CATHOLIC CHURCH AND PROMOTION OF SOCIAL COHESION AMONG THE YOUTH IN EMBAKASI EAST SUBCOUNTY, NAIROBI COUNTY, KENYA.

MERCY ADHIAMBO OCHIENG

REG. NUMBER: 1065995

A RESEARCH THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE CENTRE FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE AND ETHICS IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENT FOR THE AWARD OF MASTERS OF ARTS IN JUSTICE PEACE AND COHESION AT THE CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF EASTERN AFRICA, KENYA.

NAIROBI, KENYA

SEPTEMBER, 2026

DECLARATION

This research thesis is my original work. It has not been presented for the award of a degree or any other academic qualification in any university or institution of higher learning. All sources of information used in this study have been duly acknowledged and referenced in accordance with academic requirements.

Name: **Mercy Ochieng** **Admission Number: 1065995**

Signature: ..... Date: 28/09/2026

RECOMMENDATIONS BY THE SUPERVISORS

This thesis has been submitted for examination with our approval as the University supervisors.

DR. WILKISTER M. SHANYISA

Signature: ..... Date: 28/09/2026

REV. DR. PETER MBARO

Signature: ..... Date 28/09/2026

This research thesis has been endorsed by the Head of the Department of the Centre for Social Justice and Ethics.

Signature: ..... Date: .....

DEDICATION

This research thesis is dedicated to Almighty God for His grace, wisdom, strength, and faithfulness throughout my academic journey.

I also dedicate this work to my beloved husband and children for their unwavering love, encouragement, patience, and support during my studies. Your sacrifices, understanding, and constant motivation have inspired me to persevere and pursue academic excellence.

Finally, I dedicate this thesis to all individuals committed to promoting peace, justice, unity, and social cohesion within our communities especially among the youth. May this study contribute, in a small way, to the creation of more harmonious and inclusive societies.

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May God bless each one of you abundantly.

ABSTRACT

Globally, young people continue to face social and economic challenges which affects social cohesion especially social interaction, inclusiveness, solidarity and participation in community activities. This situation is no different in Embakasi East Constituency. Although the Catholic Church has implemented youth-focused programmes in the area, limited empirical evidence exists on how these programmes promote social cohesion among youth in Embakasi East Constituency. This study investigated the relationship between Catholic Church and Promotion of social cohesion among the youth in Embakasi East Constituency, Nairobi County, Kenya. The study was guided by Empowerment and Social Capital Theories. It adopted a Mixed methods approach with a focus on convergent parallel mixed-methods design. The target population was 146,770 from which a sample size of 399 was selected using Yamane's 1967 formula. Quantitative data was collected through structured questionnaires while Qualitative data was collected from six participants who were purposively selected. Quantitative data was analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 28, while qualitative data was analyzed thematically. The findings showed a statistically significant relationship between the Catholic Church and promotion of social cohesion among the youth. For example, there was a positive and statistically significant relationship between youth empowerment programmes and social cohesion ($r = .381$, $p = .001$). Youth community engagement programmes had a positive and statistically significant relationship with social cohesion ($r = .099$, $p = .035$). Qualitative findings identified unemployment, drug and substance abuse, political manipulation, financial constraints, monitoring and evaluation challenges, intergenerational relationship challenges, and changing youth needs as factors affecting the effective implementation of Catholic Church youth programmes. The study recommends strengthening youth empowerment, mentorship, leadership, community service and peacebuilding programmes, while improving resource mobilisation, monitoring and evaluation, in addition to youth participation in programme planning and implementation.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AMECEA	Association of Member Episcopal Conferences in Eastern Africa
APA	American Psychological Association
CUEA	Catholic University of Eastern Africa
FBO	Faith-Based Organization
KCCB	Kenya Conference of Catholic Bishops
KNBS	Kenya National Bureau of Statistics
NACOSTI	National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation
NCIC	National Cohesion and Integration Commission
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
YCA	Young Christian Association

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the background of the study, the statement of the problem, the purpose of the study, research objectives, research questions, justification of the study, significance of the study, scope and delimitation, limitations of the study, the conceptual framework, operational definition of key terms, and the chapter summary.

1.1 Background of the study

The Catholic Church has viewed young people as not merely objects of its pastoral care, but also active agents of both the Church's mission and the transformation of society. Based on the gospel and Catholic Social Teaching, the Church understands youth ministry as a holistic process which aims at the total formation of youth (spiritual, intellectual, social, moral, and economic). Consequently, contemporary Catholic youth ministry goes beyond faith instruction to encompass leadership training, mentorship, volunteering, peacebuilding, civic engagement and empowerment, to equip youth with the values, knowledge, competencies and opportunities to become responsible and active members of their societies and contribute to a peaceful and cohesive community (Pope Francis, 2019; Dicastery for Evangelization, 2020).

Social cohesion plays a crucial role in increasingly diverse societies in terms of culture, ethnicity, religion and socio-economic status. This entails the development of trust, a sense of belonging, mutual respect, inclusion, collective responsibility and willingness to contribute in various ways to the community. Pope Francis (2020) emphasizes fraternity, social friendship, dialogue, solidarity and the common good as cornerstones of societies at peace in the Encyclical Letter Fratelli Tutti. These issues become vital for young people due to the fact that they are simultaneously agents for societal change, yet are extremely vulnerable to exclusion, violence, political manipulation, unemployment, substance abuse and social

marginalization. Therefore, interventions involving young people, which combine empowerment with opportunities for effective interaction and participation, might greatly contribute to building stronger relationships and cohesion within societies.

In Germany, the Catholic Church has established well-organized youth structures through parish ministries, Catholic schools, university chaplaincies, and national youth associations such as the Bund der Deutschen Katholischen Jugend (BDKJ)**.** These programs encourage young people to participate in leadership formation, social justice campaigns, intercultural dialogue, volunteer service, environmental initiatives, and advocacy for vulnerable groups. Recent studies indicate that participation in these programs has enhanced civic engagement, leadership skills, and social responsibility while providing young people with opportunities to interact across cultural and social differences (European Commission, 2022; German Bishops' Conference, 2023). However, researchers also report declining participation in organized religious activities, increasing secularization, and changing youth lifestyles as significant challenges affecting the sustainability of parish-based youth programs. These developments have prompted the Church to adopt innovative approaches, including digital youth ministry, flexible pastoral programs, and stronger collaboration with educational institutions to maintain meaningful engagement with young people.

A different but equally important experience is observed in the Philippines, where the Catholic Church continues to play a central role in youth formation because of its extensive parish network and strong community presence. Catholic youth programs emphasize faith formation, leadership training, disaster response, community service, environmental conservation, and outreach to vulnerable populations. Following natural disasters and the COVID-19 pandemic, many dioceses expanded youth volunteer initiatives that enabled young people to participate in humanitarian assistance, psychosocial support, and community

recovery efforts. Studies conducted in the country suggest that these activities strengthened solidarity, volunteerism, empathy, and collective responsibility among young people while reinforcing relationships between the Church and local communities (Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines, 2022; UNESCO, 2023). Nevertheless, the Church continues to face challenges associated with youth migration, economic hardship, digital distractions, and declining participation among some urban youth, highlighting the need for youth programs that remain responsive to changing social realities.

Similarly, in Latin America, particularly in Colombia, Catholic youth ministry has increasingly contributed to reconciliation and community rebuilding in areas affected by decades of armed conflict. Parish youth groups have participated in dialogue initiatives, community mediation, psychosocial support, environmental conservation, and volunteer programs aimed at rebuilding trust within divided communities. Recent studies indicate that these interventions have enhanced young people's participation in peacebuilding processes while promoting reconciliation, mutual respect, and civic responsibility (UNDP, 2023). However, persistent socio-economic inequalities, youth unemployment, forced displacement, and political polarization continue to limit the long-term effectiveness of some community-based initiatives, demonstrating that faith-based interventions alone cannot resolve all structural drivers of social fragmentation.

The experience in Africa also resonates with similar narratives. There has been an effort by Catholic dioceses in Guinea-Bissau to hold inter-diocesan youth events where young people from diverse communities can come together to share values of faiths, social interaction, and peace-building. In 2023, nearly 7,000 young people in the country’s two dioceses attended a three-day Catholic Youth Day that involved catechesis, a peace march, some songs, etc. Through such events they learn together and forge relationships of brotherhood, solidarity

and participation in a way that strengthens their interactions in various communities (Vatican News, 2023). This is an experience where Church organized events can really develop meaningful youth interactions and building of peace between young people.

The African situation is an example of how youth are a growing part of the population, and becoming important decision-makers and agents of peace on the continent. While the UNDP reports that they are making progress in contributing to peace through community dialogues, reconciliations, prevention of election violence, and early warning mechanisms, the role of an institution such as the Catholic Church, or other faith-based institutions can help develop structures through which young people can build values, skills, relationships and opportunities. These programs would combine formation, leadership development, community service, peace-building and participation, which can further help in social trust, inclusion and participation.

In Kenya, the significance of youth empowerment and participation has become increasingly evident. Recent evidence from Generation Unlimited indicates that Kenya had approximately 12.1 million youth in 2024, while about 2.3 million young people were not in employment, education or training, representing 19.1 per cent of the youth population. The youth-to-adult unemployment ratio was approximately 3.0, demonstrating the disproportionate labour-market challenges experienced by young people. These conditions can affect young people's economic security, participation and prospects for social inclusion.

Recent empirical research also demonstrates that Catholic youth programs in Kenya have extended beyond purely spiritual activities. Kabugi (2025), for example, found that Catholic-led initiatives had supported more than 20,000 young people through vocational training, entrepreneurship incubation, peacebuilding workshops and counselling between 2015 and 2023. The study associated these interventions with skills development, social cohesion and

nonviolent conflict resolution. However, the study primarily examined the Catholic Church's role in addressing youth unemployment, insecurity and radicalization rather than systematically examining the contribution of specific youth empowerment and community engagement programs to multidimensional social cohesion at constituency level.

Nairobi provides an important setting for such an investigation because of its large and diverse youth population and complex socio-economic environment. Within Nairobi City County, Embakasi East Constituency comprises Upper Savannah, Lower Savannah, Embakasi, Utawala and Mihango wards. The constituency is characterized by a predominantly urban population, diverse social backgrounds and varying socio-economic conditions. These characteristics make social relationships, inclusion, participation and peaceful coexistence important areas of inquiry.

It is within this context that the present study investigates the contribution of the Catholic Church to the promotion of social cohesion among youth in Embakasi East Constituency, Nairobi County. The study focuses specifically on youth-focused programs, the contribution of youth empowerment and community engagement programs, and the factors that may facilitate or constrain the Church's contribution to social cohesion.

1.2 Statement of the problem

The Catholic Church implements various youth-focused programs intended to support young people's spiritual, social and personal development. In Kenya, the Kenya Conference of Catholic Bishops established the Commission for Youth Apostolate in 2024, with programs including youth empowerment, leadership development, mentorship, counselling, social justice, community life and service. The Archdiocese of Nairobi similarly provides retreats, leadership activities, sports, music and drama, seminars and workshops for young people. Evidence also suggests the potential contribution of such initiatives. For instance, Kabugi

(2025) reports that Catholic-led initiatives supported over 20,000 young people through vocational training, entrepreneurship, peacebuilding and counselling between 2015 and 2023.

Despite these initiatives, young people in Kenya continue to experience challenges that may affect social connectedness, inclusion and participation. In 2024, Kenya had approximately 12.1 million youth**,** with 2.3 million (19.1%) not in employment, education or training (NEET) (UNICEF, 2024). Substance use also remains a concern, with NACADA reporting approximately 632,846 youth aged 15–24 years affected by the use of at least one substance (NACADA, 2023). The youth-led demonstrations of June 2024 further highlighted concerns regarding economic opportunities, inclusion, representation and meaningful participation in governance. These challenges demonstrate the need for programs that can strengthen trust, inclusion and constructive community participation among young people.

However, limited empirical evidence demonstrates how Catholic Church youth-focused programs contribute to social cohesion among youth at constituency level**.** Existing studies tend to focus on youth empowerment, employment, peacebuilding, radicalization prevention or religious participation separately, with limited attention to the contribution of youth empowerment and community engagement programs to social trust, social inclusion and community participation. Evidence on the institutional and contextual factors shaping these contributions is also limited.

This gap is evident in Embakasi East Constituency, comprising Upper Savannah, Lower Savannah, Embakasi, Utawala and Mihango wards. Although Catholic parishes and youth structures operate within the constituency, their contribution to social cohesion among youth has not been sufficiently documented. The problem, therefore, is not the absence of Catholic youth programs, but the limited empirical knowledge of their nature, implementation and contribution to social cohesion among youth in Embakasi East Constituency. This study

therefore examines Catholic youth-focused programs, assesses the contribution of youth empowerment and community engagement programs, and examines the institutional and contextual factors shaping this contribution.

1.3 General objective

To investigate on the Catholic Church and promotion of social cohesion among the youth in Embakasi East Constituency in Nairobi County, Kenya.

1.3.1 Specific Objectives

i. To examine the relationship of youth-focused programmes in the promotion of social cohesion among the youth in Embakasi East Constituency in Nairobi County, Kenya.
ii. To assess relationship of the Catholic Church's youth empowerment programmes in the promotion of social cohesion among the youth in Embakasi East Constituency in Nairobi County, Kenya.
iii. To examine the relationship of Catholic youth community engagement programmes in the promotion of social cohesion among the youth in Embakasi East Constituency in Nairobi County, Kenya.
iv. To identify the key factors that hinder the Catholic Church's efforts to foster social cohesion among the youth in Embakasi East Constituency.

1.4 Research Questions

i. What is the relationship between youth-focused programmes and social cohesion among youth in Embakasi East Constituency, Nairobi County, Kenya?
ii. What is the relationship between the Catholic Church's youth empowerment programmes and social cohesion among youth in Embakasi East Constituency, Nairobi County, Kenya?

iii. What is the relationship between Catholic youth community engagement programmes and social cohesion among youth in Embakasi East Constituency, Nairobi County, Kenya?

iv. What are the key factors that hinder the Catholic Church's efforts to foster social cohesion among youth in Embakasi East Constituency, Nairobi County, Kenya?

Hypothesis: The study hypothesizes that there is a relationship between the Catholic Church and promotion of social cohesion among the youth in Embakasi East Constituency, Nairobi County, Kenya.

