

## **Societal Factors and the Discipline of Pastors' Children in the Context of Church Mission in Tigania West Sub-county, Meru County, Kenya.**

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### **Abstract**

Discipline, whether of children or adults, has a lot of impact in any society. The peace, unity, and prosperity of any society are dependent on the discipline of its people. As important as it is, discipline is at times affected to the detriment of society by some factors. Globally, continentally, nationally, and locally, there have been reported issues on the discipline of pastors' children. The discipline of pastors' children affects the performance of the pastor. Therefore, this study sought to establish the effect of societal factors on the discipline of pastors' children in the context of church mission in Tigania West Sub-County, Meru County, Kenya. The researcher used a qualitative research approach and phenomenological research design in this study. The target population was 431 people. Purposive sampling was used, and twenty-five (25) respondents were engaged in this study: 10 pastors, 10 pastor's children, and 5 church elders. Thematic narrative analysis of data was adopted in this study. The study established that pastors' children always feel pressured to be right hence making them stressed. Prolonged stress leads to depression resulting in more indiscipline cases like immorality and drug and substance abuse. The study recommended that church managers should engage counselling professionals who would occasionally provide one-on-one counseling sessions to the pastors' children and always keep in touch with them for their mental and physical wellbeing. Further research should be done to establish the influence pastors' children have on each other's behaviour.

**Key Words:** *Discipline, Pastors' children, Peer pressure, Expectations, Media*

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## 1.0 Introduction

Discipline is the ability to control one's behaviour or the way one works or lives. Discipline is essential in all aspects and stages of life (Kelley, 1992). Although several disciplined people have existed in all societies from the time of creation, various factors have affected discipline since Adam's time as evidenced in the Bible. Cain, one of the sons of Adam, had murderous tendencies that made him kill his brother Abel (Gen.4:8). Rueben, the eldest son of Jacob, slept with his father's concubine (Gen. 35:21). Just as there were factors affecting their behaviour then, there are also factors that affect the discipline of the children of servants of God in the world today.

In the global context, Franklin Graham, the son of renowned American evangelist Billy Graham, was rebellious as a youth, getting involved in drinking, smoking, and finding pleasure in women. However, he found his way back in the faith and ended up at the pulpit under his father's Billy Graham Evangelistic Association (Ayers 2014, Burke, 2013). A Ugandan woman named Ann Grace Aguti, whose father is a pastor, married three men. This is unacceptable among her Teso community (Akinyoade, 2019). In Kenya, there are multiple reported cases of pastors' children who have left the way of faith and have gone into the world of sin.

Whatever affects the discipline of these pastors' children is a problem that needs to be investigated because their behaviour impacts the church's growth. When a pastor's childrens' behaviour contradicts the societal norms or biblical teachings, the pastor is perceived as a failure and, therefore, fails to attract many to the

church. If the life of a Christian does not attract people, neither will the gospel he will preach (Chilcote, 2011). What affects the discipline of these children is an issue of concern; hence, the researcher's interest in investigating the issues affecting discipline among pastor's children in Tigania west sub-county, Meru County, Kenya.

*“Studies have shown that more than 60% of pastors' children at some stage in life exhibit behaviour that contradicts the societal norms or the faith the pastor's family professes”*

### Statement of the Problem

Discipline in all spheres of life is essential in the Holistic definition of the human person. The peace, harmony, and prosperity of any given society are dependent on discipline. In families and the church setup, discipline is also fundamental for peace and development. The discipline of children can have an impact on the stress levels in a family setup. Parents who are pastors are less stressed when their children are disciplined. However, studies have shown that pastors, at times, are subjected to stress due to the behaviour of their children that contradicts the societal norms and the faith they profess (Ayers, 2014).

When the behaviour of a pastor's child does not meet expectations, the pastor is hurt emotionally and spiritually, which eventually affects their office in the contemporary ecclesial context (Maina et al.,2019). Globally, continentally, and regionally studies have

recorded cases of behaviours of pastors' children that affect the church mission. Locally, there are reported cases too. Studies have shown that more than 60% of pastors' children at some stage in life exhibit behaviour that contradicts the societal norms or the faith the pastor's family professes (Allen, 2017).

