hard-experience during the rite of initiation period prepared young men and women to live in the community as adults. The pronouncement of the youth as an adult boosted his/her morale to accept the adult role which normally demanded moving away from childish behaviour to being committed to responsible living which embraced moral values (Parrinder, 1976). For instance, the hardships experienced during the initiation process served to teach the initiates obedience to elders and further inculcated in them the spirit of hard work, perseverance and self-discipline in difficult situations (Enzenweke, 2015).

The initiation rite acted as a gateway to participate in the community's governance with elders (Wachege, 1992) just as in line with the African adage "a child who washes his hands clean eats with the elders." The period of exclusion also provided-opportunity for the young adults to learn some songs, dances, folktales, handworks and orientations on men and women status roles. In the course of this training, the secret and sacred issues of life were learnt. This further developed the youth from childish behaviour to being committed to moral values and attitude. In a nutshell the puberty rite was loaded with great significance as far as inculcating or impacting values in the youth was concerned. It also re-enacts the human spirit encounter and

relationship for the purpose of ensuring continuity of the relationship between the young people and the dead (Enzenweke, 2015).

One remarkable thing about the Agĩkũyũ method of learning was that the knowledge acquired was in relationship to a practical deed and so knowledge was merged in activity and could always be called whenever the particular activity was required again. Similarly behaviour was learned through doing things together and was therefore directed from the outset to social activities. Thus the education was in participating in the life of a community and this was mostly realized successfully. In the Agĩkũyũ country everything bore a moral and social reference and everyone's initiative was more often than not directed towards corporate effort. In this respect, Kenyatta points an accusing finger at westernization for working against the Agĩkũyũ traditional institutions, which in its best was a system of mutual help and solidarity in social, economic and political activities (Kenyatta, 2015).

The discourse started by Kenyatta on the demise of the Agĩkũyũ traditional institutions is epitomized in the Kenyan formal education system which is western oriented. A disadvantage in teaching only modern subjects is that traditional wisdom, religious beliefs, ideals, morals and warnings are lost never to get to future generations, which is a contributor to the current youth moral crisis. For instance some contemporary parents of Karũri Catholic Parish do not know of a single folktale they can use to teach their children. According to scholars such as Waweru and Kinoti, the Agĩkũyũ made an error by ignoring their informal system of education, instead of embracing both of them for instruction of their children (Waweru, 2013; Kinoti, 2013). Likewise the Church and community elders did not teach people the Gikũyũ ways that were good alongside their evangelization attempts, and the parents abandoned teaching their children what good the tradition offered and entrusted the children's education to school teachers since the only knowledge of morals the parents possessed was the traditional one which the Christian missionaries referred to as 'pagan' and 'evil' (Kinoti, 2013:15-16). The condition of youth morality has continued to deteriorate due to the effects of modernization, a major feature in the society where some moral values appear to have lost their allure.

### **3. Youth and Scale of Moral Values in Agĩkũyũ Society**

Youths are identified as a group of persons who portray particular characteristics such as: strong desire for upward mobility, tend to be idealistic because of the values inculcated in them from their early age, eager to live their role model and often frustrated and anxious since this idealism is not the realism of everyday life. Again in line with Oyebamiji (2008) as quoted in Ime & Unwanabong (2014), youth are excessively ambitious and very energetic beings who desire change in the shortest time. The youths are idealistic because they are taught from childhood to value ideals which are instilled in them in form of moral values. In many ways, youth are regarded as the future leaders that no society can afford to ignore. They act as major determinant of how far the development and growth in their societies can go (Ime & Unwanabong, 2014). This study considers youth to be those persons between ages 14 to 35 years. However the Kenya Constitution 2010 defines a youth as a person who has attained the age of 18 years and has not attained 35 years (Kenya Laws Reports, 2010).

Almost all the youth of Karūri Catholic Parish have life goals of becoming important persons in society. They want to be aerobic engineers, surgeons, journalist, lawyers, accountants, oncologists, managers, businessmen and businesswomen, leaders, pilots, politicians, teachers, to serve in the army and so on. Others aim to be rich when they are still young. To properly realize these achievements and/or be productive in service the youth need to have been well formed in their moral values.

The value of a thing whether it be a belief or an object is defined normally as its worth. Just as what is seen to be of high value is treasured, the beliefs that people hold-about right or wrong, and are worth being held, are equally treasured (Idang, 2015). Equally, the custom of the Agĩkũyũ community was to disapprove what did not promote smooth relationships, uphold the social structure and any conduct that ran counter to its beliefs (Kinoti, 2013; Malcolm, 1974: 84). On the whole, the moral ethic and code of behaviour of the Agĩkũyũ was governed by a system of taboos (Kamenju, 2013; Cagnolo, 2016). Their effort to pursue the right causes was also informed by their religious beliefs in a moral God and the fear of punishment for disobedience (Kenyatta 2015; Cognolo, 2006; Ime & Unwanabong, 2014). So the yardstick for someone's worth was his or her morals, manners, and respect for customs, conventions and laws of the land, and obedience to authority.

Kenyatta and Kinoti (2013) expound the scale of moral values that were taught to the children right from infancy, the adopted ambitions and the virtues instilled. This study discusses some of these virtues and further explains in the findings section how some parents in Karūri Catholic Parish are inculcating them into their children. These values are: honesty, obedience, kindness, respect, hard work, self-discipline, humility and fear of God as are discussed in the next sections.