1.5 Justification of the Study

The Catholic Church has an extensive presence within communities and has established various youth-focused programs intended to support the holistic development of young people. These programs include youth empowerment, leadership development, mentorship, skills development, community service, volunteerism, peacebuilding and other forms of youth engagement. However, the existence of such programs does not, by itself, establish the extent to which they contribute to social cohesion. There is therefore a need to examine their nature, scope and implementation and to assess how empowerment and community engagement programs relate to social trust, social inclusion and community participation among youth.

Social cohesion is an important condition for peaceful coexistence, social inclusion and meaningful participation in community life. Among young people, social cohesion is particularly important because youth constitute a significant proportion of the population and are important actors in community development, peacebuilding and social transformation. However, young people may also experience challenges such as unemployment, social exclusion, limited opportunities for meaningful participation, substance abuse and

vulnerability to political manipulation. These challenges may weaken social trust, inclusion and participation and may consequently affect peaceful coexistence within communities.

Existing studies provide useful evidence concerning Catholic Church involvement in youth development, charitable activities, peacebuilding and empowerment in Kenya. However, there remains limited empirical evidence focusing specifically on the contribution of Catholic Church youth programs to social cohesion at the constituency level. In particular, limited attention has been given to the relationship between Catholic youth empowerment and community engagement programs and the specific dimensions of social cohesion examined in this study: social trust, social inclusion and community participation. The present study therefore seeks to address this contextual and empirical gap in Embakasi East Constituency.

The study is further justified by the need to understand the institutional and contextual factors that may shape the Church's contribution to social cohesion. Examining issues such as institutional capacity, resources, leadership support, youth participation, socio-economic conditions and community support may provide a more comprehensive understanding of both the opportunities and limitations surrounding Catholic youth programs.

Methodologically, the study is justified by the need to combine quantitative and qualitative evidence. Quantitative data will provide measurable evidence concerning youth participation in empowerment and community engagement programs and their relationship with indicators of social cohesion, while qualitative data will provide contextual explanations concerning program implementation and the institutional and contextual factors shaping the Church's contribution. The use of a mixed-methods approach therefore provides a broader basis for understanding the phenomenon than relying on either quantitative or qualitative evidence alone.

The study was consequently justified because it generated constituency-level empirical evidence on the contribution of Catholic Church youth-focused programs to social cohesion, while also identifying factors that facilitated or constrained this contribution. Such evidence was useful in strengthening youth ministry programming, community engagement and peacebuilding initiatives within Embakasi East Constituency and in informing wider discussions on faith-based contributions to social cohesion.

1.6 Significance of the Study

The findings of this study are expected to contribute to both scholarly knowledge and practical efforts aimed at promoting social cohesion among young people through faith-based interventions. Specifically, the study will benefit the following stakeholders.

The Catholic Church, particularly the Catholic Archdiocese of Nairobi, parish leadership, diocesan youth offices, the Youth Catholic Action (YCA), the Catholic Justice and Peace Commission (CJPC), and Caritas Kenya, will benefit from empirical evidence on the effectiveness of youth-focused programs in promoting social cohesion. The findings will enable the Church to identify strengths, address existing challenges, and design more responsive youth empowerment and community engagement programs that foster trust, inclusion, participation, solidarity, and peaceful coexistence among young people.

The Government of Kenya, particularly the Ministry of Youth Affairs, Creative Economy and Sports, the State Department for Social Protection, County Government of Nairobi, and agencies responsible for youth development and social cohesion, will benefit from evidence that can inform the formulation, implementation, and evaluation of youth policies and programs. The findings may also strengthen collaboration between government institutions and faith-based organizations in addressing youth-related social challenges.

Development partners, civil society organizations, and other faith-based organizations working in youth empowerment, peacebuilding, governance, and community development will benefit from a deeper understanding of how faith-based youth programs contribute to promoting social cohesion. The findings may inform programmer design, resource allocation, partnership development, and the adoption of best practices for strengthening youth participation and community resilience.

The youth in Embakasi East Constituency will benefit indirectly through improved youth programs that are better aligned with their social, economic, and developmental needs. The study is expected to generate recommendations that encourage greater participation in leadership, volunteerism, community engagement, and peacebuilding initiatives, thereby enhancing young people's sense of belonging, civic responsibility, and opportunities for positive social interaction.

The Catholic University of Eastern Africa (CUEA), other institutions of higher learning, researchers, and students will benefit from the study by gaining additional empirical literature on the contribution of faith-based organizations to promoting social cohesion among youth. The study will enrich the growing body of knowledge in Peace and Conflict Studies, Development Studies, Sociology, Theology, and Religious Studies while providing a reference for future research on youth development and faith-based peacebuilding initiatives.

Finally, the findings of this study are expected to contribute to broader efforts towards achieving sustainable peace and development by providing evidence on how youth-focused faith-based programs can strengthen trust, social inclusion, community participation, solidarity, and peaceful coexistence. In doing so, the study will support ongoing national, regional, and international efforts to build cohesive, resilient, and inclusive communities in line with Kenya's development aspirations, the African Union Agenda 2063, the Sustainable

Development Goals, and the pastoral priorities reaffirmed during the 21st AMECEA Plenary Assembly (2026).

1.7 Theoretical Framework guiding the study

The theories that guided this study were Empowerment Theory and Social Capital Theory. Empowerment Theory, advanced by Rappaport (1987) and elaborated by Zimmerman (1995), explains how opportunities, resources, and skills enable Catholic Church youth-empowerment and community-engagement programmes to enhance young people's capacity for community development and peacebuilding. Social Capital Theory, popularized by Putnam (1993, 2000), explains how social networks, trust, reciprocity, and civic participation foster cooperation, inclusion, and collective action, thereby enhancing social cohesion, participation, and belonging among youth engaged in Catholic Church youth-focused programmes. Discussion of the two theories in details is provided in Chapter two below.

1.8 Scope and Delimitation of the Study

This study examined the contribution of the Catholic Church to the promotion of social cohesion among youth in Embakasi East Constituency, Nairobi County, Kenya. Specifically, the study focused on four key areas: Catholic Church youth-focused programmes; youth empowerment programmes and their contribution to social cohesion; youth community-engagement programmes and their contribution to social cohesion; and challenges affecting the Church's efforts to promote social cohesion among youth. Social cohesion was assessed through dimensions including interpersonal trust, social inclusion, community participation, sense of belonging, solidarity, and peaceful coexistence.

Geographically, the study was conducted in Embakasi East Constituency, which comprised five administrative wards: Upper Savannah, Lower Savannah, Embakasi, Utawala, and Mihango. The constituency was selected because of its substantial youth population, rapid

urbanisation, cultural diversity, and the presence of Catholic parishes implementing youth-focused programmes. These characteristics provided an appropriate context for examining the contribution of Catholic Church youth programmes to social cohesion.

The study targeted youth aged 15–34 years, consistent with the youth population definition used in the study, residing in Embakasi East Constituency. The quantitative component focused on youth participants and beneficiaries of Catholic Church programmes, while key informants, including parish priests, youth chaplains, youth coordinators, Youth Catholic Action (YCA) leaders, and officials of the Catholic Justice and Peace Commission (CJPC), provided complementary qualitative information on programme implementation, outcomes, and challenges.

The study adopted a mixed-methods research approach, integrating quantitative and qualitative methods to provide a comprehensive understanding of the contribution of Catholic Church youth programmes to social cohesion. Quantitative data were collected using structured questionnaires administered to sampled youth respondents, while qualitative data were obtained through key informant interviews with selected Church and youth programme leaders. The integration of the two forms of data facilitated a more comprehensive assessment of programme experiences, outcomes, and implementation challenges.

Temporally, the study focused on Catholic Church youth programmes implemented between 2020 and 2026. This period was selected to capture recent youth-focused interventions and initiatives related to empowerment, community engagement, social inclusion, and peacebuilding. Restricting the study to this period ensured that the findings reflected the contemporary context of youth ministry and the prevailing social cohesion challenges affecting young people in Embakasi East Constituency.

1.9 Limitations of the Study

The study was subject to various limitations which could have affected data collection and interpretation of results; these were minimized by implementing applicable measures. Some people could have declined to provide information concerning social cohesion, youth programmes or activities of the Church due to insecurity, the secrecy of such information, or fear of being judged negatively and misunderstood. To minimize this, the researcher explained the importance of the study, sought informed consent, and assured confidentiality of the information provided.

The possibility existed that respondents would offer subjective and therefore biased information due to different factors such as personal preference, the desire to conform to socially acceptable norms, the need to avoid stigma or negative reactions, or simply the desire to portray a favourable profile of their respective Church to the researcher. This could have caused the study to collect subjective data that did not provide a true representation of the issues or facts on the ground. For example, Church members could have expressed how the Church wanted them to be perceived without clearly reflecting on the real underlying situation in the community.

The researcher assured the respondents that there were no right or wrong answers and that the intention was only to ascertain truthful opinions and perceptions. The questionnaire tool was used to elicit sincere and spontaneous views, whereas the researcher sought to enhance veracity by cross-checking and verifying data collected from more than one interviewee using questions framed differently to capture a multifaceted perspective. Open-ended questions were also useful in allowing respondents to articulate their thoughts.

The study was also limited by the availability of finances, which included expenses for travelling within Embakasi East Sub-county; printing and photocopying of the tools;

communication charges incurred during the fieldwork; as well as other relevant logistical and administrative expenses. Since data collection took place among a varied array of social groups and diverse Catholic Churches in Embakasi East Sub-county, field expenditure was likely to be substantial. Thus, this factor could have been an impediment to the amount of data that was collected.

A realistic budget was put in place to incorporate financial provisions to cater for such operational expenditures, and efficient and economical means of transportation, printing, communication, and other related activities were utilized where possible. The researcher closely worked together with the respective Catholic institutions to reduce travel costs, which assisted in granting access and enabling smoother progress of fieldwork operations within the study area.

The research was limited to selected Catholic Parishes within Embakasi East Sub-county. As a consequence of this narrow scope of data collection, conclusions and findings resulting from this study could hardly represent all other Catholic Parishes within the larger Kenyan Catholic Community, whether countrywide or within specific urban contexts in Kenya, due to varied social, cultural, and economic contexts of different regions in Kenya.

Caution was observed when stating conclusions or extrapolating findings derived from this study beyond Embakasi East Sub-county as a unit of study. The researcher endeavoured to improve the quality and reliability of the data collected to represent a wider spectrum of people within the sub-county through data collection from different layers of community members such as priests, youth leaders, Catechists, members of the Small Christian Communities, justice and peace advocates, and laypersons of varied ages.

1.10 Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework illustrates the expected relationship between Catholic Church youth-focused programs and the promotion of social cohesion among youth in Embakasi East Constituency. The framework is informed by Empowerment Theory and Social Capital Theory and assumes that Catholic youth programs may contribute to social cohesion by strengthening young people's capabilities, agency, participation and relationships.

The framework identifies Catholic Church youth empowerment programs and Catholic Church youth community engagement programs as the principal independent variables. Youth empowerment programs refer to interventions intended to strengthen young people's knowledge, skills, confidence, leadership capacity, agency and ability to participate in decisions affecting their lives and communities. Indicators include leadership opportunities, skills development, mentorship, career and vocational guidance, entrepreneurship or livelihood support, participation in decision-making, self-efficacy and opportunities to exercise voice.

Youth community engagement programs refer to activities through which young people participate in collective activities beyond individual development and contribute to the wider community. Indicators include community service, volunteering, peacebuilding activities, environmental activities, charitable activities, civic participation, outreach activities and participation in community initiatives.

The dependent variable is promotion of social cohesion among youth**.** For purposes of this study, social cohesion refers to the extent to which young people experience and contribute to trusting, inclusive, participatory and harmonious relationships within their communities. It was operationalized primarily through indicators of social trust, social inclusion and community participation, with belonging, solidarity and peaceful coexistence considered as

related dimensions of the broader concept.The framework also recognizes that the relationship between Catholic youth programs and social cohesion may be influenced by contextual factors. These include socio-economic conditions, family and community support, government youth policies, availability of resources, institutional capacity and the wider social environment. These factors are treated as contextual/intervening factors rather than as additional components of the main independent variables.

The expected relationship is that participation in well-designed Catholic youth empowerment programs may strengthen young people's agency, self-efficacy, leadership capacity, voice and participation. Increased empowerment may enable youth to participate more constructively in community affairs and collective activities. Similarly, participation in community engagement programs may increase opportunities for young people to develop relationships, networks, trust, reciprocity and collective responsibility. Through these processes, empowerment and social connectedness may contribute to greater social trust, inclusion and participation, thereby promoting social cohesion.

The framework does not assume that Catholic Church programs automatically produce social cohesion. Rather, it proposes an empirical relationship to be examined through quantitative and qualitative evidence. The qualitative component further explored how young people and key informants understand these relationships and what factors facilitate or constrain the contribution of the programmes.