When the pastor's children are undisciplined, the community might develop a low opinion concerning the pastor and, thus, may not be attracted to that church because the community expects that a pastor's child should be morally upright on account of coming from the family of Godly parents (Maina et al., 2019). When people are not attracted to the church, the church cannot experience meaningful numerical growth: the way believers live and the testimony the community has about them affects church growth (Chilcote, 2011) and thus, necessitating asking, what are the factors promoting indiscipline among pastors' children? While many studies have been done on the behaviour of pastors' children and the stresses they are subjected to, little has been done regarding factors affecting their discipline and their impact on the church mission. This study, therefore, sought to establish the effects of societal factors on the discipline of pastors' children in the context of church mission in Tigania West Sub-county, Meru County, Kenya.

### **Impact of peer pressure, pressure from expectations and media on behaviour of pastors' children**

Peer pressure affects children, youth, and even adults. There is negative and positive peer pressure. According to Etes (2012), positive peer pressure enables people to be responsible

and independent members of society. Through peers, children can develop skills for social interactions and intimacy. Negative peer pressure causes young people to be irresponsible, dependent, and unworthy in a community (Etes, 2012). Pastors' children are brought up within a normal community and not in a utopian society and are also subject to peer pressure, whether negative or positive.

When pastors' children join the company of an undisciplined group, they do things that the group does because they want to be accepted by that group (Ravi, 2014). The desire to belong to a group is the most significant motivating factor among the youth that makes them do and believe what their peers are doing, irrespective of whether they are good or bad. Therefore, peer pressure plays a significant role as far as the indiscipline of some of the pastors' children is concerned. In essence, every day, children are pressured by their peers to act as they act and perceive or think as they do (Morin, 2021). The community and church members expect a pastor's child or children to be role models and participate in the church's activities more than any other child (Maina et al., 2018).

The pastors, too, according to Maina et al. (2018), expect the character of their children to be unquestionable and that which will not be a source of disgrace or embarrassment. The church members expect them not to sin or misbehave (Kuhn, 2017). These high expectations from the parents, congregants, and society can put a lot of pressure on the child or children, causing them to resent church. Studies have indicated that 46 % of children who abandon their Christian faith do it because of high and unrealistic expectations (Ayers, 2014).

According to Nkonge (2020), many pastor's children are stressed by high expectations placed on them by both parents and the congregants. The community's high expectations of pastors' children can stress the children to the extent of some rebelling in protest. Whether social media or mass media, media, has both negative and positive effects on all people, children inclusive. Studies have indicated that media impacts the behaviour of children (raisingchildren.net.au, 2017). The television programmes that children watch, for example, can influence them into drugs, violence, or even involvement in sexual intercourse. Also, social media has led to many children accessing many sites that expose them to drugs and other ideas that can endanger their lives (Hilliard, 2019).

Studies have also indicated that media influences the temperament of children. According to Oluwafemi et al. (2013), children who watch violent movies on television end up exhibiting aggressive characteristics. Oluwafemi et al. (2013) adds that, a considerable percentage of violence experienced in society today may be attributed to the violence that results from watching violence on television. According to an article in the Star Newspaper, Lawrence Warunge, a university student from Kenya who killed five members of his family claimed that he executed the murders after watching and being inspired by a television series called 'Killing Eve' (Kimuyu, 2021).

## **2.0 Materials and Methods**

The researcher used a qualitative research approach and phenomenological research design in this study. The target population was

431 people; 52 pastors, 191 church elders, and 188 pastors' children from 51 Pentecostal churches in Tigania West, Meru County. Purposive sampling was used in this study. Twenty-five (25) respondents were engaged: 10 pastors, 10 pastors' children, and 5 church elders. All ten pastor participants were males as the Pentecostal churches in this area of study are dominated by male clergy. Open-ended questionnaires and interview schedules were used as research instruments. Thematic narrative analysis of data was adopted in this study.