### **3.1 Honesty and Obedience**

Honesty implies being truthful, frank, direct or straight. It involves speaking what one believes without wavering no matter the circumstance. It is being aware of what constitutes right and proper in one's behavior. One cannot be said to have moral standards or have integrity without being honest. Honesty or truthfulness was a quality pursued by all in the traditional society and children were taught to be honest right from the family level (Kenyatta, 2015). It was a Gĩkũyũ ideal (Leakey, 1977) and many rules of ordinary honesty were from time to time inculcated in a child; in case of any naughty trickery causing trouble in the family prompt discipline was taken on the child (Cognolo, 2006:73).

A number of examples will suffice here. In the Agĩkũyũ traditional society, kinship was maintained by the principle of honesty because the relationship itself was of respect and honour. Honesty helped people to make mutually beneficial arrangements, for instance one could place his cattle in custody of another person for security reasons (Kinoti, 2013). No one could be trusted with public leadership without a reputation of being honest, and for this reason people protected their names from being tainted (Ime & Unwanabong, 2014). Only a man beyond reproach could give out a sacrificial lamb to be slaughtered in praying for rains as expounded in the roles and powers of Agĩkũyũ elder (Wachege, 1992). Still only those known for honesty could be trusted with important roles like midwifery. To wrap up the examples is

the expectation a mother would question where her daughter got some farm produce that she had brought home to make sure the girl had not stolen.

On the other hand, obedience is submission to the rightful authority. It is dutiful or submissive compliance. Human beings have been proved to be obedient in the presence of figures of legitimate authority (Wikipedia, 2017). Obedience was regarded as a virtue and children were expected to submit to their parents, elders or authority. It was defined in terms of respect, therefore, children were trained from early stages to obey and respect their parents, elders and authority without questioning. For instance the father was obeyed and respected unconditionally by all the members of his family (Kenyatta, 2015:6). In a similar way the Agĩkũyũ valued the virtue of kindness to others and the respect extended to elders.

### **3.2 Kindness and Respect**

Kindness is the quality of being friendly, generous, and considerate as defined by Oxford Dictionary. One does not need to have a reason to be kind. It is simply the right way to treat people. The Agĩkũyũ valued being kind and more so to visitors and abhorred individualism. Being kind was viewed as being mindful of the rest of the community members as is the case where orphans were adopted into families. While a significant percentage of those interviewed agreed with this assertion, they also added that it is at home where the child should first learn to be kind and be respectful. This study obtained the parent's view of their children's level of kindness.

Respect is "acknowledgement of the inherent worth and innate rights of the individual and collectivity" (Ime & Unwanabong, 2014). In the traditional society juniors respected their seniors whom they acknowledged as not only their seniors but also wiser than them. Anyone or any group of people worth of respect was honored and showed dignity. Children were trained to unconditionally respect anybody who was older than them and this is the reason why Agĩkũyũ children would regard their peer's parents as their fathers or mothers. Children showed respect to their father by talking to him in a polite and gentle tone which was termed as good etiquette. It was considered disrespectful for the children to address their father or mother by their own names unless the child would have been a rascal, which was not the case (Kenyatta, 2015:6). The children's effort was also extended to working in the family farm because hard work was recognized as the foundation for ensuring a comfortable life and resources mobilization.

### **3.3 Hard Work and Self-discipline**

The traditional society inculcated the value of hard work right from when the children were young. This was possible because education given to the children was functional in its approach, making it easy for them to live in conformity with the tradition of the community. The value of hard work ensured no one entertained or supported laziness. Training children to work started from when children could practically imitate their parents' activities. The son worked alongside the father in the farm using a digging stick specifically made for him. In general all society members were given education for occupation and economic self-reliance, and regarding particular families the members were equipped with specific skills such as

dealing in medicine or craft (Kosemani & Okorosaye-Orubite, 1995). The traditional society also believed in self-discipline and functionalism and worked to the end with utmost sincerity. Unlike today, cases of sex outside marriage were negligible. Cognolo enlightens that the self-discipline the youth exercised was taught during the rigorous rite of initiation. Stealing, lying and sexual immorality were watched keenly and irresponsible sexism was particularly not tolerated (Cognolo, 2006:74). As mentioned earlier the effort to pursue these values had a basis in the religious beliefs.

### **3.4 Humility and Fear of God**

Through the virtue of humility inter-personal relationships stay healthy. For example when an elder keeps his promise to a younger person he shows humility. Humility creates the right environment for the fear of God. In the older society obeying the morals was done out of awe of God. God gave the Agĩkũyũ certain rules of conduct to govern them and ensure society's wellbeing. Any misbehaving attracted the wrath of God; thus disrespecting parents, contradicting the moral laws of God, stealing and the like attracted chastisement of epidemic, famine or defeat at tribal wars with their enemies. Religion held each family together, bound together the inhabitants of the various villages of a territorial unit and gave the cohesion essential to their mutual security. Communal prayers were held in public assemblies to request God for peace and prosperity and it was characteristic of the father to pray occasionally for God to grant his family peace and wellbeing. Generally, and as concerns being moral, some scholars sums it thus "the yard stick that measures an educated man is his morals, manners, obedience to authority and respect for the customs, conventions, superstitions and laws of the land" (Kosemani & Okorosaye- Orubite, 1995). Lately the Agĩkũyũ cultural and religious values have significantly been affected by modernization.