1.1 Conceptual Framework

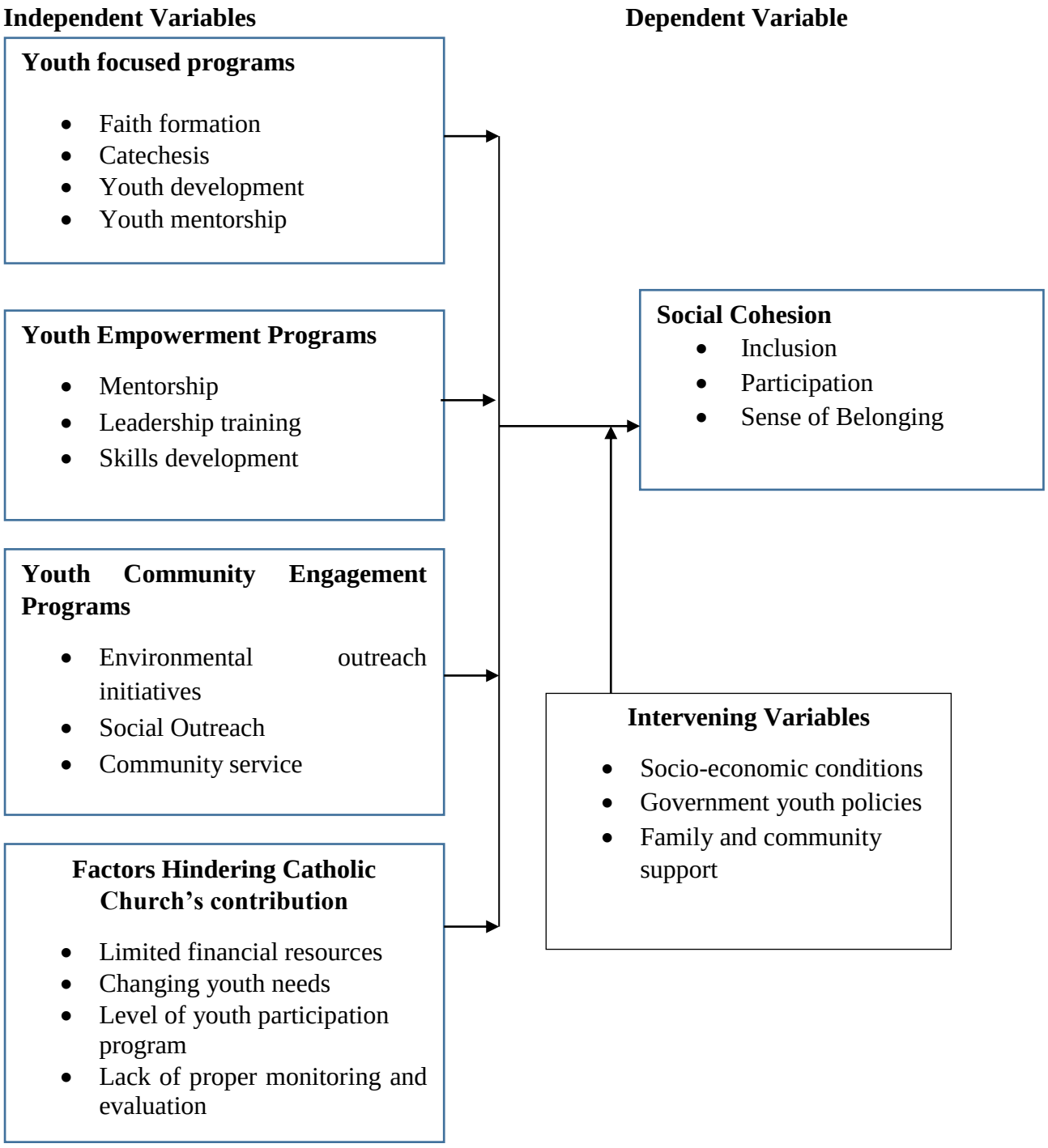


Figure 1. 1: Conceptual Framework

1.11 Operational Definitions of Key Terms

Catholic Church: Refers to the Roman Catholic Church operating within Embakasi East Constituency through its parishes, youth ministries, and affiliated organizations that implement programs aimed at the spiritual, social, and personal development of young people.

Youth: Refers to persons aged 15–34 years who participate in Catholic Church youth programs within Embakasi East Constituency. This age category is adopted for the purpose of this study in line with the study population.

Youth-focused Programs: Refers to organized activities implemented by the Catholic Church specifically for young people, including faith formation, youth fellowship, leadership development, mentorship, sports, talent development, and other initiatives intended to promote the holistic development of youth.

Youth Empowerment Programs: Refers to initiatives undertaken by the Catholic Church to enhance the knowledge, skills, leadership capacity, self-reliance, and socio-economic well-being of young people through mentorship, entrepreneurship training, career guidance, leadership formation, and related activities.

Youth Community Engagement Programs: Refers to activities organized by the Catholic Church that encourage young people to participate in community service, volunteerism, peacebuilding, environmental conservation, charitable outreach, and other initiatives that promote active citizenship and community participation.

Social Cohesion: Refers to the extent to which young people demonstrate trust, social inclusion, and active participation within their communities as a result of their involvement in Catholic Church youth programs. In this study, social cohesion was measured using indicators of social trust, social inclusion, and community participation.

Social Trust: Refers to the confidence and willingness of young people to interact, cooperate, and build positive relationships with others regardless of ethnic, religious, social, or cultural differences.

Social Inclusion: Refers to the extent to which young people feel accepted, valued, and provided with equal opportunities to participate in Church and community activities without discrimination or exclusion.

Community Participation: Refers to the active involvement of young people in Church and community initiatives, volunteer activities, leadership roles, and decision-making processes that contribute to the well-being of society.

Promotion of Social Cohesion: Refers to the process through which Catholic Church youth programs strengthen trust, inclusion, and community participation among young people, thereby enhancing harmonious relationships and peaceful coexistence within Embakasi East Constituency.

Contribution: Refers to the extent to which Catholic Church youth-focused programs influence or enhance the promotion of social cohesion among young people as perceived by the study participants.

Embakasi East Constituency: Refers to the administrative constituency located in Nairobi County comprising the wards of Upper Savannah, Lower Savannah, Embakasi, Utawala, and Mihang'o, which forms the geographical area of this study.

1.12 Chapter Summary

This chapter introduced the study by presenting the background to the research from the global, African, Kenyan, Nairobi County, and Embakasi East Constituency perspectives, highlighting the growing importance of promoting social cohesion among young people through faith-based interventions. It outlined the statement of the problem, demonstrating the existing empirical and contextual gap regarding the contribution of Catholic Church youth-

focused programs to the promotion of social cohesion among the youth in Embakasi East Constituency. The chapter further presented the purpose of the study, research objectives, research questions, justification, significance, scope and delimitation, conceptual framework, and operational definition of key terms. Collectively, these sections established the foundation and direction of the study by clarifying its focus, variables, and expected contribution to knowledge and practice. The next chapter reviews relevant theoretical and empirical literature on Catholic Church youth-focused programs and social cohesion to establish the study's theoretical foundation, identify existing knowledge gaps, and develop a framework for interpreting the study findings.

CHAPTER TWO
LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter involves a review of the empirical literature on the contribution of the Catholic Church to the promotion of social cohesion among youth. The literature is organized based on the research objectives, following a funnel approach by first considering the international context, then moving to the African continent and finally to Kenya. The review encompasses existing Catholic youth-focused interventions, how youth empowerment and community participation programs foster social cohesion and the factors that influence the Church's role in this context. The chapter also present the theoretical framework that supports the study, and conclude with a brief summary and a presentation of research gaps that emerged from the literature review.

2.2 The Problem Overview

Faith-based organizations have increasingly adopted and engaged in, youth-centered programs to empower young people and enhance their engagement in sustained development. Among these institutions, the Catholic Church is among the most active in facilitating holistic youth development through activities that include; parish-based youth ministry, leadership training programs, mentorship opportunities, community development activities, volunteerism programs, peacebuilding missions and youth socio-economic empowerment. Such interventions aim at empowering the young people to be responsible citizens and instilling in them a variety of values such as solidarity, dialogue, inclusion and service. Empirically, studies have documented the role of participation in such programs in strengthening civic responsibility, community participation, interpersonal trust and peaceful coexistence of young people, indicating positive correlations to social cohesion (Marshall & Van Saanen 2022; UNESCO 2023).

Youth are one of the key stakeholders globally, and are well recognized as significant drivers of social, economic and political development. However, the majority of these young people today grapple with a variety of issues including unemployment, poverty, social exclusion, abuse of drugs and illicit substances, violent extremism, political manipulation and restricted opportunities to meaningfully contribute to community life (United Nations Development Program (UNDP) 2023; United Nations 2024). The persistence of these factors is detrimental to social cohesion due to their negative impact on social trust, public participation, inclusion and peaceful existence.

Many societies are still facing societal fragmentation, ethnic polarization, youthful unemployment, political intolerance and decline of civic participation. Such issues are particularly evident among urban youth in Kenya who, faced with socio-economic inequalities, are vulnerable to political manipulation, crime, drug use and other vices. Despite continuous efforts by the Catholic Church, through the implementation of various youth-focused interventions, empirical evidence concerning the contribution of such programs to social cohesion especially in urban areas such as Embakasi East constituency is very limited and, indeed this forms the basis of the current study.

2.3 Empirical Literature Review on

2.3.1 Existing Catholic Church-based Youth-Focused Programs

Globally, the Roman Catholic Church utilizes highly structured, institutionalized ministries to address the spiritual, psycho-social, and developmental needs of young demographics. In the United States, this framework is strategically architected by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), which deploys the Catholic Youth Organization (CYO) as an umbrella body across hundreds of dioceses to provide formalized leadership, pastoral care, and identity-building programs. Similarly, in Ireland, the *Catholic Youth Care (CYC)*

framework operates as a specialized diocesan provision, offering structured youth clubs, information services, and formal leadership certifications. Globally, these foundational programs are intentionally designed to establish safe, prosocial environments that anchor young people within a supportive institutional network before deploying them into broader civic spaces. International empirical evidence demonstrates that the relationship between young people, faith and community participation varies across social and cultural contexts.

In the Philippines, empirical studies provide more specific evidence concerning Catholic youth participation. Cortez-Arrevillaga (2025) examined Catholic youth involvement in Basic Ecclesial Communities in three parishes in Metro Manila. The study focused on young people's participation in grassroots Catholic communities and demonstrates how parish structures can be used to mobilize young people and encourage their involvement in community-based religious activities. Similarly, Paz (2024) examined young adults participating in Catholic youth organizations in San Antonio de Padua Parish in Laguna Province. The study found that Catholic youth organizations constitute an important social environment for young people, although participants also experienced pressures associated with education, employment, family support and their responsibilities as church members. These studies are important because they demonstrate that Catholic youth ministry operates within the broader social realities of young people and therefore has potential to respond to challenges extending beyond spiritual development.

Duke et al. (2025) examined Pope Francis' approach to youth ministry within university contexts in Nigeria, emphasizing inclusive pastoral care and opportunities for young people to participate actively in ecclesial life. The study argues that youth ministry should provide practical avenues through which young people can participate in the Church rather than limiting participation to formal religious activities. Similarly, research on Catholic campus

ministry in the Diocese of Kalookan in the Philippines found that programs intended to involve young people in the synodal process need to provide appropriate avenues for translating participation and inclusion into practice (Duke et al., 2024). These findings are significant for the present study because they suggest that the effectiveness of youth-focused programs depends not only on the existence of activities but also on whether young people are given meaningful opportunities to participate.

The global evidence therefore indicates a gradual transformation in Catholic youth ministry from programs centered predominantly on religious instruction towards more holistic approaches incorporating participation, accompaniment, leadership, social relationships and community involvement. Hunt (2020), for example, examined the development of digital Catholic youth ministry and noted the opportunities and challenges associated with maintaining meaningful youth relationships and spiritual community beyond traditional physical church spaces. Taken together, these international examples suggest that Catholic youth programs can provide social spaces where young people develop relationships, strengthen belonging and participate in collective activities. However, the extent to which such participation translates into broader social cohesion depends on the nature, inclusiveness and accessibility of the programs.

The African context presents additional dimensions to youth-focused interventions because young people constitute a substantial proportion of the continent's population while simultaneously facing unemployment, socioeconomic exclusion, political marginalization, substance abuse, violent extremism and limited participation in decision-making. Consequently, youth empowerment and peacebuilding have increasingly become important components of development and social stability initiatives. Yingi (2023) examined youth empowerment programs in Zimbabwe and established a relationship between youth

empowerment and peacebuilding. The study found that empowerment could provide young people with opportunities to participate constructively in society and reduce conditions associated with vulnerability to violence. However, political interference, inadequate political will and marginalization of youth from decision-making were identified as significant challenges. The findings demonstrate that empowerment programs are more likely to contribute to peace when they provide genuine opportunities for participation and agency rather than merely delivering material assistance.

A related study by Zvaita and Kaye (2023) examined youth peacebuilding agency in Mbare, a high-density suburb of Harare, Zimbabwe. The researchers found that political manipulation, social inequalities, unemployment and exclusion from political and economic decision-making influenced youth vulnerability to violence. The study consequently emphasized the importance of initiatives that harness young people's social and economic capacities and strengthen their agency in peacebuilding. This urban African evidence is particularly relevant to the present study because it illustrates how the social and economic conditions of young people can influence their capacity to participate constructively in community life.

Within Eastern Africa, faith-based youth interventions have increasingly addressed peacebuilding, interreligious relations and social inclusion. In Kenya, Mudembei (2020) examined the Program for Christian-Muslim Relations in Africa (PROCMURA) and found that youth empowerment activities included peace days, workshops, seminars, conferences, university chapters and peace walks. The programs sought to equip young people to act as peace ambassadors and promote peaceful coexistence despite religious differences, radicalization and violent extremism. The study is relevant to the present research because it demonstrates how faith-based youth programs can combine empowerment with

peacebuilding and create opportunities for young people to engage constructively across religious and social boundaries.

In Kenya, the Catholic Church has established several structures through which youth-focused interventions are implemented. These include parish and diocesan youth ministries, Youth Catholic Action (YCA), the Catholic Justice and Peace Commission (CJPC), Caritas programs, chaplaincies and other pastoral and development initiatives. The programs encompass spiritual formation, leadership development, mentorship, entrepreneurship, vocational skills, counselling, community service, peacebuilding, civic engagement and social outreach. The diversity of these interventions indicates that Catholic youth ministry in Kenya has expanded beyond spiritual formation towards addressing socioeconomic and community-level challenges affecting young people.

Recent empirical evidence specifically concerning the Catholic Church in Kenya provides support for this observation. Kabugi (2025) investigated the role of the Catholic Church in addressing youth unemployment, insecurity and radicalization in Kenya. The study used 25 semi-structured interviews with Catholic clergy, youth beneficiaries and program officers, supplemented by analysis of more than 40 institutional reports and public documents from diocesan development offices in Nairobi, Kisumu and Eldoret. The study found that Catholic initiatives included vocational training, entrepreneurship incubation, peacebuilding workshops and counselling. It further linked Catholic youth empowerment initiatives with skills acquisition, economic resilience, social cohesion and nonviolent conflict resolution. These findings are particularly relevant to the present study because they establish empirical evidence of Catholic involvement in youth empowerment and peacebuilding in Kenya.

However, Kabugi's (2025) study also leaves room for further investigation. Although Nairobi was among the study locations, the research considered the Catholic Church's contribution

broadly in relation to unemployment, insecurity and radicalization across three urban settings. It did not specifically examine how parish-level youth programs within a particular constituency influence dimensions of social cohesion such as social inclusion, interpersonal trust, participation, belonging and collective responsibility. The present study therefore seeks to extend this evidence by examining Catholic youth programs within the more specific context of Embakasi East Constituency.

The importance of youth empowerment and community participation in Kenya is further supported by research beyond the Catholic context. Mbugua et al. (2024) examined the inclusion and integration of youth needs in empowerment programs in Nairobi and Trans Nzoia Counties. Their findings draw attention to the importance of incorporating young people's needs and participation into the design and implementation of empowerment interventions. Such evidence is relevant because programs directed at young people may have limited effects when youth are not meaningfully involved in determining the activities intended to address their needs. The findings therefore reinforce the need to assess not only what Catholic youth programs exist but also the extent to which they provide meaningful opportunities for youth participation.