## **3.0 Results and Discussions**

### **Pastors' children narrative on expectations of congregants and its effect**

Pastors' children were asked, "Do you feel church members expect a lot from you as a pastor's child?" They were also asked if this expectation affected them in any way. Pk1 admitted that the congregants expect a lot from him and that this affects him but did not clarify how. Pk2 said the expectation is a lot to the extent that, at times, he does not want people to know that he is a pastor's child. Pk3 stated that he feels the expectation is a lot because the community expects him to be perfect because he is a pastor's child. He said he is a child like any other, and therefore the expectations are too much. As a pastor's child, Pk3 said he could not go to any place he wished to go to like other children because he is a pastor's child.

This kind of feeling can make a child rebel so that he can do what others are doing. Pk4 indicated that the expectation of being perfect because she is a pastor's child is too much. She said this expectation affects her because, at times, being a human being, she fails to meet

them, which makes her feel like a failure as a pastor's child. Pk5 said the expectation is a lot, and it affects him in a way. He said it is a burden when people expect you to live a life that one feels is not his.

Pk6 said the expectation is a lot because the community expects him to be a pastor or preacher like his father, thus, significantly affecting him. Pk7 stated that being a pastor's child comes with pressure because society expects one to behave in specific ways. Pk7 said these expectations can affect one's behaviour but failed to state whether it has affected him personally. Pk8 said the expectations are a lot, and it can bring about social pressure in one's life. According to Pk9, the expectations are a lot and affect him because the community expects one to be almost perfect in everything, including academic performance. Pk10 said that the expectation is a lot as they consider the children to be like a pastor. He also said it affects him because sometimes, the expectation is more than he can handle.

Generally, the participants shared that the expectation from the church members was too much, considering they were children like any other. The community and the congregants expected them not to sin and behave in specific ways, which made many feel like failures for not meeting such expectations. They said that these expectations affected them because they had no freedom to do certain things or visit select places like other children. This finding agrees with Kuhn's (2017) study, which indicated that pressure and expectations caused pastors' children a lot of grief.

### **Pastors' narrative on expectations of congregants in regards to their children**

Pastor respondents were asked whether the congregants expected their children to serve in the church with them. P1, P2, P3, P5, P6, and P10 said the church members expected their children to serve with them in the church but offered no explanation. P4 said they do because the congregants expected his children to be excellent examples to others. P8 shared that the congregants expected him to serve with his children because they accept and respect them, expecting them to be role models to other children in the church. P9 indicated that the congregants expected him to serve with his children because, according to them, pastors' children should lead others. Most pastors shared that the congregants expect that their children should serve with them in the church. This observation is made by Morgan (2017) where he states, "the church perceives the entire family as a part of the pastorate once the minister is called to serve."

### **Elders' narrative on expectations from parents and the society and its effect on discipline**

Elder participants were asked, "The community and the members of the church expect the pastor's family to have children who are well behaved, God-fearing, and role models to other children. Do you think this is too much an expectation?" They were also asked whether this pressure and expectation from the parents and the community can affect the discipline of pastors' children. Elder1, regarding this, said it is too much an expectation because pastor's children are not unique; they are just like other

children, and that pressure from expectations can affect the discipline of children. Elder2 opined that this was not too much an expectation because the children should be disciplined like the pastor, father. He concurred with Elder1 that pressure from very high expectations could affect discipline. Elder3 stated that the expectation is too much and can affect the discipline of pastor's children as they ought to be good examples to others.

Elder4 said the expectation is too much, and it can affect the discipline of pastors' children either negatively or positively. Elder5 said it was too much of an expectation which at times may not be achieved. He explained that pastors' children interact with other children who, at times, might impact their conduct. He said the pressure from expectation can affect the discipline of children. The majority of the elder participants felt that the pressure from expectations was too much and can affect the discipline of children; an observation made by Nkonge (2020), who argues that the unrealistic expectation can cause challenges and stress pastors children.

### **Peer pressure**

#### **Pastors children narrative on peer pressure and its effects on their lives**

The pastors' children were asked to explain how their peers treated them and whether that treatment affected them in any way. Pk1 did not share the specific treatment concisely. However, the respondent explained that his peers' treatment affected him negatively, resulting in depression and feeling like they were not supposed to belong to a pastor's family. Pk2 explained that his peers treated him

with respect, and the treatment did not affect him in any way.