## **4. Effects of Modernization**

Society is never static but dynamic, changing from simple traditional outfit to a more complex modern one. Scholars of history agree that modernization as a major feature of modern society has a political, economic, cultural and even religious impact on individuals, families and nations; they however disagree on the nature and extent of this impact (Mensah & Ammisah, 2016). Alongside the changing society, its peoples, values, activities and trends also change. The changes have been positive and also negative, and in particular the values continuing to change to suit the character of a changing society marked by increased moral decadence now being witnessed in alarming proportions, and more anxiety (Ime & Unwanabong, 2014). The conceptualization of modernization for this study is in line with the school of thought that sees modernization as the overwhelming decline of the traditional values, culture and norms. Focus in this study is on the negative impact of modernization on moral values among the youth of Karũri Catholic Parish. To comprehensively do this we discuss it from several perspectives beginning with modernization effect on family values.

#### **4.1 Modernization Effect on Family Values**

In a world where societies are moving fast with developmental trends, there should be certain principles the Agĩkũyũ families will want not only to genuinely focus on but also to strictly adhere to and family values is key among them. The Agĩkũyũ traditional family had a strong sense of belonging and cohesion and highly cherished family values to the extent that the child's behaviour was often used to evaluate the quality of the parents. It has been increasingly pointed out that standards found in family have declined and given way to situations like people who for instance do not often sit together for even meals because of busy work schedules. As we shall see later there is conflict in today's family orchestrated by new roles and opportunities boosted by modernization. Further, cultural values are changing as seen in the role of fathers who are now not the sole bread winners, a position only they used to hold. On the other hand and unlike in the past where women were rarely found in paid employment, today's women prefer to work because of its creative development, economic and social features (Urszula, 2011:333). Contemporary trends show about 40% of bread winners are women, a reality brought about by modernization (Filipovic, 2013). The trouble with this is that a formally employed mother will ordinarily have very little time for interacting with her children in feeding, playing, disciplining or impacting some values in them in one way or another; so the parent's time and attention to the child is lessened. Generally it can be summed up the family is seldom together and no longer eats food together in a patterned way with regard to time, place and contents (Cognolo 2006; Mensah & Amissah, 2013).

The extended family, which was regarded as a social dynamism in the family and helped in developing the child's social responsibility and respect among other values, has greatly been affected by modernity. Probably as a consequence, the contemporary Karũri youth seem not to have much respect for not only age but for values the community revered. The youth agree they don't observe common gesture like giving up their seats for an older person in public vehicles. Regrettably, modernization continues to provide means like the social media by which western cultures are showcased as superior and therefore spread rapidly leading to continued loss of rich Agĩkũyũ indigenous family values and ideals. The family values are not the only ones which have been affected by modernization, youths' have adopted a disturbing behaviour pattern.

#### **4.2 Modernity Effect on the Youths' Behavioural Pattern**

In present times moral decadence has to a significant extent replaced basic moral values. The witnessed behavior pattern of the youth is an indication morality is at its all-time low. Today the youth are lax, and more interested in pleasure and enjoyment with no sense of the future, the sum total of all these is a fall in moral standards that has resulted in indiscipline at all levels of society, whose results is craze for power without accountability, cheating, laziness, and, lack of dignity and respect for human life. Furthermore, it is in public domain there is an increase in vices like corruption, broken homes, teenage pregnancies, crime, and sexual promiscuity (Kinoti, 2013; Ime et al.2014) all linked to the breakdown of moral values. Being dishonest, unjust, intolerant, disrespectful, disobedient, undisciplined, individualistic or corrupt makes one a hero in the contemporary society because these are the values majority holds and are

pursuing. The modern society has adopted the philosophy “the end justifies the means.” Everyone wants to acquire wealth in the shortest time possible thereby causing the wave of corruption to be in vogue. One notable consistent behaviour pattern of the youth is in the use of social media.

#### **4.3 Social Media and Youth Attitude**

The media has fast become the forum of public life and social interaction among the youth and has greatly impacted on their values and attitude. Internet and television allow instantaneous exchange of information. They perpetuate social change without physical contact through borrowing of fashions and mingling of cultures (Mensah & Amissah, 2013:824). Not surprising then, modernization has been blamed for interfering with the way things used to be. Unlike the social media, most African and by extension Agĩkũyũ activities carried with them moral message and values which were passed on from one generation to the next (Ezenweke, 2016). Similarly, the Synod of Bishops has noted, though the benefits of mass media include major access to information and greater opportunities for knowledge exchange, these potentialities however cannot hide the risk when this kind of culture is taken to an extreme (Synod of Bishops, 2012). It is unfortunate the youth don’t seem to have control of the habit.

A significant impact of mass media has been the propagation of violence particularly on video film and television where the actors are portrayed as heroes. The children who have been exposed to this kind of violence have been known to exhibit violent tendencies in their lives (Anderson et al., 2003). In addition, the use of social media, television, and the increased proliferation of social functions has given rise to celebrities who the youth yearn to learn from or imitate. These celebrities are famous for nudity and substance abuse among other indecent habits. The youth continue to witness the media society celebrate scantily dressed women and socialites and corrupt people celebrated as heroes and trusted with public offices. Disturbingly, it is the case today that within their environment the youth are surrounded by a crowd of witnesses who have thrown morality away, but nevertheless making it in life (Ime et al. 2014).