Research in Nairobi's informal settlements provides additional contextual evidence. Onguka et al. (2024) examined the role of youth groups in community peacebuilding in Amani Kibra and Kibera Hamlets in Kibra. The study identified mentoring, empowerment and creative activities among the ways through which youth groups contribute to community peacebuilding, while also noting resource constraints and socio-political instability as challenges. The findings suggest that organized youth participation can create opportunities for collective action and peacebuilding within urban communities. This evidence is particularly useful to the present study because Embakasi East, like other urban

constituencies in Nairobi, contains diverse communities in which youth organizations and faith-based groups may provide important spaces for social interaction and community participation.

The literature reviewed at the global, African and Kenyan levels therefore demonstrates that youth-focused interventions can take multiple forms, including spiritual formation, leadership development, mentorship, skills acquisition, entrepreneurship, civic education, peacebuilding, community service, interfaith dialogue and social outreach. Although these interventions differ according to national, cultural and institutional contexts, a common theme emerges: programs that provide young people with opportunities to develop skills, form relationships, participate in decision-making and contribute to community activities may strengthen their agency and capacity to participate constructively in society. This provides an important basis for examining Catholic youth-focused programs through the lens of social cohesion.

Nevertheless, several gaps remain in the existing literature. First, international studies have examined Catholic youth participation, belonging, pastoral engagement and youth development in countries such as the Philippines, Brazil and Nigeria, but these studies have generally concentrated on religious participation, youth development or pastoral effectiveness rather than directly measuring social cohesion as a multidimensional outcome. Second, African studies have provided evidence on youth empowerment, peacebuilding and community participation, but much of this literature focuses on state, civil society or broader faith-based interventions rather than Catholic parish youth programs specifically. Third, Kenyan research has begun to document the Catholic Church's contribution to youth empowerment, peacebuilding and socioeconomic resilience, particularly through Kabugi (2025), but there remains limited constituency-level evidence on how specific Catholic youth programs contribute to social cohesion.

A further geographical gap exists because much of the available evidence is located at national, county, diocesan or broad urban levels. Limited attention has been given to the parish and constituency level, where youth actually experience and participate in Church programs. This is particularly important in an urban setting such as Embakasi East Constituency, where young people experience diverse socioeconomic realities and may encounter unemployment, social exclusion, substance abuse, political mobilization and limited opportunities for meaningful participation. The local context may therefore shape both the implementation and outcomes of Catholic youth interventions.

Consequently, the present study seeks to address the identified empirical, contextual and geographical gaps by examining the youth-focused programs implemented by the Catholic Church in Embakasi East Constituency, Nairobi County. The study specifically examines the contribution of Catholic youth empowerment programs and youth community engagement programs to social cohesion and investigates the factors that hinder the Church's contribution. In this way, the study moves beyond establishing the existence of Catholic youth programs to examining how such programs may influence social inclusion, participation, trust, belonging, collective responsibility and peaceful coexistence among youth in Embakasi East Constituency.

2.3.2 Contribution of Catholic Church Youth Empowerment programs to Social Cohesion

Youth empowerment has increasingly become an important component of development and peacebuilding interventions because young people's capacity to participate constructively in society is influenced by their access to skills, livelihood opportunities, leadership experiences, information and supportive social networks. Empowerment is therefore broader than the provision of material assistance; it involves strengthening individuals' capabilities,

confidence, agency and ability to influence decisions affecting their lives. From a social cohesion perspective, empowered young people may be better positioned to participate in community affairs, develop positive relationships, overcome exclusion and contribute to collective solutions to social challenges. The present study therefore considers youth empowerment in terms of the extent to which Catholic Church programs strengthen young people's skills, leadership capacity, economic agency, confidence and ability to participate meaningfully in society.

To cultivate structural stability and social harmony, European and American Catholic ministries heavily utilize youth empowerment programs that focus on socio-economic resilience, capacity building, and social justice. In post-industrial urban centers across the United Kingdom, organizations like the *Sion Catholic Community for Evangelism* and localized *Caritas* networks run youth-targeted vocational mentorship, financial literacy training, and micro-skills development. By empowering marginalized, migrant, or economically vulnerable youth with tangible socio-economic tools, these initiatives insulate them from localized crime, anti-social behaviors, and marginalization. Within the global literature, this economic and psychological empowerment is recognized as a vital precursor to social cohesion, as it provides young individuals with a stable stake in society and reduces the systemic frustrations that often fuel civil unrest.

In Asia, youth empowerment has also been incorporated into Catholic education and pastoral programs. Catholic institutions in India, for example, have traditionally combined education, vocational formation, leadership development and social service as mechanisms for preparing young people to participate in society. Such approaches are consistent with the wider Catholic understanding of integral human development, in which personal development is connected to responsibility towards others. The relevance of this approach to social cohesion

is that skills and leadership development can increase young people's confidence and capacity to participate in collective activities rather than remaining socially excluded.

Evidence from Africa provides stronger empirical support for the connection between economic empowerment and peace. Chigudu (2025) examined the role of skills training and entrepreneurship in empowering African youth and promoting sustainable peace. Drawing on African program experiences, the study reports that vocational and entrepreneurial initiatives, including Young Africa's Skills2Live and Don Bosco Tech Africa, have contributed to employability, economic independence and community cohesiveness. The findings are significant because they demonstrate that economic empowerment can have consequences extending beyond individual livelihoods. When young people acquire useful skills and improved economic opportunities, their capacity to participate constructively in their communities may also increase.

In West Africa, Catholic institutions have similarly used skills development as a mechanism for youth empowerment. Evidence from Nigeria indicates that Catholic Church programs have included skills acquisition and livelihood-oriented initiatives intended to improve young people's economic circumstances and reduce vulnerability to negative social behaviors. Such interventions demonstrate the potential of Church-based empowerment to address socioeconomic conditions that may contribute to marginalization. However, economic empowerment alone does not necessarily produce social cohesion. Its contribution is likely to be greater when skills development is accompanied by mentorship, leadership formation and opportunities for young people to participate in community life.

Within Eastern Africa, faith-based youth empowerment has also been linked to peace and peaceful coexistence. Mudembei's study of the Program for Christian-Muslim Relations in Africa (PROCMURA) in Kenya found that youth empowerment initiatives included

university chapters, peace days, workshops, seminars, conferences and peace walks. The programs were designed to equip young people with information and skills that could enable them to act as peace ambassadors and resist radicalization and violent extremism. Although PROCMURA is not a Catholic organization, its experience is useful for demonstrating how faith-based empowerment can connect capacity building with peacebuilding and social stability.

The Kenyan Catholic context provides particularly important evidence for the present study. Kabugi (2025) investigated the role of the Catholic Church in addressing youth unemployment, insecurity and radicalization and found that Catholic-led initiatives had supported more than 20,000 young people between 2015 and 2023 through vocational training, entrepreneurship incubation, peacebuilding workshops and counselling. The study further associated Catholic Justice and Peace Commission youth empowerment centres and Caritas Kenya economic resilience initiatives with skills acquisition, social cohesion and nonviolent conflict resolution. These findings provide direct evidence that Catholic youth empowerment in Kenya extends beyond spiritual formation to include economic and psychosocial interventions.

A more localized Kenyan example is provided by research on the Don Bosco Development Outreach Network in Murang'a County. The study found that Catholic youth participating in the program acquired skills that contributed to self-reliance and personal transformation. However, financial constraints, inadequate learning resources and poor participation were identified as challenges affecting program effectiveness. This evidence is important because it illustrates both the potential and limitations of Catholic youth empowerment programs. It also demonstrates that the presence of an empowerment program does not automatically guarantee sustainable outcomes; program quality, resources and participation matter.

Research on youth empowerment more generally in Nairobi provides further contextual evidence. Mbugua, Kanyinga and Mbatia (2024), in a mixed-method study of youth empowerment programs in Nairobi and Trans Nzoia Counties, examined the extent to which youth needs were incorporated into empowerment interventions. Their findings raise concerns regarding the effectiveness and sustainability of youth empowerment programs and emphasize the importance of meaningful inclusion of young people's needs and perspectives in program design. This is particularly relevant to the present study because it raises the question of whether Catholic youth empowerment programs in Embakasi East are designed and implemented in ways that correspond to the actual needs of participating youth.

Recent evidence from Nairobi's informal settlements further illustrates the relationship between skills and economic empowerment. Okatta, Simiyu and Sankale (2026) examined entrepreneurial skills and youth economic empowerment in Nairobi's informal settlements and highlighted the complex relationship between skills acquisition and the broader ecosystem required for young people to translate skills into sustainable economic opportunities. The study is relevant to the present research because it suggests that training alone may not be sufficient; young people also require supportive networks, opportunities and institutional linkages to translate empowerment into meaningful socioeconomic participation.

From the perspective of social cohesion, the contribution of Catholic youth empowerment programs can therefore be understood through several pathways. Skills development can improve young people's capacity and employability; entrepreneurship programs can strengthen economic agency; leadership training can increase confidence and participation; mentorship can create supportive interpersonal relationships; and life-skills programs can improve communication, decision-making and conflict-management abilities. Collectively,

these outcomes can reduce feelings of exclusion and increase young people's capacity to participate in community affairs.

Economic empowerment is particularly relevant to social cohesion because unemployment and economic exclusion can weaken young people's sense of belonging and participation. Young people who lack opportunities for productive engagement may experience frustration, dependency and marginalization. Conversely, access to skills, employment and entrepreneurship opportunities may strengthen self-reliance and provide young people with greater capacity to participate in social and community activities. Chigudu (2025) therefore argues that addressing structural barriers to economic opportunity is important to both youth empowerment and sustainable peace in Africa.

Leadership development provides another pathway. When young people are entrusted with responsibilities within Church structures, they can acquire skills in communication, teamwork, decision-making and problem solving. These competencies can subsequently be applied beyond the Church in families, workplaces and communities. Leadership opportunities may also enhance young people's sense of recognition and belonging, particularly where they feel excluded from formal decision-making structures. Thus, youth leadership within Catholic programs may contribute to social cohesion by encouraging responsible participation and strengthening intergenerational relationships.

Mentorship is similarly important because empowerment is not only about acquiring technical skills. Young people may require guidance in translating knowledge into practical decisions concerning education, employment, relationships and community participation. Mentoring relationships can provide social support and create networks through which young people access information and opportunities. These networks are relevant to Social Capital Theory because they can strengthen trust, reciprocity and social connectedness.

The relationship between empowerment and social cohesion can consequently be conceptualized as a progression from capacity development to agency and then to participation. A young person may first acquire knowledge or skills, develop greater confidence and independence, and subsequently become more willing and able to participate in collective activities. The process can strengthen social networks, reduce exclusion and increase the young person's contribution to the community. However, this process is not automatic. The effectiveness of empowerment depends on whether young people have opportunities to apply the skills acquired and whether Church programs are accessible, inclusive and sustainable.

The literature also reveals several challenges that can limit the contribution of empowerment programs. Financial constraints can reduce the scale and sustainability of training initiatives; inadequate facilities can affect the quality of skills development; low youth participation can weaken program outcomes; and limited links between training and employment can reduce the practical benefits of empowerment. The Murang'a evidence illustrates financial and resource constraints, while the Nairobi and Trans Nzoia study raises broader concerns about inclusion and program effectiveness. These findings indicate that the contribution of Catholic empowerment programs should be assessed not only by program availability but also by accessibility, relevance, sustainability and the extent to which beneficiaries can translate acquired capacities into meaningful participation.

Despite the growing literature, an important gap remains. Existing international and African studies have established relationships between youth empowerment, skills development, employment, agency and peacebuilding. Kenyan research has also begun to document the Catholic Church's contribution to vocational training, entrepreneurship, counselling and peacebuilding. However, limited empirical research has specifically examined how Catholic

Church youth empowerment programs contribute to social cohesion among young people within a particular urban constituency**.**

Furthermore, much of the existing literature evaluates empowerment through indicators such as employment, skills acquisition, entrepreneurship or reduction of negative behaviors. Comparatively less attention has been given to the social dimensions of empowerment, including whether empowered youth experience greater social inclusion, trust, belonging, participation and willingness to cooperate with others. This represents a conceptual gap that the present study seeks to address.

The geographical gap is also significant. While Kabugi (2025) provides evidence from Nairobi, Kisumu and Eldoret, and other studies have examined youth empowerment in Nairobi more broadly, limited empirical evidence exists specifically on Catholic youth empowerment programs within Embakasi East Constituency. The present study therefore seeks to establish whether and to what extent Catholic youth empowerment initiatives contribute to social cohesion among youth in the five wards of Embakasi East Constituency, Nairobi County.

In summary, existing literature suggests that Catholic youth empowerment can contribute to social cohesion through interconnected pathways involving skills development, economic agency, leadership, mentorship, confidence and participation. Nevertheless, the strength of these relationships depends on program accessibility, relevance, resources and opportunities for young people to apply their acquired capacities. The present study therefore examines the contribution of Catholic youth empowerment programs to social cohesion among youth in Embakasi East Constituency, with particular attention to whether empowerment enhances social inclusion, trust, participation, belonging, cooperation and peaceful coexistence**.**

2.3.3 Contribution of Catholic Youth Community Engagement Programs to Social Cohesion

Community engagement is an important dimension of youth participation because it provides opportunities for young people to move beyond individual development and become active contributors to the wellbeing of their communities. Community engagement may include volunteering, community service, charitable outreach, civic participation, environmental activities, peacebuilding, interfaith dialogue, reconciliation initiatives and participation in local decision-making processes. Within the Catholic Church, such activities are consistent with the principles of solidarity, service to others and the common good embedded in Catholic social teaching. For young people, participation in community-oriented activities can create opportunities to interact with people from different social, religious and economic backgrounds, develop relationships and assume responsibility for issues affecting their communities. These processes have potential to strengthen social cohesion through increased interaction, trust, inclusion, belonging and collective action.

The deployment of youth-focused community engagement initiatives serves as a primary vehicle through which the global Catholic Church actively constructs bridging social capital and inter-group harmony. In the United States, the CYO manages sprawling inter-parish sports leagues, community service immersion camps, and environmental justice projects that intentionally bring together young people from disparate racial, economic, and neighborhood backgrounds. In a parallel manner, Catholic youth movements in France and Germany heavily emphasize cross-cultural volunteerism and joint civic action, such as organizing refugee integration support forums. By guiding diverse youth cohorts away from isolated silos and into cooperative, shared secular actions, these community engagement models successfully dismantle historical prejudices, foster a collective identity, and establish a baseline of communal peace.