Pk3 stated that his peers had a low attitude towards them, and they assumed they were proud because of being pastor's children. He further said they were considered hypocrites. The respondent explained that the treatment affected him significantly, and it made him feel hurt and discouraged. At times he used to consider leaving the way of faith because of that treatment by peers. Pk4 disclosed that sometimes her peers made fun of her, especially when she did something wrong because her peers expected a pastor's child to be perfect in everything. Their treatment made her feel like she was different from other children.

Pk5 explained that his peers expected him to live in a holy manner, although their treatment did not impact him in any way. Pk5 said he usually ignored the way his peers treated him. He said, "I always laughed it off.". Pk6 indicated that his peers treated him in a friendly way, which did not negatively affect him. He said they admired and wished to have been born and raised in a pastor's family. Pk7 explained that sometimes his peers ridiculed him for acting in a certain way, and this treatment can affect one's behaviour negatively. Pk8 disclosed that his peers treated him well, although they would always remind him that he was a pastor's child and was expected to be a role model. Pk9 explained that his peers treated him differently depending on whether one was a Christian believer or not. Finally, Pk10 stated that his peers did not treat him well, which affected him profoundly.

Many participants reported that they were not treated well by their peers because of being pastor's children, which made some feel like they were in the wrong family. Few reported that they were treated with respect as some of their peers admired them because of being pastor's children. This observation is in line with Dahlager's study (2012, as cited in Nkonge, 2020) who indicated that 77% of pastor's children in Latin America wished their parents were in a different profession while other pastors' children did not have a problem with the occupation of their parents.

### **Pastors narrative on peer pressure and its influence on behaviour**

The respondents were asked to explain whether, in their opinion, their children's behaviour could be influenced by their peers. Pastor1 affirmed that his children's peers could impact his children's behaviour. The respondent explained that his children would want to be like some of their peers. Pastor2 felt his children's behaviour could be influenced by their peers' although the impact depends on the company one chooses to join. Pastor3 explained that children could be tempted to engage in worldly activities if their peers engage in them. Pastor4 stated that his children's behaviour could be impacted significantly by their peers, although the influence depends on the group joined.

Pastor5 noted that his children's behaviour can be influenced by their peers. He referred to the bible and stated, "bad company corrupts good character." He further noted that a good company has positive results and vice versa. Pastor6 did not have a specific standpoint on the question and failed to share his views. Pastor7 strongly felt that children's behaviour can be impacted profoundly

by their peers, especially when the parents are too busy to guide them in the right direction. Pastor8 stated that his children's behaviour can be influenced by their peers. Pastor9 was also of the view that his children's behaviour can be affected by their peers. Pastor10 also shared that peers have a significant impact on his children's behaviour.

Many participants felt that peers influence their children greatly as most children would want to be like their peers in many ways; an observation made by Carter (2019) who argues that a child will be influenced by their peers positively or negatively.

### **Elders narrative on peer pressure and its effect on discipline**

Elder participants were asked in an interview, "to what extent does peer pressure affect the discipline of children." Concerning this, Elder1 said peer pressure affects the discipline of children either negatively or positively depending on which group the child interacts with. Elder2 argued that peer pressure affects children negatively or positively depending on the group the child interacts with. Elder3 stated that peer pressure can affect children's behaviour. Elder4 felt strongly that peer pressure affects the discipline of children significantly, arguing it can influence positive or negative results.

Elder5 opined that peer pressure can affect discipline considerably as others may influence children to engage in bad habits like taking alcohol to feel what their peers praise. Generally, all the participants shared that peer pressure affects the discipline of children. This finding agrees with Morin (2021), who

indicated that the desire to belong to a group influences children to do what the group desires irrespective of whether it is good or bad.

### **Media: Pastors narrative on media and its effects on discipline**

The respondents were asked whether, in their opinion, the internet and media affected their children's discipline. Also, the researcher inquired whether the respondents bothered to find out the T.V. programs their children watched. Pastor1 stated that the media and internet have affected most children's behaviour. The respondent also shared that he checks what his children watch because some programmes may negatively influence their behaviour. Pastor2 stated that social media and T.V. programmes affect children's discipline either positively or negatively. The respondent noted that he checks what his children watch on the television and advises them to follow programmes that impact their lives positively.