On the same vein the present radical crave for drugs, consumption of alcohol and partying is most disturbing to parents. Recently there have been incidents of students getting involved in group drinking and immoral acts in enclosed rooms or buses. Other incidences like public advertisements for a party dubbed “Project X”, which had to do with house parties for the young people, have provoked swift intervention of authorities. The existence of such an event could be a pointer to the moral decadence among the youth in the country, most of whom have accepted such behaviour as normal (Odumbe, 2016). It is worth noting that for such parties there is normally an overbooking. Another aspect of social media the youth participate in is sexting, which involves sending, receiving, or forwarding sexually explicit messages, photographs, or images. Many of these images become distributed rapidly via cell phones or the Internet. It is saddening to think about the under-age who innocently consumes this kind of information. This situation is more so in the urban and semi-urban areas like our study location where some cultural elements have become fluid and given rise to self-centeredness.

#### **4.4 Urbanization Effect and Self-centeredness**

The modern society is characterised by urbanization which leads to exodus of people from their rural settings to the urban centres. In the urban area there is diversity of careers, people, religion, economic systems, better housing and lifestyles. Unfortunately, urbanization brings about erosion of the fundamental references to life, the undermining of the values for which people exert themselves and the deterioration of the very human ties they use to identify themselves. In the process, culture becomes extremely fluid and fluctuating increasingly leaving little space for the great tradition of life, including those of religion, and their task of objectively contributing to a sense of history and the identity of individuals (Synod of Bishops, 2012).

Modernization comes with urbanized commercial culture which has now shadowed the interpersonal relations of the family-centered society thus in effect also losing the sense of community that exists in a consanguineous relationship. People are now more enthusiastic to embracing innovations to better their lives preferring it to having emotional attachments with traditions (Mensah & Ammisah, 2016:827). In addition, personal choices increase in the urban society, choices of pursuing education, choosing an-occupation and adapting to the new lifestyles. This new lifestyle is in contrast with what Kenyatta and Idang assert, to the traditional Agĩkũyũ, the ideal was rightly relating and behaving towards other people as opposed to the western philosophy of individualism (Kenyatta, 2015; Idang, 2015).

The Synod of Bishops warns in the advent of urbanization, there is a temptation to superficiality and self-centredness, arising from a “predominating hedonistic and consumer-oriented mentality and throw-away culture, a revelation of the cult of individualism” (Synod of Bishops, 2012). The great danger in today’s world, pervaded as it is by consumerism is the feverish pursuit of frivolous pleasures and a blunted conscience. Pope Francis describes it as irresponsible individualism which is of postmodern and globalization era favouring a lifestyle which weakens the development and stability of personal relationships and distorts family bonds. The weakening of these bonds is particularly serious because the family is the place where parents pass on values to their children (Pope Francis, 2013:61-67).

### **5. Findings**

At this point the study records the key findings and draws the recommendations and eventually comes up with a general conclusion.

#### **5.1 Modernization Effect on Family Values**

The study observed the community and family values have changed and given way to new elements such as individualism, new beliefs, attitudes and lifestyles. An interesting finding is in many situations both the father and mother are engaged in paid employment, unlike in the past. Another cultural change is where the youth agree they don’t often observe common gesture like giving up their seat for an older person in public vehicles. As the view on family values change to the whims of modernization, the mass media content and opportunities it offers are having a huge and consistent effect on the youths’ beliefs, attitudes and behaviour.

Like many past studies, this study finds there are many reasons for this present day Karuri community situation such as the family members not sitting together for storytelling ostensibly for lack of time. Children are thus left exposed to negative elements from other sources such as

radio, television and internet. Despite this, still the highest responsibility for influencing the moral development of the child lies on the parents. It follows therefore they should play this role and carry it out enthusiastically, consciously, reasonably and appropriately.

### **5.1.1 Mass Media and New Attitudes**

Generally social media has been noted to have a significant influence on the youths' way of life especially their choices, desires and attitudes. This may be in relation to the nature of some mass media content which the youth seem to know compromises moral values and disrupts family time together. The situation is made worse when social media provides information that erodes the sense in the traditional values and ideals. The Karūri youth like many other people enjoy the benefits social media offers but it is unfortunate a good number are allowing themselves to be victims of its negative influence.

Today social media tops the list of daily activities youth of Karūri are engaged in, with some staying on it for as much as eight hours daily. The youth, using modern electronic gadgets gifted by their parents, such as laptops and smart phones stay busy browsing, playing games, watching movies, listening to music, interacting with their friends through chatting and the like. Deviously, it is common for the youth to cheat on school assignments and exams, enabled by the phone, which aids in creating a lazy and dishonest generation. The gadgets can allow interaction with distant strange persons and unfettered chance to engage in intoxicating and dangerous games, for instance the Blue Whale that is reportedly self-harming (Wikipedia, 2017). Regrettably, the study found, through social media, the youth are increasingly becoming venerable to negative modernization effect courtesy of showcasing western cultures as superior; the adoption of these cultures leading to rapid and continued loss of rich Agĩkũyũ indigenous family values and ideals.