The relationship between Catholic youth ministry and community participation is evident in different parts of the world. In the Philippines, Catholic youth organizations have provided platforms through which young people participate in parish activities, community life, leadership and service. Paz (2024) found that participation in Catholic youth organizations created a social environment in which young adults negotiated their religious commitments alongside educational, employment and family responsibilities. Such participation demonstrates that youth ministry can provide social spaces where young people interact regularly and develop relationships through shared activities. These relationships are relevant to social cohesion because repeated interaction and shared experiences can contribute to social connectedness and a sense of belonging.

The importance of volunteering is particularly evident in international peacebuilding literature. The United Nations Peacebuilding Fund's thematic review of local peacebuilding reports that youth participation in volunteer peace initiatives in Kenya has been associated with increased trust towards members of other ethnic groups and stronger perceptions that different communities can live together peacefully. The review further documents youth volunteerism in Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Niger, where young people have participated in conflict prevention, mediation, dialogue, social cohesion and efforts to counter violent extremism. These findings demonstrate that volunteering is not simply an avenue for providing services to others; it can also generate relationships and social networks that strengthen trust and cooperation.

The relationship between youth civic engagement and social cohesion is also demonstrated in West Africa. Kouassi (2022), examining Young Catholic Students (YCS) in Côte d'Ivoire, found that civic engagement and associative activities can contribute to peace education, social mixing and solidarity among young people. The study positions youth civic

participation as a mechanism for addressing violence within educational communities and promoting peaceful relationships. Of particular relevance is its emphasis on associative life as a space where young people can interact and develop a sense of collective responsibility. This provides a useful Catholic example of how youth engagement can move beyond religious instruction towards participation in activities with wider social consequences.

African scholarship more broadly demonstrates the growing recognition of young people as agents of peace rather than simply potential sources of conflict. Akinyetun, Bakare and Adedini (2023) argue that African youth contribute to peace and inclusion through advocacy, civic engagement, music, arts, sports, education, storytelling and interfaith dialogue. These forms of participation provide young people with nonviolent avenues for expressing concerns and building relationships within their communities. The study is particularly relevant because it connects youth participation with social cohesion, resilience, trust and inclusion rather than restricting youth peacebuilding to formal conflict-resolution mechanisms.

The Tanzanian experience provides another useful African example of youth-led community engagement. Recent research on youth peacebuilding initiatives in Tanzania identifies the #VijanaNaAmani255 movement as an example of young people mobilizing around community resilience and addressing socioeconomic factors associated with violent extremism. Such initiatives illustrate how young people can use community-based platforms to address local problems while strengthening relationships and resilience. The example is relevant to the present study because it demonstrates that community engagement can involve youth-led initiatives rather than activities designed and controlled exclusively by adult institutions.

In Kenya, youth participation in peacebuilding provides further evidence of the relationship between community engagement and social cohesion. Odallo and Ochieng' (2025),

examining youth agency in Mombasa County, found that peacebuilding structures engaged young people in addressing radicalization, creating economic opportunities and promoting responsible citizenship through civic education. The findings demonstrate that youth engagement can extend beyond participation in Church or youth-group activities to include broader civic responsibilities. This suggests that youth community engagement can strengthen social cohesion by enabling young people to participate in issues affecting the wider community.

Muthiora (2019) similarly examined the role of youth and religious peacebuilding in Kenya, including Christian and Muslim youth in Nairobi. The study found that young people were already participating informally in religious peacebuilding, although stereotypes, marginalization and inadequate support for collaboration constrained their effectiveness. The Nairobi focus makes this evidence particularly relevant to the present study because it demonstrates both the potential of religious youth engagement and the barriers that may prevent young people from translating participation into effective peacebuilding.

More recent evidence from the Turkana–West Pokot border further demonstrates the relationship between youth engagement and social cohesion. Eregae (2026) found that young people participated in dialogue forums, cultural exchanges, sports activities, livelihood initiatives and peace caravans. These activities were associated with improvements in communication, trust, social cohesion and reductions in stereotypes between communities. Although the study was conducted in a conflict-prone rural border context rather than an urban constituency, it provides useful empirical evidence that structured youth participation can contribute to relationship-building and peaceful coexistence.

Within the Nairobi context, Onguka, Wachira and Wando (2024) examined youth groups involved in community peacebuilding in Amani Kibera and Kibera Hamlets. The study used

a mixed-method approach involving questionnaires, interviews and focus group discussions and found that organized youth groups provide platforms for peacebuilding and community-level engagement. The study is relevant to the present research because it demonstrates the role that organized youth structures can play in addressing local community challenges within an urban informal-settlement environment.

The Catholic Church provides several institutional structures through which community engagement can be facilitated among young people in Kenya. Parish youth groups, Youth Catholic Action, Catholic Justice and Peace Commission activities, Caritas initiatives and diocesan youth ministries can involve young people in charitable outreach, community service, peace activities, environmental initiatives, civic education and support for vulnerable members of society. Such activities provide opportunities for young people to encounter people outside their immediate social circles and to work collectively towards common objectives. In this respect, Church-based community engagement may create both bonding social capital, through relationships among members of youth groups, and bridging social capital, through interaction with people from other religious, ethnic, socioeconomic and community backgrounds.

Recent evidence on the Catholic Church in Kenya supports this broader understanding of community engagement. Kabugi (2025) found that Catholic initiatives have included peacebuilding workshops and that the Church has developed interfaith alliances for peace alongside its youth empowerment and livelihood programs. The study associated these interventions with social cohesion and nonviolent conflict resolution. Although Kabugi's study examines the Church's contribution broadly rather than community engagement as a separate variable, the findings demonstrate the potential of Catholic institutional networks to provide spaces for peacebuilding and interfaith cooperation.

Community service and charitable outreach represent another mechanism through which Catholic youth programs may contribute to social cohesion. Activities involving visits to vulnerable people, support for disadvantaged households, environmental conservation, fundraising, community clean-ups and other forms of service can expose young people to the experiences and needs of people outside their immediate social networks. Such interaction can foster empathy, solidarity and a stronger sense of shared responsibility. When these activities are undertaken collectively, they can also strengthen cooperation among participating youth and create a shared sense of purpose.

Interfaith engagement is particularly important within socially diverse urban communities. Young people who participate in dialogue or joint activities with members of other religious communities have opportunities to challenge stereotypes and develop more positive perceptions of people who may otherwise be viewed as socially different. The Kenyan evidence on religious peacebuilding demonstrates that such engagement is possible, although stereotypes, marginalization and limited institutional support may constrain its effectiveness (Muthiora, 2019). Consequently, the extent to which Catholic youth programs create sustained opportunities for interfaith interaction is an important question for the present study.

Civic participation provides a further pathway between community engagement and social cohesion. Young people who participate in civic education, community forums, peace campaigns and local decision-making processes can develop greater awareness of their responsibilities as citizens. Civic participation can also strengthen young people's sense of agency and belonging. This is particularly relevant in politically sensitive environments where young people may be vulnerable to manipulation or mobilization along ethnic, political or other social divisions. Community engagement programs that promote informed,

peaceful and responsible participation may help young people become constructive contributors to community life.

From the perspective of Social Capital Theory, community engagement can strengthen social cohesion through the development of networks, trust, norms of reciprocity and collective action. Regular participation in shared activities allows young people to interact repeatedly, establish relationships and develop expectations of cooperation. Activities that bring together people from different social groups can additionally generate bridging relationships and reduce social distance. Thus, the potential contribution of Catholic youth community engagement to social cohesion lies not simply in the services provided but also in the relationships created through participation.

The literature nevertheless identifies several challenges that can limit the contribution of youth community engagement programs. These include inadequate funding, irregular participation, weak institutional coordination, limited access to decision-makers, political interference and insufficient recognition of youth voices. The comparative African study of youth-led civil society organizations found that limited funding, restricted access to authorities and inadequate organizational capacity can constrain youth civic engagement. Similarly, Kenyan studies identify marginalization and limited institutional support as barriers to effective youth participation in religious peacebuilding. These challenges suggest that the existence of community engagement opportunities does not necessarily guarantee meaningful participation or positive social-cohesion outcomes.

The reviewed literature demonstrates that youth community engagement can contribute to peacebuilding, social inclusion, trust, dialogue and collective action. International and African evidence highlights the importance of volunteering, civic participation, interfaith dialogue and youth-led peace initiatives, while Kenyan studies demonstrate the contribution

of youth participation to peacebuilding and community relationships. However, much of this literature examines youth engagement generally or focuses on government, civil society or interfaith initiatives rather than Catholic Church youth community engagement programs specifically.

There is also a conceptual gap. Existing studies frequently examine youth participation in terms of peacebuilding, civic engagement or conflict prevention, but fewer studies explicitly examine how Catholic youth community engagement contributes to the broader dimensions of social cohesion, including social trust, inclusion, belonging, participation, collective responsibility and cooperation. Consequently, it remains unclear whether participation in Catholic community activities translates into stronger relationships between young people and between young people and the wider community.

A geographical gap is further evident. Although studies have examined youth peacebuilding in Mombasa, Kibra and other parts of Kenya, limited empirical evidence exists on Catholic youth community engagement at the constituency level in Nairobi. In particular, little is known about how young people participating in Catholic programs in the five wards of Embakasi East experience community service, volunteering, peacebuilding, civic participation and other forms of community engagement and whether these activities contribute to social cohesion.

The present study therefore seeks to assess the contribution of Catholic youth community engagement programs to the promotion of social cohesion among youth in Embakasi East Constituency, Nairobi County. The study examined the extent to which community service, volunteering, charitable outreach, peacebuilding, civic participation, interfaith engagement and other collective activities create opportunities for young people to develop trust,

strengthen social relationships, participate in community affairs, overcome social divisions and contribute to peaceful coexistence.

2.3.4 Challenges Affecting the Catholic Church's Contribution to Social Cohesion

Although faith-based organizations have considerable potential to contribute to youth development, peacebuilding and social cohesion, their interventions may be constrained by institutional, financial, social, political and contextual factors. The effectiveness of Catholic youth programs cannot therefore be understood solely by examining the activities implemented; it is also necessary to consider the conditions under which these programs operate. Factors such as inadequate financial resources, limited program coverage, weak coordination, insufficient participation of young people, political interference, inadequate infrastructure, shortage of trained personnel and changing youth needs may affect the Church's capacity to achieve sustainable outcomes. Examining these constraints is particularly important in urban contexts where young people face complex socioeconomic pressures and where faith-based organizations operate alongside government agencies, civil society organizations and other actors.

Despite these robust institutional frameworks, the global Catholic Church faces distinct operational, cultural, and structural challenges that limit its capacity to foster youth social cohesion. In both Western Europe and North America, a profound shift toward secularization and youth disaffiliation has drastically diminished the Church's traditional authority and consistent reach among younger generations. Additionally, operational bottlenecks—such as chronic funding disparities between wealthy suburban parishes and under-resourced inner-city missions—hinder the long-term sustainability of vital youth programs. Furthermore, deep-seated socio-political polarization within these Western societies frequently spills over

into parish dynamics, fracturing the unified communal witness necessary for the Church to act as an objective, neutral broker of social peace and reconciliation.

The United Nations (2020) emphasizes that meaningful youth participation requires more than symbolic inclusion; young people need accessible platforms through which they can influence decisions and contribute to processes affecting their communities. Where young people are invited to participate without being given meaningful influence, participation may become tokenistic and have limited impact on social cohesion.Institutional capacity is another important consideration. Youth programs require adequate staffing, financing, training, infrastructure and monitoring mechanisms to remain effective. Weak institutional capacity can lead to irregular activities, limited geographical coverage and inadequate follow-up of beneficiaries. This is particularly relevant to Church-based programs, which often depend on parish and diocesan resources as well as donations and partnerships. Where resources are inadequate, programs may reach only a small proportion of the youth population and may be unable to respond to the diverse needs of young people.

Financial constraints have been identified across African youth development initiatives. A comparative study of youth-led civil society organizations across nine African countries found that inadequate funding was one of the factors constraining the ability of youth organizations to engage effectively in civic and development activities. Limited financial resources can affect program continuity, organizational capacity and access to decision-making spaces. Although the study was not specifically concerned with Catholic organizations, its findings are relevant because Catholic youth programs similarly require sustainable resources to support training, community activities, outreach and peacebuilding.

Evidence from Catholic youth programs in Kenya also points to resource-related constraints. Research on Catholic youth empowerment initiatives in Murang'a County identified financial

difficulties, inadequate learning resources and limited participation as factors affecting program implementation. These constraints can reduce the quality and sustainability of interventions and limit the number of young people who benefit from them. The findings suggest that program availability should not be equated with program effectiveness because the resources available to implement activities influence the outcomes achieved.

The challenge of program accessibility is particularly important. Youth populations are heterogeneous, with differences in age, gender, education, socioeconomic status, employment status and religious involvement. A program that is accessible to active parish members may not necessarily reach youth who are socially excluded, unemployed, disengaged from Church activities or living in economically disadvantaged households. Consequently, Church programs may inadvertently benefit young people who are already relatively connected while failing to reach those most vulnerable to exclusion.

Youth participation itself may also constitute a challenge. Young people may have competing demands related to education, employment, family responsibilities and personal economic survival. Where Church programs are scheduled at times that conflict with these responsibilities, participation may decline. Mbugua, Kanyinga and Mbatia (2024), examining youth empowerment programs in Nairobi and Trans Nzoia, highlight the importance of aligning programs with young people's needs and circumstances. This suggests that the relevance and flexibility of program design are important determinants of youth participation.

The changing nature of youth needs presents another challenge. Young people today encounter rapidly changing technological, economic and social environments. Digital technology, social media, unemployment, changing family structures and evolving forms of political participation influence how young people interact with institutions. Church programs that rely predominantly on traditional approaches may struggle to attract and retain

young people. This creates a need for Catholic youth ministries to continuously adapt their approaches while retaining their pastoral and values-based orientation.

Political interference and manipulation constitute another significant challenge, particularly in contexts where young people represent a large proportion of the population. Research across Africa has demonstrated that unemployed and socially excluded youth can become vulnerable to political mobilization and manipulation. Yingi (2023), for example, identifies political marginalization and interference as challenges affecting youth empowerment and peacebuilding in Zimbabwe. Where youth programs operate in politically polarized environments, their peacebuilding activities may be affected by mistrust, political affiliations or perceptions that particular organizations support specific political interests.

Kenyan experience demonstrates similar concerns. Youth have historically been mobilized during periods of political competition, sometimes along ethnic or political lines. The resulting divisions can undermine trust between communities and create difficulties for organizations attempting to promote peaceful coexistence. Faith-based organizations may therefore need to maintain credibility and neutrality while addressing politically sensitive issues. This can be particularly challenging where Church leaders or youth members have different political preferences.