Pastor3 felt that media and the internet can significantly influence a child's behaviour depending on what they watch and read. The respondent stated that he monitors what his children watch on the television because they may be influenced to engage in the wrong activities. Pastor4 also observed that media and the internet might affect a child's discipline positively or negatively. The respondent also said that he monitors the television programmes watched by his children. Pastor5 stated that violent episodes might make children violent and, therefore, the internet and media have a significant impact on his children's discipline. The respondent said he checks and guides his children on the best television programmes to watch.

P6 failed to share his views on the subject. Respondent Pastor7 also opined that media and the internet greatly influence the discipline of a child because one is exposed to certain things beyond their age. Pastor8 argued that, although the media and the internet are educative, entertaining, and significant shop windows, they host various shows involving misleading celebrities, pornographic material, and lies. The respondent stated that he is careful and monitors what his children watch on the television. Pastor9 opined that the contents that children watch and read from the internet and media affect their discipline. However, he stated that he does not monitor his children's television programs to avoid interfering with their freedom. Pastor10 argued that the internet and media have both positive and negative effects on the behaviour of children. The respondent also affirmed that he cares and monitors the television programmes his children watch. Generally, most participants indicated that media has a negative and positive effect on the behaviour of children, and most of them shared that they monitor the T.V. programmes that their children watch.

### **Elders' narrative on media and its effects on discipline**

Elder participants were asked, "In your opinion, do the media (mass and social media) affect the discipline of children?" Elder1 strongly felt media affects the discipline of children. He was emphatic that almost all children today are affected negatively. Similarly, Elder2 also conceded that media affects the discipline of children. She argued that the T.V. programmes that children watch influence them into engaging in early sex (even for those under twelve) and for those watching violent movies



into violence. Elder3 stated that media affects the discipline of children positively and negatively. For instance, he argued that during the lockdown period due to the Covid-19 pandemic, some children could access valuable information used for studies such as online classes. Elder4 said that media affects the discipline of children in a significant way. He explained that children learn more by seeing, and when they are exposed to violent movies, they become violent. Elder5 felt that media can affect the discipline of children. He feared that many parents have no control over the contents their children watch through phones, computers, or at times, televisions.

Many elder participants reported that media has its positives and negatives and can impact discipline in children. They stated that children learn more by seeing and that they are likely to practice whatever they see on televisions or on their phones. This finding agrees with the observation made by Yun Hoong et al. (2020), who indicated that children who spend a lot of time on television and the internet are indirectly exposed to media violence and imitate violent behaviour from media content. The research findings indicate that media affects the discipline of children negatively despite its positives. This observation is made by Costello et al. (2017) where they stated that media is responsible for the many mental health problems and drug abuse among adolescents. The results also reveal that some pastor parents are ignorant of the effect media can have on the discipline of their children; therefore, they do not bother to control what their children watch on T.V. or other online platforms. However, some pastors cared to monitor the T.V. programmes that their children watch. The

findings agree with Costello et al. (2017), who in their study, found out that many parents monitor the online activities that their children engage in while only 39% of parents have parental control over what their children watch or do online.

#### **4.0 Conclusion**

The study established that pastors' children always feel pressured to be right, thus, stressing them. Prolonged stress causes depression, resulting in more indiscipline cases like immorality, drug and substance abuse, and even suicides among pastors' children. Peer pressure, too, influences the path a child will take, whether good or bad. It can also make pastors' children stressed and resent being born in a pastors' family. This attitude makes children rebel to do things their way. Media impacts the discipline and mental health of children, and therefore parents should monitor the T.V. programmes they watch and the online activities they engage in.

#### **5.0 Recommendations**

The church management should engage counselling professionals who would occasionally provide one-on-one counseling sessions to the pastors' children and always keep in touch with them for their mental and physical wellbeing. Churches should initiate programmes that train pastors' children on their roles and how to face and address challenges posed by their peers and the congregants. Further research should be carried among the female clergy, as this study covered only male clergy in regard to the effects of societal factors on the discipline of pastors' children in the context of church mission in Tigania West Sub-county. Further research should also be done to establish the influence pastors' children have on each other's behaviour.

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