This study specifically noted the many hours the youth spend on social media is at the expense of valuable work, spending quality time with parents or other family members, or the sitting for folk tales, folk music or games that occupied the young people in the earlier days and served to communicate values. Understandably, a majority of the youth said social media is important while at home as increasingly they are left alone with little else to do. Although the youth view the mass media and internet as one of the key sources providing information on moral values and also as a platform for interaction they point at the parents as being in the best position to teach them. Sadly and despite this knowledge the young people have embraced these western ideals learnt through media because these ideals are considered "modern" and anyone left behind appears backward. Taken together, from the study results, the percentage engagement in social media and the like take a lot of the youth's time which should be a worrying thing if the quest for a morally upright child is to be achieved.

In line with Anderson et al. (2003), a key finding is mass media has a significant influence on the youths' way of life especially their choices and desires. Standards of morality, ethics, religion, and custom are being compromised day after day as if they don't exist because of personal freedoms. This is exemplified when we observe a wild revolution in lifestyles happening with the young people and their code of dressing. It is no longer uncommon to see young people walk in public places sporting deadlocks, in sleeveless tops, skin-tight trousers, micro-mini

skirts, exposed busts and other similar outfits that confuse their identity. Half nudity is now synonymous with being fashionable and acceptable. Songs carrying intimate talks are the most popular when there exists many other songs carrying messages of wisdom for life. In reality dressing craze has taken over mostly youthful women and has permeated even places of worship. As Tambe observes, what is disturbing here is the concept of freedom in the liberal sense because freedom does not mean one can freely walk in the market place half naked nor should individual freedom bother or disturb others (Tambe, 2013).

In the study, however, more than half of the youth respondents highly rank social media of any kind as a key source of information on moral values, life and economy, entertainment, and at the core of their peer-to-peer interactions. The youth feel the parents' contribution to building moral values in them amounts to less than a third of what they know, though they point out the parents as best positioned as first educators of the child. At a distance is the school together with relatives who the youth claim offer them little help. Opposed to the stance of the youth, the parent respondents view the media especially social media as mostly responsible for their children's current wanting behavior having brought more of bad than good because the child is able to access both good as well as destructive information mostly in the confines of his room. Today's parents observe the youth are laidback, are inclined to pleasure and enjoyment more than working. The youth of Karūri Parish don't seem to be an exception because some have indicated they want to be rich while still young; being rich seems to be the current fad in Kenya with most people hoping to acquire quick wealth. This is despite the dim future most of the youth seem to face; some examples will demonstrate what the youth feel about this situation. The parents are no longer able to entirely control what information the youth consume, a fact confirmed by a quarter of the youth respondents. The youth are not wholly to blame in this matter. One youth summed it concerning the situation "...sometimes parents are not at home, therefore they do not know what is happening..." perhaps trying to justify their mismanagement of valuable time. Another simply reports "...my mother has never asked once since she trusts me..." A more revealing comment is "...they don't complain as they regard what they do as more important first..." These comments show a youth who is aware of what is good or bad but appears juxtaposed between the worlds of modernization and lack of strong guidance, and or lack of creativity at home. These statements are a clear finding that the parent-child relationship does want; which does not create a good atmosphere for the teaching of moral values and thus the inculcation of moral values is constrained and the consequence is the unparalleled fall in youth's morality.

While social media and internet has cultivated a niche as useful friends of the youth, the parents loathe the way youth use them and blame it for the challenges confronting their effort to inculcate values into the youth. They indicate that mass media, through internet and video is an intruder posing a big competition for both parents and the Church by propagating western secular values like materialism and free sex. Thus the parents view modernization more in the negative in relation to youth's morality. The family values and the youth behavior are not the only ones which have been affected by modernization, family cohesion has been challenged to the core by urbanization; there is a conflict as family members interact and learn new roles from several other sources enhanced by modernization and as individuals tend to be more self-

centered than in earlier days. Further, the continued use of social media has been noted as isolating an individual from the rest of the environment.

### **5.1.2 Urbanization Effect and Self-centeredness**

Karūri area is fast turning to a semi-urban multi-ethnic environment where many effects of modernization can be witnessed meaning the common traditional rural setting under which moral values were taught is fast fading away. The urban living has affected the child because it confines and shuts him or her from subsistence activities thus decreasing the child's contact with self-reliant models and reducing the opportunity to learn and practice responsible behaviour (Whiting, 1980). The study agrees with Ojukwu & Esimone (2014) when they lament: urbanization not only disorganizes kinship ties but also puts people with different cultural orientations together. In this boiling pot, the Agĩkũyũ cultural values continue to diminish under pressure from new technologies and new ways of passing information (Ojukwu & Esimone, 2014).

Modernization effects have combined together to produce a serious threat to the Karūri family structure for inculcating moral values in the society, that is individualism (Kinoti, 2013:39). The traditional social structures that pressurized individuals to conduct themselves morally operate minimally. For example, religion has become a matter of personal choice and of an individual. For most families worship has stopped being a significant common element centered in the home though they may all be Christian converts. The study found in some cases different family members belong to different Christian denominations and some to other faith affiliations. This has brought death to the traditional connection between morality and religion. By the foregoing, unfortunately, the individual's attitude towards God has changed (Kinoti, 2013:54-55).