Religious and denominational boundaries may also limit the contribution of Catholic youth programs to wider social cohesion. While Catholic youth organizations can provide strong networks and a sense of belonging, programs that remain largely within Catholic circles may have limited opportunities to develop bridging relationships with young people from other religious communities. Muthiora (2019), studying religious youth peacebuilding in Nairobi, found that stereotypes, marginalization and inadequate support for interreligious collaboration could constrain youth participation in peacebuilding. This suggests that

Catholic youth programs seeking to promote broader social cohesion may need to deliberately create opportunities for interaction beyond the immediate parish community.

Intergenerational relations may constitute another challenge. Youth programs are often organized within institutional structures where important decisions are made by adults. If young people perceive that their views are not taken seriously, they may become disengaged from Church activities. Meaningful participation requires young people to have opportunities to contribute to program design, implementation and evaluation. The absence of such opportunities may weaken ownership and reduce the effectiveness of interventions. The availability of trained personnel is also important. Youth programs dealing with peacebuilding, counselling, conflict resolution, leadership and psychosocial support require facilitators with appropriate knowledge and skills. Where parish youth programs depend heavily on volunteers who have limited training or experience, the quality and consistency of interventions may vary. The problem may become particularly significant where young people face complex challenges requiring specialized support.

Coordination between Church programs and other stakeholders may present another constraint. Youth development and social cohesion involve multiple actors, including government agencies, schools, community organizations, civil society organizations and other faith-based organizations. Limited coordination can result in duplication of activities, fragmented services and inefficient use of resources. Strong partnerships, by contrast, can increase program reach and enable organizations to combine expertise and resources.

Monitoring and evaluation also influence program effectiveness. Without systematic collection of information on participation, outputs and outcomes, it can be difficult for Church institutions to determine whether their programs are actually improving young people's lives or contributing to social cohesion. The absence of empirical evidence may also

make it difficult to secure funding or demonstrate program effectiveness to government and development partners. This reinforces the importance of studies such as the present one, which seek to generate empirical evidence on the contribution of Catholic youth programs.

Within Nairobi, the urban environment introduces additional challenges. Embakasi East is characterized by a large and diverse youth population, socioeconomic inequalities and different forms of community vulnerability. Young people may experience unemployment, social exclusion, substance abuse, political mobilization and other pressures that can affect participation in community and Church programs. Consequently, programs developed for general parish youth ministry may not necessarily address the specific circumstances experienced by young people in different neighborhoods.

The digital environment presents both opportunities and challenges. Social media can provide Catholic youth programs with inexpensive ways of communicating with young people, organizing activities and disseminating peace messages. At the same time, digital platforms can facilitate misinformation, hate speech, political polarization and harmful peer influence. Church youth programs therefore need to develop approaches that engage young people within the digital spaces where much of their social interaction now occurs.

Another potential barrier is the sustainability of programs. Youth interventions that depend on individual leaders, temporary funding or short-term projects may struggle to continue when leadership changes or funding ends. Sustainability requires institutional ownership, adequate resources, succession planning and integration of youth programs into broader parish and diocesan structures. Without such mechanisms, successful initiatives may remain isolated or disappear after the completion of a particular project.

The literature demonstrates that the Catholic Church and other faith-based organizations possess considerable potential to contribute to youth empowerment, community engagement, peacebuilding and social cohesion. However, the effectiveness of these interventions is shaped by multiple constraints. Financial limitations, inadequate infrastructure, weak coordination, limited youth participation, insufficiently trained personnel, political interference, religious boundaries, intergenerational challenges and changing youth needs can all reduce program effectiveness.

Importantly, these factors do not operate independently. For example, inadequate funding may limit program coverage; limited coverage may reduce youth participation; low participation may weaken program visibility; and weak visibility may reduce opportunities for partnerships and additional funding. Similarly, political polarization may undermine interfaith activities, while inadequate institutional support may limit the ability of youth leaders to respond to such challenges.

Despite the growing literature on youth empowerment and peacebuilding, limited empirical research has examined these factors specifically in relation to Catholic Church youth programs and social cohesion in Embakasi East Constituency. Existing Kenyan studies tend to examine youth empowerment, peacebuilding or faith-based interventions at broader national, county or diocesan levels. Consequently, there is insufficient localized evidence regarding the specific institutional, socioeconomic, political and youth-related factors that hinder Catholic youth programs from promoting social cohesion within Embakasi East.

The present study therefore seeks to determine the factors hindering the Catholic Church's contribution to the promotion of social cohesion among youth in Embakasi East Constituency. Particular attention was given to financial and resource constraints, youth participation, program accessibility, institutional capacity, political influences,

intergenerational relations, program coordination and changing youth needs. Understanding these challenges enable the study to develop context-specific recommendations for strengthening the effectiveness and sustainability of Catholic youth interventions.

2.4 Theoretical Framework

This study was guided by Empowerment Theory and Social Capital Theory since no single theory alone seems capable to account for the complex interplay between Catholic Church youth initiatives and their contribution to the establishment of social cohesion among the youth in Embakasi East Constituency, Nairobi County. Empowerment theory helps understand the process of developing people's self- efficacy and personal capabilities. Empowerment allows youth take initiative and control over their own lives and to participate in decision- making processes that affects them and their communities. Although it explains how youth will be empowered and equipped with skills, knowledge and an ability to lead, it does not shed any light on how these capacities translate into broader social consequences such as social bonds, inclusion and peaceful coexistence with a variety of other social segments of the society.

For this reason, social capital theory has been applied in conjunction with the former to further articulate the mechanism by which empowerment processes contribute to development of these social relationships and cohesion. Social capital refers to the structure and networks, including shared values, relationships and interactions which create collective action and reduce co- ordination costs thereby creating mutual benefit in various networks and collectivities (Nahapiet&Ghoshal,1998; Putnam,2000). In this case, Catholic Youth Programs become the source and provider of empowerment and the social networks/bonds that ultimately enable young people to develop, within their community, a framework which promote inclusion, mutual trust and peaceful coexist between diverse members of their own

community and society at large. Combined these theories make a holistic theoretical basis to explicate Catholic youths' contribution to social cohesion in Nairobi's informal settlements.

2.4.1 Empowerment theory

Empowerment Theory has its foundations in community psychology and is principally associated with the work of Rappaport (1987), who conceptualized empowerment as a process through which individuals, organizations and communities gain greater control over matters that affect their lives. The theory was further developed by Zimmerman (1995), who emphasized that empowerment involves processes and outcomes operating at individual, organizational and community levels. At its core, Empowerment Theory challenges approaches that perceive individuals, particularly marginalized groups, as passive recipients of assistance. Instead, it views people as capable actors who can identify their needs, make decisions, mobilize resources and participate in actions that influence their circumstances.

Rappaport (1987) conceptualizes empowerment as a process through which individuals and communities gain control over their affairs and participate meaningfully in decisions affecting their lives. Zimmerman (1995) similarly distinguishes between empowering processes and empowered outcomes. Empowering processes involve opportunities for participation, decision-making, leadership and access to resources, while empowered outcomes are reflected in increased competence, perceived control, critical awareness and the ability to act collectively. This distinction is particularly useful in the present study because participation in a Catholic youth program does not necessarily constitute empowerment in itself. Rather, the study is concerned with whether such programs create opportunities through which young people develop capacities and exercise greater agency in their personal and community lives.

An important assumption of Empowerment Theory is that individuals possess capacities that can be strengthened when appropriate opportunities, resources and supportive structures are made available. Empowerment therefore involves more than providing material assistance or knowledge; it encompasses the development of self-efficacy, critical awareness, decision-making capacity, leadership, participation and collective action. When individuals are given opportunities to participate in decisions and activities affecting them, they can develop a stronger sense of ownership and responsibility. In the context of youth development, this perspective shifts the understanding of young people from being beneficiaries of programs to being active participants and potential agents of social change.

Zimmerman's (1995) conceptualization further identifies psychological empowerment as involving perceived control, competence and participation. Young people who perceive themselves as capable of influencing decisions, who possess relevant skills and who actively participate in community activities are more likely to develop confidence and agency. At the community level, empowerment may involve collective participation, access to resources and the ability of groups to influence issues affecting their communities. This is particularly relevant to social cohesion because meaningful participation can create opportunities for interaction, cooperation, mutual support and collective problem-solving.

The theory is particularly applicable to youth empowerment programs implemented by the Catholic Church. Through leadership training, entrepreneurship development, vocational and life-skills training, mentorship, counselling and other capacity-building initiatives, the Church can provide young people with knowledge, skills and supportive relationships that strengthen their capacity to make decisions and participate constructively in society. From an empowerment perspective, the importance of these interventions is not simply whether young people receive training, but whether the training increases their confidence, agency,

leadership capacity and ability to participate in decisions affecting their lives and communities.

Empowerment Theory also provides a useful basis for understanding youth community engagement. Opportunities for young people to participate in community service, volunteering, peacebuilding, charitable outreach, civic activities and interfaith initiatives can enable them to exercise their capacities in real-life settings. Such participation may strengthen responsibility, collective efficacy and a sense of belonging. Young people who are given meaningful opportunities to contribute to their communities can increasingly view themselves as stakeholders in community wellbeing rather than outsiders or passive recipients of assistance. In this respect, empowerment can provide a pathway through which individual capacity is translated into collective participation.

The theory is therefore closely related to the promotion of social cohesion, which constitutes the dependent variable in this study. When youth empowerment programs increase young people's skills, confidence, agency and participation, they may create conditions that facilitate positive relationships with others. Similarly, community engagement can provide opportunities for young people from different social, economic, ethnic or religious backgrounds to interact, cooperate and address common concerns. Through these processes, empowerment may contribute to social inclusion, trust, participation, belonging, cooperation, collective responsibility and peaceful coexistence.

The theory is particularly relevant to the context of Embakasi East Constituency because young people may experience socioeconomic and social challenges that can limit their opportunities for meaningful participation. Empowerment-oriented Church programs may provide alternative spaces through which young people can develop skills, assume leadership responsibilities, participate in community activities and contribute to peacebuilding.

However, Empowerment Theory also implies that programs are unlikely to achieve meaningful empowerment where young people are merely passive recipients, where access to resources is restricted, or where their views are excluded from program planning and decision-making.

In relation to the present study, the theory can therefore be represented as a process: Catholic Church youth programs leads to access to skills, knowledge, mentorship, resources and participation opportunities which yields Youth empowerment (competence, self-efficacy, agency, leadership and decision-making) resulting to active community participation and collective action thus Social cohesion (trust, inclusion, belonging, cooperation and peaceful coexistence). This theoretical pathway provides a basis for examining whether the Catholic Church's youth empowerment and community engagement programs are associated with improved social cohesion among young people in Embakasi East Constituency.

The theory also assists in identifying potential barriers to the Church's contribution. From an empowerment perspective, inadequate resources, limited youth participation, weak institutional support, restricted access to decision-making and program approaches that do not adequately respond to youth needs may constrain empowerment outcomes. Therefore, the fourth objective of the study, which examines factors hindering the Catholic Church's contribution to social cohesion, can also be interpreted through the lens of Empowerment Theory.

Despite its relevance, Empowerment Theory has some limitations. The theory may sometimes place considerable emphasis on individual and collective agency without sufficiently accounting for broader structural conditions that constrain people's choices. For example, unemployment, poverty, political structures, social inequalities and institutional limitations may restrict young people's ability to translate acquired skills and confidence into

meaningful opportunities. Consequently, empowerment cannot be understood solely as an individual process; it must also be considered within the social and institutional environment in which young people operate. This limitation is important to the present study because the effectiveness of Catholic youth programs may depend not only on the capacities developed among young people but also on the availability of economic, social and institutional opportunities through which those capacities can be utilized.

Nevertheless, Empowerment Theory provides an appropriate theoretical foundation for this study because it explains how youth-focused programs can move young people from passive recipients of interventions to active participants in their communities. It provides a framework for examining the extent to which Catholic Church programs develop youth capacities, promote participation, strengthen agency and encourage collective action. The theory therefore guides the analysis of the contribution of Catholic youth empowerment and community engagement programs to social cohesion among youth in Embakasi East Constituency.

2.4.2 Social Capital Theory

Social Capital Theory provides an important framework for understanding how relationships, networks, trust, reciprocity and participation facilitate cooperation and collective action within communities. The intellectual foundations of social capital can be traced to Bourdieu (1986), who viewed social capital as resources accessible to individuals through durable networks and relationships; Coleman (1988), who emphasized the role of social structures, obligations, trust and social norms in facilitating collective action; and Putnam (1993, 2000), who extended the concept to civic participation, social networks, reciprocity and trust within communities. Although these scholars conceptualized social capital from somewhat different

perspectives, they share the view that relationships and social networks can provide resources that facilitate individual and collective action.

Bourdieu (1986) conceptualized social capital primarily in relation to the resources individuals can access through membership in networks and social groups. From this perspective, relationships are valuable because they provide access to information, support, opportunities and other resources. Coleman (1988), on the other hand, emphasized the functional role of social relationships and structures in facilitating coordinated action. Trust, obligations, expectations and social norms can make it easier for individuals to cooperate because members of a social group develop confidence that others will reciprocate. Putnam (1993, 2000) extended the concept to community life by emphasizing networks of civic engagement, generalized trust and norms of reciprocity as important foundations for effective collective action.

Putnam's conceptualization is particularly relevant to the present study because it links participation in associations and community activities with the development of trust, reciprocity and cooperation. According to Putnam (2000), social networks can facilitate coordination and communication while also creating expectations of reciprocity. Regular participation in community and voluntary associations provides opportunities for individuals to meet, interact and establish relationships. Over time, these interactions can strengthen trust and cooperation and increase people's willingness to work together towards shared objectives.

An important distinction within Social Capital Theory is between bonding and bridging social capital. Bonding social capital refers to relationships among people who share similar social characteristics or identities, while bridging social capital refers to relationships that connect people across different social, ethnic, religious, economic or other social boundaries (Putnam,

2000). This distinction is particularly relevant to the present study. Catholic youth groups may create bonding social capital by bringing young people together through parish-based activities and shared religious identity. However, activities such as interfaith dialogue, community service, peacebuilding and civic engagement may create bridging social capital by enabling Catholic youth to interact and cooperate with people from different backgrounds.

Social Capital Theory further emphasizes trust and reciprocity. Trust enables people to cooperate because they have confidence that others will behave in ways that are reasonably predictable and mutually beneficial. Reciprocity refers to the expectation that assistance or cooperation provided to others will, directly or indirectly, be reciprocated. Within youth programs, repeated participation in group activities can provide opportunities for young people to develop interpersonal trust and norms of mutual support. These relationships can subsequently extend beyond the program itself and influence how young people interact within their wider communities.

The theory also places considerable emphasis on civic participation and collective action. Communities with extensive networks of civic engagement may possess greater capacity to mobilize around common concerns because individuals have established relationships and experience working together. Youth participation in parish activities, community service, volunteering, peace initiatives and other collective activities can therefore provide practical opportunities for young people to develop cooperation and collective responsibility. Such participation is particularly relevant to the present study because community engagement constitutes one of the key dimensions of Catholic youth-focused programmes being examined.

Social Capital Theory is therefore highly relevant to the Catholic Church context. Catholic parishes and youth organizations provide structured social environments in which young

people can meet regularly, develop friendships, participate in common activities and build relationships with other members of their communities. Programs such as Youth Catholic Action (YCA), parish youth groups, youth leadership activities, community service, charitable outreach, peacebuilding initiatives and interfaith activities can provide opportunities for both bonding and bridging social capital.

Through regular interaction, young people may develop interpersonal relationships characterized by trust, mutual support and shared responsibility. For example, participation in a parish youth group can create bonding networks among members, while joint community service involving people from different religious or social backgrounds can create bridging networks. The latter is particularly significant for social cohesion because bridging relationships can reduce social distance and create opportunities for individuals from different backgrounds to cooperate around common concerns.

The theory is also relevant to understanding the contribution of Catholic youth empowerment programs. Although empowerment programs primarily seek to develop individual capacities, they can simultaneously create social networks through which young people exchange information, support one another and develop relationships. Entrepreneurship groups, leadership programs, mentorship structures and skills-training initiatives may therefore generate social capital when participants develop relationships that continue beyond the immediate program. Such networks may provide young people with information, opportunities, emotional support and connections that strengthen their participation in society.

The relationship between social capital and social cohesion is particularly important in this study. Social capital should not be treated as synonymous with social cohesion. Rather, social capital provides one mechanism through which social cohesion may develop. Networks, trust,

reciprocity and civic participation create conditions that can facilitate inclusion, cooperation, belonging and peaceful coexistence. Social cohesion, therefore, represents a broader outcome involving the quality of relationships within a community and the willingness of members to participate, cooperate and work towards common goals. In the context of this study, social cohesion will consequently be conceptualized through four principal dimensions: social trust, social inclusion, community participation and sense of belonging.

Social trust refers to the extent to which young people have confidence in other people and relevant community institutions and are willing to interact, cooperate and provide mutual support. From a Social Capital Theory perspective, repeated positive interactions and networks of reciprocity can strengthen trust among members of a community. Social inclusion refers to the extent to which young people feel accepted, respected and able to participate meaningfully in parish and community life regardless of their social, economic, ethnic, cultural or other backgrounds. Bridging social capital is particularly relevant here because relationships across social boundaries can create opportunities for inclusion and reduce social distance.

Community participation refers to the extent to which young people actively participate in parish and community activities and contribute to initiatives directed towards the common good. Participation is a central component of Putnam's understanding of social capital because civic associations provide opportunities for interaction, cooperation and collective action. Sense of belonging refers to the extent to which young people perceive themselves as valued and accepted members of the parish and wider community. Strong social networks can strengthen attachment to a community by creating meaningful relationships and shared experiences. A sense of belonging can consequently encourage young people to take greater responsibility for the wellbeing of their communities.

These four dimensions provide measurable indicators through which the dependent variable, social cohesion, can be operationalized in the present study. The theory therefore helps translate the abstract concept of social cohesion into observable experiences among youth in Embakasi East Constituency. The theory also helps explain the potential contribution of Catholic youth community engagement programs. When young people participate in community service, charitable outreach, peacebuilding, interfaith dialogue, environmental activities and civic initiatives, they interact with people beyond their immediate social networks. Such interaction can create bridging social capital and potentially strengthen trust, inclusion and cooperation. Similarly, participation in parish-based youth groups can create bonding social capital by strengthening relationships and mutual support among members.

However, Social Capital Theory also recognizes that networks do not always produce positive outcomes. Strong bonding networks may sometimes reinforce exclusion of outsiders or strengthen divisions between groups. For example, if youth programs remain confined to members of one religious, ethnic or social group, they may strengthen internal solidarity without necessarily promoting wider social cohesion. This distinction is important for the present study because it allows the research to examine whether Catholic youth programs create bridging relationships in addition to strengthening relationships among Catholic youth themselves.

Another limitation of Social Capital Theory is that it can sometimes place insufficient emphasis on structural inequalities that influence people's ability to participate in networks. Factors such as unemployment, poverty, unequal access to resources, political marginalization and social exclusion may restrict opportunities for some young people to participate. Consequently, the existence of social networks does not automatically guarantee social cohesion. This limitation complements the study's use of Empowerment Theory, which

gives greater attention to agency, capacity and access to resources. The two theories can therefore be used complementarily rather than interchangeably. Empowerment Theory explains how Catholic youth programs build young people's capacities, confidence, agency and ability to participate, while Social Capital Theory explains how participation creates networks, trust, reciprocity and relationships that can contribute to social cohesion.

Consequently, Social Capital Theory is appropriate for the present study because it provides a framework for examining how Catholic Church youth-focused programs facilitate relationships, networks, trust, reciprocity and civic participation among young people. It further explains how these social resources may contribute to broader social cohesion among youth in Embakasi East Constituency, Nairobi County.

2.5 Chapter Summary

Chapter Two has focused on reviewing relevant empirical literature about the contribution of Catholic Church in the area of social cohesion development among the youth. The literature review began by describing the problem context with reference to the contemporary social and economic challenges affecting young people globally, which has informed the need to have effective youth-focused interventions. It then examined empirical studies about the existing Catholic youth-focused interventions; contribution of youth empowerment programs, contribution of community based program, and challenges facing Catholic Church interventions in social cohesion development. The review has followed a funnel approach, expanding from the global to the continent and to the country level of analysis. Studies have shown the positive roles the Catholic Church plays in developing young people; focusing on leadership, mentorship, volunteerism, and peace building as key youth empowerment elements and community development initiatives; contributing to the development of social trust, social inclusion, community participation and sense of belonging.

However, it has been observed that majority of the studies on this issue have looked on the contribution of the programs to youth empowerment, peace building and leadership skills development and socio-economic development but few of them has critically studied the contribution to social cohesion. Specifically, less research has been dedicated on studies relating the Catholic Church youth focused programs to the development of social cohesion, especially at the constituency level. It has also not been analyzed in the context of urban constituencies like that of Embakasi East, Nairobi County. This has presented a gap of knowledge that the present study seeks to address. Chapter three covers the methodology that was applied in achieving the study's objectives.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the methodologies that were used to examine the contribution of the Catholic Church to the promotion of social cohesion among the youth in Embakasi East Constituency, Nairobi County, Kenya. The chapter describes and justifies the research approach, research design, and study area adopted for the study. It also presents the target population, sampling procedures, sample size determination, data collection methods and instruments, pilot testing, validity and reliability of the research instruments, data collection procedures, methods of data analysis, ethical considerations, and chapter summary.

3.1 Research Design

This study employed a mixed-methods research approach with a convergent parallel research design to address the research question regarding the contribution of Catholic Church youth programs to promoting social cohesion among youth in Embakasi East Constituency, Nairobi County, Kenya. The mixed-methods approach allowed the researcher to incorporate quantitative and qualitative data and to have a holistic understanding of the subject under study. The convergent design entailed collecting both quantitative and qualitative data concurrently in the same phase. Both datasets were then analyzed independently, and the results were integrated, compared, and interpreted at the end.

The quantitative strand involved structured questionnaire surveys administered to selected youth between 18–34 years residing in Embakasi East Constituency's five wards, namely Upper Savannah, Lower Savannah, Embakasi, Mihango, and Utawala. This collected measurable data on the existing Catholic youth-friendly programmes, youth engagement levels in various empowerment activities and community initiatives, and indicators of social

cohesion such as social interactions, sense of mutual trust, peaceful co-existence, inclusiveness, solidarity, and participation within the community. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive and some relevant inferential statistical techniques.

The qualitative strand involved focus group discussions with selected youth and key informant interviews (KIIs) with key Catholic Church officials, coordinators, and other stakeholders of youth programmes. This gathered in-depth insights into participants' perceptions, experiences, and explanations of the contribution of Catholic youth programmes towards social cohesion, as well as challenges faced. Qualitative data were analyzed thematically.

These two data strands ran parallel to each other but were analyzed separately before being merged and their results cross-validated. Any convergence, divergence, or complementarity was identified. This involved cross-validating the findings, for example, the extent to which participation in programmes was related to increased social cohesion according to youth participation and the reasons underlying this participation based on explanations offered during focus groups.

Thus, a convergent design was found suitable, since the study aimed to both measure the impact of Catholic Church youth programmes and seek the perspectives and experiences explaining this impact. Integration of both sources ultimately produced better quality and more comprehensive results from the study and enabled a fuller appreciation of the contribution of Catholic Church youth programmes in creating social cohesion among the youth in Embakasi East Constituency

3.2 Study Area

The study was conducted in Embakasi East Constituency, one of the seventeen constituencies in Nairobi City County, Kenya. The constituency is located in the eastern part of Nairobi and comprises five administrative wards, namely Upper Savanna, Lower Savanna, Embakasi, Utawala, and Mihang'o. Embakasi East shares boundaries with Embakasi Central, Embakasi South, Embakasi North, Embakasi West, Kasarani, and Machakos County. The constituency has experienced rapid urbanization over the past two decades due to population growth, expansion of residential settlements, and improved transport infrastructure.

According to the 2019 Kenya Population and Housing Census, Embakasi East has a population of approximately 163,765 people, with young people constituting a significant proportion of 36% of the population (Kenya National Bureau of Statistics [KNBS], 2019). The constituency continues to attract migrants from different parts of Kenya because of employment opportunities, educational institutions, and affordable housing. Consequently, the area is characterized by considerable ethnic, cultural, religious, and socio-economic diversity, making it an appropriate setting for studying issues relating to social cohesion among young people.

Economically, residents of Embakasi East engage in diverse livelihoods, including formal employment, informal businesses, transport services, small-scale trade, and self-employment. However, the constituency also experiences challenges associated with rapid urban growth, including youth unemployment, income inequality, informal settlements, insecurity, substance abuse, and limited recreational facilities for young people. These challenges may affect young people's sense of belonging, participation in community life, and relationships across different social groups, thereby influencing the level of social cohesion within the constituency.

The Catholic Church has an active pastoral presence within Embakasi East through several parishes and outstations that provide both spiritual and social services to the local community. Besides offering sacramental and catechetical formation, these parishes implement youth-focused programs such as Youth Catholic Action (YCA), mentorship initiatives, leadership training, retreats, peace education, charitable outreach, sports activities, environmental conservation, counselling, and community service. These programs create opportunities for young people from diverse backgrounds to interact, collaborate, develop leadership skills, and participate in activities that promote peaceful coexistence and community development.

Embakasi East was purposively selected for this study because it provides an appropriate context for examining the contribution of Catholic Church youth programs to the promotion of social cohesion. First, the constituency has a large and diverse youth population that reflects many of the opportunities and challenges experienced by urban youth in Kenya. Second, the presence of several active Catholic parishes implementing structured youth programs provides a suitable institutional setting for investigating the study variables. Third, the constituency's social diversity makes it possible to examine how Catholic youth programs contribute to strengthening social trust, social inclusion, and community participation among young people from different ethnic, cultural, and socio-economic backgrounds. Finally, despite the Church's active involvement in youth ministry within the constituency, limited empirical studies have specifically examined the contribution of these programs to social cohesion, thereby justifying the selection of Embakasi East as the study area.

The findings of this study are expected to provide valuable insights for the Catholic Church, government agencies, development partners, and other faith-based organizations implementing youth programs in multicultural urban settings. Although the study focused on

Embakasi East Constituency, the findings may also provide lessons applicable to other urban constituencies in Kenya that share similar demographic and socio-economic characteristics.

3.3 Target Population

The target population for this study comprised youth aged 15–34 years residing in Embakasi East Constituency, Nairobi County, Kenya. Youth population in Embakasi East Constituency comprised 146,770 (KNBS, 2019) distributed across the five wards as below Embakasi (63,201), Lower Savannah (28, 573), Mihango (24,855), Upper Savannah (21,936), and Utawala (8,205). The target population was selected because it represents the group most directly exposed to Catholic Church youth programs within the study area.

3.2 Sample Size

The sample size for the quantitative component of the study was determined using Yamane's (1967) formula for a finite population:

$$n = N / [1 + N(e^2)]$$

Where:

n = required sample size;

N = estimated target population; and

e = level of precision.

The estimated 2026 youth population of Embakasi East Constituency is approximately 146,770 persons aged 15–34 years. At a 5 per cent level of precision, the sample size is calculated as follows:

$$n = 146,770 / [1 + 146,770(0.05^2)]$$

$$n = 146,770 / [1 + 366.925]$$

n = 398.91

The figure is therefore rounded to 399 youth respondents.

The 399 respondents were proportionately allocated across the five wards of Embakasi East Constituency. The resulting allocation was: Embakasi – 172 respondents; Lower Savannah – 78 respondents; Mihango – 67 respondents; Upper Savannah – 60 respondents; and Utawala – 22 respondents, giving a total of 399 respondents.

During actual data collection, the researcher used an appropriate and verifiable sampling frame to identify youth respondents within each ward.

Table 3. 1: Sampling Matrix

Ward	**Estimated youth 15–34**	**Sample Size**
Embakasi	63,201	172
Lower Savannah	28,573	78
Mihango	24,855	67
Upper Savannah	21,936	60
Utawala	8,205	22
Total	**146,770**	**399**

For the qualitative data, 6 KIIs were purposively sampled out based on the way the interact with the youth. These included; one parish priest, youth chaplain, three youth leaders, YCA leader, and CJPD leader. The total sample size was therefore **405 participants.**

3.3 Description of sampling method

The first stage of sampling involved stratifying Embakasi East Constituency into its five administrative wards: Upper Savannah, Lower Savannah, Embakasi, Utawala, and Mihango, with each ward constituting a distinct sampling stratum. Stratification was appropriate because it ensured adequate geographical representation and minimized the risk of over- or under-representation of any ward. Following stratification, the 399 youth respondents were

distributed proportionately across the five wards based on the estimated youth population aged 15–34 years in each ward. The proportional allocation was determined using the respective ward youth population relative to the total youth population of 146,770.