Individualism is at play as Mensah & Ammisah (2016) make an observation that African families, including those of Karūri Parish, now have children of single parents, a phenomenon identifiable with western world because people no longer communalize, no one wants to be the other's brother keeper (Mensah & Ammisah, 2016). Single parenting (Wachege, 2003:150) is a challenge when children lack the appropriate role model in a father or mother figure accordingly. Apparently the phenomenon of single parenting in Karūri is being felt in families expressed in form of egocentric absent parents and especially fathers. This study makes an observation the single parenting status also extends to single parenting by choice, mostly single mothers. The youth respondents brought this to fore with those affected exposing the effect of this status on their individual development. For instance one female youth whose working mother arrives home after 8.30pm revealed what she misses most is the fathers love. The right of children to receive equal care and protection from the mother and father is enshrined in The Constitution of Kenya 2010, whether they are married to each other or not (Kenya Laws Reports, 2010:36).

The Karūri youth is exposed to a vast urban environment associated with social changes which are not only technical in nature and material conditions but also in the sphere of ideas and values for the young people. Their un-vetted accesses to media and modern technology through which they receive various kinds of information continue to influence their behaviour.

The sum total of the effects of social media is the seclusion of the youth from the rest of the family or society as they are constantly glued to their gadgets. This creates a youth who is less concerned with what the rest of the community does as individualism is more pronounced than communality.

### **5.1.3 Youth Mentorship by Parents and Other Players**

Another unfortunate finding is a reasonable percentage of parents of Karūri Parish are not teaching their children how to behave well for several reasons. The parents are busy and lack time for interaction even to observe their children's actions or are ignorant of much coveted parenting skills among other reasons. Left alone, children and especially the youth have multiple teachers including the social media which seems to speak to them loudest, teaching them to embrace freedom without responsibility. Individualistic life style has hampered communal mentoring of children and often a neighbour or friend who tries to correct a child will be confronted in the course of time to his or her embarrassment. Now we turn to the parents' view of modernization effects on their effort to inculcating moral values into the young people.

Replying to the question of what challenges confront parenting, parent respondents confirmed social media influence as having significantly altered parenting structures. They indicated social media has provided an opportunity to unknown elements outside the family to impact children's lives with the youth managing to evade the monitoring eye of the parents. Sometimes this leaves the children exposed to perceived role models who influence them negatively. For instance, some of the peer pressure is associated with peer communication through social media calculated to negatively influence the youth. As is expressed in similar works, the study finds many Karūri parents loathe peer pressure influence on their sons and daughters. This is a contrast to the earlier days when peers worked to promote positive values in individuals. The moral decadence in the area has been recognized by the Kĩambu County government as one of the by products of poverty (Kĩambu County, 2013).

The study commends the county government for its 2013-2017 Integrated Development Plan prospects which offers opportunities to the youth (classified as a vulnerable group in the plan) through access to loans for income generating activities, Jua kali sector, HIV and AIDS and drug abuse campaign, environmental conservation, entertainment, drama and theatre among others. In the same manner, the Church is seen by both the parents and the youth as an important player in combating moral decadence and transforming lives in the county. This is in addition to equipping them spiritually and emotionally. Therefore the community and the Church need to take further interest and start discussions on how the youth's economic future will be secured. When engaged the youth will have less time for negative activities that they involve themselves in today.

### **5.1.4 Modernization Effect on Church Youth Programs**

The study made an observation that the power of religion is starting to appear ineffective in the face of rapid social change as far as combating moral decadence in society is concerned, but

even with the many demands the parents put on the Church concerning moral education of their children, the Church can only do so much. This finding agrees with an earlier study by Poshkid who laments that the religious institutions, which are regarded as an organized collection of belief systems, cultural systems and world views relating humanity to spirituality and to moral values seem to have failed in their fight against moral decadence and have indulged more in the pursuance of materialistic gains (Poshkid, 2014).

On the other hand, the findings show a large percentage of parents take their children to Church when they are young for baptism and catechesis to introduce them to the fullness of Christian life. As the children grow they continue to receive spiritual teachings and get involved in Church activities appropriate for their age. However, as they grow up they are allowed some autonomy and may decide to deviate from spirituality. "I used to prepare and take them to Church at an early age", a parent says. Nevertheless parents to such youth encourage themselves that prodigal sons can always come back home as Proverbs 22:6 advises "Train a child in the way he should go and when he is old he will not turn from it". On the home front, outside the church, there seems to be less enthusiasm as few families hold fellowships to read the Bible and pray together as a family unit. From the above, it can be suggested the Church can be a good influence on the youth and this is Providential in the face of continuing mass media effect on their attitudes.

#### **5.1.5 Modernization Threat to Future Generations**

Just like in the traditional society the virtues of honesty, kindness, obedience, humility, respect, hard work, self-discipline and fear of God were reported to be still very important. Generally though, the study results have demonstrated the perception of the relevance of moral values has changed as viewed through the eyes of the youth. Most youth in the study said they do not mind not reflecting some of the values in their lives. For instance they do not appreciate hard work as a value since they do not see its connection with future success. They disregard the social and important aspects of work which are existential, creativeness and self-realization for working mostly for leisure. However, the parents argue the youth may actually understand hard work is necessary to further their dreams through education, but, as they describe them, they are lazy. Unfortunately and unlike in the past, even if the youth wanted to, they seem to have few options to manifest as hard workers partly because of the nature of the present economy being now more knowledge based and limited job positions. However, imbibing these values is the only way of enhancing character development and moral health. For the youth it all starts with making a decision to be morally right and stand out of the crowd and become light in darkness of a morally bankrupt society. Short of this, they will fail to be oriented leaders of tomorrow and the entire society will fail in its goals.

Majority of the parents indicated the current youth do not like being provoked even for a worthwhile cause and therefore require to be explained the meaning and benefits of each value for their lives. Hence a key finding, therefore, is that in teaching moral values to the children today, the parents have to show them the relevance of the values in relationship to the issues they are facing or will face in life. An example is where the child has first to perceive say kindness as being extended to him or her or their friends. Another instance is in teaching the

youth how to be respectful, where the parents explain the importance or worth of human beings, and love for others because they are created by God in his own image. Sometimes parents cede some ground and listen to what a child who has misbehaved has to say, forgives and grants a second chance thus teaching the child or youth a valuable lesson on how to humble himself and therefore the meaning of “sorry” and “thank you”. This also encourages the child to be forthright and not to keep secrets from parents under any circumstances.

As indicated earlier, most youth response shows the parents are a key source of learning although this is clearly being challenged by the modern sources of information and knowledge. From the study there seems to be no immediate mechanism on sight for addressing the media threat to parenting notwithstanding the fact that technology is becoming advanced and youth are getting more tech savvy by the day. The advances in technology and the social media cannot be wished away. On their part, though, the parents show determination to bring up morally upright children and try to work hard to realize it despite the many challenges confronting them. By encouraging the children to regularly attend Church where they are taught Christian values, the parents hope their effort together with the Church contribution will be invaluable in building the child’s character.

Youth respondents think everyone should have the reverence for God as a foundation for their lives though a small percentage has absconded Church activities. Enderbrock argues “no matter what other educational advantages a child may enjoy, if his attitudes and convictions with respect to religion and morals have been ill-formed, he is on the high road to trouble. What he knows about morals will penetrate deep enough to stir a conviction on his will to arrest his wrong desires and surging passions” (Enderbrock, 1955).

Despite the unequivocal conviction that moral values are important, a few not unexpected findings arose. Interestingly some youth hold the notion one can bargain out of morality. Luckily, even though the numbers were insignificant, but oddly, the youth (majority being girls who are expected by society to be naturally humble) regarded having humility as the least worry in their lives on the account of being seen to be weak and licensing people to mistreat them. One youth used the words ‘...it would allow people to walk over me...’, or maybe the understanding of how humility should express itself is not clear to them since humility is not at all weakness. Jesus demonstrated humility. Similarly and absurdly, some youth also regard self-discipline as their least worry and respect is regarded as not necessary at all times. In the old days disregarding any moral value was an abhorrent punishable act. Interpreted from the lenses of Aminigo the less than enthusiastic embrace of moral values by the youth shows they have failed to fully understand the principles of being morally right (Ime et.al. 2014), and if nothing is done urgently, our youth will not be endowed with knowledge, skills and right attitudes to enable them to leave behind a lasting positive legacy for the future of the society.

#### **5.1.6 Disciplining Errant Children**

Disciplining the child is still appreciated by parents of Karūri Catholic Parish. Self-discipline is inculcated by making the children follow laid down rules. At the end, the parent makes sure the child understands being honest, or for that matter acquiring any other virtue, is not just a matter for discussion but a must do, in which case the parent takes a commanding or

authoritarian stand. In some families, the relevant Bible study topic is discussed and prayer offered during such times to reinforce the point.

Some examples of how Karūri parents discipline their children will suffice here. One way of correction is where the child makes a mistake and the parent deliberately takes unusually long to grant the child's subsequent request for something. Then again some parents take the responsibility to reprimand the child for not showing for example respect, basing their reason on Agĩkũyũ custom and on biblical teachings thus inspiring the child. Where the parent suspects the child is not telling the truth or has stolen, appropriate correction methods are used among them spanking, interrogation and dialogue. Dialogue is employed for the youth and spanking for younger children to accompany errant behaviour for if the rod is spared the child is spoilt. Where dialogue is used the aim is to point out clearly to the child the benefits of being morally right. For this approach compliments any other disciplinary method applied by the parents in inculcating values into their children. Hence today, any teacher of moral values must trend carefully and show an appreciation of the youths' perception of moral values. This should be done with the understanding that the new ways especially the social media cannot be wished away. The idea is for the everyone to move forward, the parents willing to play their instructor as well as vigilant role while the youth must be helped to come out of their current worrisome moral situation in order to possess the wherewithal needed to act prudently when they face challenges.

It is good for the young people to heed the words of Pope Francis in which he reminds them that they live in a world full of problems, of temptations to take the wrong path, but also acknowledges the one thing the youth have is the ability to choose which path one wants to take and the power to overcome challenges and not the challenges to overcome them. The young people can therefore decide to follow this advice and make all the difference needed for them and also become positive role models to subsequent generations (Pope Francis, 2015).

Ultimately though, moral values must be inculcated into young people because it is the only way of enhancing character development and moral health. On their part, the youth should appreciate this truth because moral people earn high social status and prestige in society, make right decisions, promote peaceful harmonious living within communities, help people to become of firm resolve and have courage to face challenges in their lives and last but not least lead to blessings from God, and among the Agĩkũyũ connects one to spirits and ancestors.

## **6. Conclusion and Recommendations**

This study confirms the long held truism that moral values as epitomized in the Agĩkũyũ traditional way have been extinguishing gradually in the face of modernity which has brought multiple challenges to the way children are taught. To move forward, the parents must be willing to play their instructor as well as vigilant role while the youth must be helped to come out of their current worrisome moral situation in order to possess the wherewithal needed to act prudently when they face challenges. This should be done with the understanding that the new ways especially the social media cannot be wished away.

The notion life can be lived out with less of life skills demonstrates a conspiracy borne out of modernization and makes this study conclude that some youth's reasoning and proper

judgment in responding to whatever issue they face in life is not guided by any meaningful values. This together with the growing threat of individualism makes this study conclude, as many other studies have previously done, the present and future family risks being dysfunctional and thus creating a shaky foundation for society. Nevertheless, youths are reminded strongly that values never lose their relevance from one generation to another though this is what it may be made to look like. All hope is not lost as the youth can still be taught in the way they can become determinants of change in their society and not victims in a rapidly changing world. The starting point is by realizing modernity is irreversible; even as communities embrace it they should consider reverting to what is good in their rich cultural heritage while not ignoring the fact that this time round the audience has substantially changed and will not accept teaching without questioning. Still, the call to the parents and the Church is: inculcating moral values in children is not an option but a must do and the earlier it begins the better. And to the youth, they can be a force of positive change if they decide to use the power within them accordingly.

As future leaders, the youth has to be morally disposed to steer their societies to prosperity. For this to manifest, the youth must imbibe right moral values that will dispose them to become positively inclined (Ime et.al. 2014). The study therefore establishes an urgent need to fill the gap created by youth's failure to fully understand the principles of being morally right and calls for the work of redeeming the lost youth to intensify. To do this the youths' conviction regarding moral values is of utmost importance if any programs have to work. Countering this youth's situation and the other changed aspects of the society may require measures such as continuation of honest discussions and drastic change of the mindset of the parent and society.

The study makes the following recommendations:

- i. Agĩkũyũ elders and parents should endeavor to expose the children to what is good in their culture. The constrained parent-child relationship needs to be restored. Finding time to spend with the children – eating meals together and sharing the word of God. By doing so an appropriate environment will be created for even incorporating stories which used to be loaded with a rich source of African wisdom, religious beliefs, ideals, morals and warnings.
- ii. The relevant authorities are urged to evaluate and critique the current stories to which young people are exposed in books, radio, and television and in other media and use all available means to promote suitable stories with themes of moral values in Kenyan schools, homes and institutions of higher learning to guarantee all round education to the child and youth. Doing so will guarantee the child learns the right moral values from the right sources.
- iii. Agĩkũyũ elders and parents should consider what they want their children to be exposed to, that is who they spend free time with and who is interacting with them through the electronic gadgets. Therefore parents should embrace the culture of inquiring and following on what their children are doing. The parents should be vigilant and keep educating the child on the merits and demerits of social media with simplicity, at the same time help the child to identify healthy ways of spending time. When the parents

- create awareness in the child about an issue, they help the child to grow in freedom and in this way he comes to possess the skill dexterity needed to act prudently when he or she faces difficulties.
- iv. Rather than see the social media as always a problem, it is good for the parents and the community to recognize that youth have a great ability to exploit its potential for the benefit of the community as well as for creating business opportunities that could change the youth's status. It is therefore recommended that the youth should be given skills to recognize and how to avoid negative aspects of social media while being encouraged to exploit the positive aspects.
  - v. Youths are reminded to interact with one another and partner with appropriately equipped parties and create social networks that will easily strengthen them when confronted with discouraging attitudes concerning moral values. This can help to create a strong and viable moral based institution founded on principles that work. While still residing in this changing society, the young people should resolve to be reasonable and adapt themselves to the world and not persist on trying to adapt the world to themselves. This will take the youth to stand out of the crowd and become light in darkness of a morally bankrupt society.
  - vi. It is the parents' responsibility through examples and affection to instill moral values in the child. For this to happen, the parents should create opportunity to spend time with the child especially from early age since it is in the early phase when the foundation for the entire person's later life is laid. By doing so the child will not only have a good foundation but also become grounded on moral values.
  - vii. Given that most youth have low regard for relevance of some moral values in their lives and that they do not associate moral values with quality of life, the study recommends continuation of discussions and honest explanation to them that being moral is not a punishment and it is not a choice. Children need to be given a compelling reason why they should reinforce certain behavioral pattern in them. The parent should take a firm position on moral values at all times.
  - viii. If punishment is necessary, the parents should learn to punish promptly any wrongdoing by the child. Likewise a child who does well should occasionally be rewarded to complement it and serve as an encouragement. A child who refuses to follow instructions should have his electronic gadgets confiscated to allow him or her time and space to reflect on his or her behavior. It is the high time parents bought their children electronic gadgets with conditions on how they expect them to be used.

### **Future implications**

This study did not ask the youth to rank the values, as the researchers believes all the values are important, nevertheless the youth were requested to give their opinion if a certain value was necessary to them. Further research could focus on this and illuminate the perception that moral values have lost allure in the eyes of the youth. Future research could also focus on effective parenting skills in the contemporary society because parenting, other than making emotional demands requires interpersonal skills (Santrock, 2006).

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