After determining the sample for each ward, simple random sampling was used to select the youth respondents. Lists of eligible Catholic youth participating in Church programmes were obtained from parish youth records within each ward. Each eligible youth was assigned a number, and respondents were selected through a simple random procedure. This technique gave every eligible participant an equal probability of selection, thereby reducing selection bias and enhancing the representativeness of the quantitative sample. Only youth engaging directly with the church programs were eligible for the study.

Catholic parishes were purposively selected from within Embakasi East Constituency. Parish selection was based on geographical location within Embakasi East Constituency, existence of an established youth ministry or youth structure, evidence of youth-focused activities, implementation of programmes relating to empowerment, mentorship, leadership, community engagement, peacebuilding or service, availability of a priest, chaplain, youth coordinator or youth leader with knowledge of the programmes, and willingness to facilitate access to participants and relevant information. The purpose of purposive parish selection was to ensure that the study included parishes where the phenomenon under investigation was sufficiently present to generate meaningful evidence. The selected parishes were identified and documented before data collection, together with the reasons for their inclusion.

For the qualitative component, purposive sampling was used to select key informants because of their knowledge, experience, and direct involvement in Catholic youth ministry. The key informants comprised six participants, including parish priests, parish youth coordinators or chaplains, and youth leaders serving the five wards of Embakasi East Constituency. Their

positions enabled them to provide detailed information on the planning, implementation, achievements, and challenges of Catholic youth programmes, making them suitable participants for the qualitative interviews.

The combination of stratified sampling, proportionate allocation, simple random sampling, and purposive sampling was considered appropriate because it ensured that the quantitative sample was geographically representative while enabling the qualitative component to obtain rich and context-specific information from individuals directly involved in youth ministry. The use of these complementary sampling techniques was consistent with the convergent parallel mixed-methods design adopted for the study.

3.4 Description of Data Collection Methods

To gather information about the contribution of Catholic Church youth-focused programs to the social cohesion of Embakasi East Constituency, this study utilized two methods of data collection, quantitative and qualitative approach. Methods of data collection were appropriate since they provide both quantitative data that were analyzed descriptively and inferentially, and qualitative data through the key informant interviews, which generated in-depth understanding and richness from the study context through data triangulation that can lead to findings credibility and validity.

3.4.1 Quantitative method

Quantitative data was obtained using a self-administered closed-ended questionnaire from youth who are part of various Catholic Church youth-focused programs. Using the questionnaire approach was appropriate as it is efficient for collecting large amounts of standard information, often from many respondents. It allows questions and topics that are often best investigated through survey research as they include respondent views and perceptions on youth empowerment programs, involvement of youth in community activities

and the effect of youth empowerment programs on social co cohesiveness. The structured questionnaires would gather sufficient amount of quantitative data suitable for quantitative statistical tests.

3.4.2 Qualitative method

Qualitative data was collected from key stakeholders through key informant interviews from Catholic parish priests, Catholic youth chaplain / youth coordinators and three youth leaders involved in the church initiatives in various catholic parishes in Embakasi East Constituency. Key informant interview method was suitable since this kind of methodology allowed for an in depth understandings of the lived experiences and perceptions of stakeholders on various aspects relating to existing and available youth programs, planning and delivery process of the youth programs run by churches. KIIs helps researchers gain insights from individuals who have in-depth knowledge about specific issues of concern and are well positioned to provide context, detailed knowledge. A mix of these two methods of data collection allows the researcher to cover the range of outcomes that reflect both trends that are measurable, as well as people's experiences. The dual strategy ensures triangulation of both the questionnaire data with interview data thereby promoting accuracy of data.

3.5 Data Analysis

Data analysis refers to the systematic process of organizing, processing, interpreting, and presenting data in order to answer the research questions and achieve the objectives of a study. The choice of data analysis techniques depended on the nature of the research questions, the type of data collected, and the research design adopted. Since this study employed a convergent parallel mixed-methods design, quantitative and qualitative data were analyzed separately before being integrated during the interpretation stage to provide a

comprehensive understanding of the contribution of the Catholic Church to the promotion of social cohesion among the youth in Embakasi East Constituency.

3.5.1 Quantitative Data Analysis

Quantitative data were checked for completeness, coded, and analyzed using SPSS version 28. Data cleaning was undertaken before statistical analysis. Descriptive statistics included frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations. These statistics were used to summarize respondents' demographic characteristics, exposure to Catholic youth programmes, and responses concerning empowerment, community engagement, and social cohesion.

Inferential analysis was subsequently done to examine relationships between the study variables. Pearson's correlation coefficient was used to assess the direction and strength of relationships between youth empowerment, youth community engagement, and social cohesion, where the assumptions for its use were satisfied. Multiple linear regression was then used to assess the extent to which youth empowerment and youth community engagement predicted variation in social cohesion.

Statistical significance was evaluated at the 5% significance level ($p \leq .05$), and results were presented using appropriate tables and narrative interpretation. The fourth objective, concerning factors hindering the Church's contribution, was primarily addressed through descriptive analysis of quantitative responses and qualitative thematic analysis. The hindering factors were not automatically included as regression predictors unless the research model was subsequently revised and the relevant variables were operationalized appropriately

3.5.2 Qualitative Data Analysis

Qualitative interviews were transcribed and analyzed thematically. Thematic analysis provided a systematic approach for identifying, organizing, and interpreting patterns of meaning within qualitative data (Braun & Clarke, 2021). The method was appropriate because the study sought to identify recurring experiences and explanations concerning Catholic youth programmes, empowerment, community engagement, social cohesion, and implementation challenges.

The analysis involved familiarization with the data, generation of initial codes, identification of potential themes, review and refinement of themes, definition and naming of themes, and preparation of the final analytical account (Braun & Clarke, 2021). Relevant participant quotations were used in the final report to illustrate major themes while protecting participants' identities

3.5.3 Qualitative Findings

In line with the convergent parallel mixed-methods design, the quantitative and qualitative findings were integrated during the interpretation stage. The researcher compared the findings from both datasets to identify areas of convergence, divergence, and complementarity. Where the quantitative and qualitative findings supported each other, stronger conclusions were drawn regarding the contribution of the Catholic Church to the promotion of social cohesion among the youth. Where differences emerged, the qualitative findings were used to explain the contextual factors that might have accounted for the observed quantitative results. The integration of findings provided a more comprehensive understanding of the study problem than would have been achieved through the use of either quantitative or qualitative methods alone

Table 3. 2: Summary of Data Analysis Plan

Research Objective	Data Source	Instrument	Data Analysis Technique
To explore the youth-focused programs implemented by the Catholic Church.	Youth, Priests, Youth Coordinators, Youth Leaders	Questionnaire, Interview Guide	Descriptive statistics, Thematic analysis
To examine the contribution of Catholic youth empowerment programs to social cohesion.	Youth, Key Informants	Questionnaire, Interview Guide	Descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, Multiple regression, Thematic analysis
To assess the contribution of Catholic youth community engagement programs to social cohesion.	Youth, Key Informants	Questionnaire, Interview Guide	Descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, Multiple regression, Thematic analysis
To determine the challenges affecting the Catholic Church's contribution to social cohesion.	Youth, Key Informants	Questionnaire, Interview Guide	Descriptive statistics, Thematic analysis

3.6 Pilot Study

A pilot study preceded data collection and was carried out to pre-test the research instruments and examine their validity in the study. The pilot study allowed the researcher to determine the clarity, relevance, formulation, ordering, and completeness of the questionnaire and interview guide, to identify sources of confusion and error in the instruments, and to make the necessary adjustments before data were actually collected. The pilot study was carried out in a selected Catholic Parish in Nairobi County, Kenya, which had some similar characteristics to the study site but was not considered a sample for the main data collection. This was done to reduce the probability that respondents in the main study would be selected as pilot participants. Forty participants (10%) of the proposed total sample of 399 were involved in

the pilot study. This was conducted in Kamukunji Sub-County, which had similar characteristics to the study area.

This percentage was representative of the proposed study based on the assertion of Mugenda and Mugenda (2003) that a sample of about 10% of the sample size for the pilot study was sufficient in examining such instruments. Furthermore, one Catholic Parish priest or youth chaplain, as well as one Catholic youth leader, was purposively selected for the pilot study to test the interview guide. Data generated from the pilot study were used to improve, modify, edit, and refine the wording of the research instruments and to make revisions, deletions, and additions in order to provide the data required to answer the study. Data from the pilot study were not analyzed or used.

3.7. Validity and Reliability.

3.7.1. Validity

Validity referred to the extent to which a research instrument adequately measured the concepts it was intended to measure. The study emphasized content validity by ensuring that questionnaire and interview-guide items corresponded directly to the research objectives, research questions, conceptual framework, and operational indicators. The instruments were reviewed by the research supervisors and, where appropriate, other experts in peace studies, social cohesion, youth studies, and research methodology. The reviewers examined the instruments for relevance, clarity, completeness, appropriateness of wording, and alignment with the study variables. Feedback from the review was incorporated before the pilot study. Items found to be ambiguous, repetitive, or insufficiently aligned with the objectives were revised or removed.

3.8.2. Reliability

Reliability concerned the consistency of an instrument in measuring the constructs for which it was designed. The quantitative questionnaire was piloted before the main data collection. For multi-item Likert-type scales, Cronbach's alpha coefficient was used to assess internal consistency. A coefficient of approximately .70 or above was generally considered an acceptable indication of internal consistency, although interpretation took into account the number and nature of items and the purpose of the scale (Taber, 2018). Items that substantially weakened the internal consistency or were found to be unclear during piloting were reviewed and, where justified, revised. The qualitative interview guide was not assessed using Cronbach's alpha because qualitative interviews sought depth and contextual understanding rather than internal statistical consistency. Instead, consistency was promoted through a common interview guide, standardized procedures, and systematic documentation.

3.9 Ethical Considerations

This research was guided by established ethical principles to ensure that the dignity, privacy, well-being, and rights of all the study participants were assured during the research period. The researcher obtained approval from Catholic University of Eastern Africa (CUEA) before the commencement of the study and secured a research permit from the National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI). Clearance was also sought from the Church authorities and the Parish leadership where the study was carried out in Embakasi East Constituency.

Participation in this study was on a voluntary basis. The participants were fully informed of the research process by the researcher prior to giving consent. Information was provided regarding the objectives of the study, methodology, expected time of participation, and anticipated benefits and risks. Participants had an opportunity to ask any clarifying questions

before appending their consent signatures. The right to refuse participation or withdraw at any time without consequences was provided.

The researcher protected the confidentiality of every respondent's identity and information. Personal data such as names, addresses, or contact numbers were masked or anonymized, meaning that they were not collected or recorded. Instead, the researcher used participant identification codes. Data obtained during the study were not disclosed without participant consent and were used for research purposes only.

Voluntary participation in the study was purely optional. Respondents were not coerced or unduly pressured to participate in the study. They were free to skip any question considered sensitive or personal and to withdraw from the study without penalties or unpleasant effects of any kind. The researcher ensured that the interviews were based on the free will of the participants.

The study adhered to the principles and guidelines of the Data Protection Act No. 24 of 2019 of Kenya, which provided for the protection of personal data and the privacy of individuals. Personal information obtained from study participants was obtained, processed, and protected according to lawful and ethically prescribed norms. Such personal information was only processed in line with the objectives of this research project. In addition, participants were informed of the reason for carrying out the study, the details of personal data to be collected, how the data would be used, and participants' rights to refuse participation. All possible measures were taken by the researcher to prevent unauthorized access to or use of information by others, and the information was safeguarded in whatever format it appeared.

The collected personal data was only collected to the minimum needed for the purpose it served, as provided for under the Data Protection Act 2019, and was not disclosed to any

third party as stipulated by the Act or any other law, unless required by any law or agreement where relevant. The participants were informed of how their data rights applied, such as the right to access data. Personal data was retained for the shortest possible period needed for fulfilling the purpose of the study and its institutional/research purposes and was appropriately disposed of after the researcher had completed its use.

3.10 Chapter Summary

This chapter presented the research methodology that guided the study on the contribution of the Catholic Church to the promotion of social cohesion among the youth in Embakasi East Constituency, Nairobi County, Kenya. It described the research paradigm, research design, study area, target population, sample size determination, and sampling techniques and procedures adopted in the study.

The chapter also outlined the data collection methods and research instruments used, together with the pilot study, procedures for establishing the validity and reliability of the research instruments, and the data collection procedures. In addition, it explained the methods used to analyze both quantitative and qualitative data, including the integration of findings in accordance with the convergent parallel mixed-methods design. Finally, the chapter discussed the ethical considerations that guided the conduct of the study to ensure the protection of participants' rights, confidentiality, voluntary participation, and adherence to accepted research standards.

The methodology described in this chapter provided a systematic and rigorous framework for collecting, analyzing, and interpreting data that addressed the study objectives. The next chapter presented the analysis, presentation, interpretation, and discussion of the research findings based on the data collected from the field.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents and discusses the findings on the contribution of the Catholic Church towards the promotion of social cohesion among the youth in Embakasi East Constituency, Nairobi County, Kenya. The chapter begins with the response rate, followed by the presentation and discussion of respondents' demographic characteristics. Descriptive findings on Catholic Church youth-focused programmes, youth empowerment programmes, youth community engagement programmes, and social cohesion are subsequently presented and discussed. The chapter also presents the inferential statistical findings examining the relationships between the study variables. The qualitative findings from key informant interviews are integrated with the quantitative results to provide a comprehensive interpretation of the contribution of Catholic Church programmes to social cohesion among the youth. The findings are presented and discussed in line with the study objectives and research questions.

4.2 Response Rate

The term "response rate" refers to the percentage of questionnaires that are returned or collected after being filled out in their entirety and compared to the survey questionnaires that were sent to the respondents.

Table 4. 1: Response Rate

No. of respodents	No. of questionnaires Returned	Response Rate (%)
399	331	83

As a result of this, 399 questionnaires were sent, and out of those, 331 were completely filled out, which is a response rate of 83%. Mugenda & Mugenda (2003) consider a response rate of fifty percent to be satisfactory, sixty percent to be acceptable, and seventy percent or more

to be very good. For the purposes of the research, this response was consequently deemed to be very good.

4.3 Respondents Details

The study examined the respondents' information in respect to their gender, age, ward, highest education level, employment status, Catholic youth programme(s) participated in and duration of participation.

4.3.1 Gender composition of the respondents

The researcher was interested in establishing the gender of the respondents; the findings are as shown in the figure 4.1

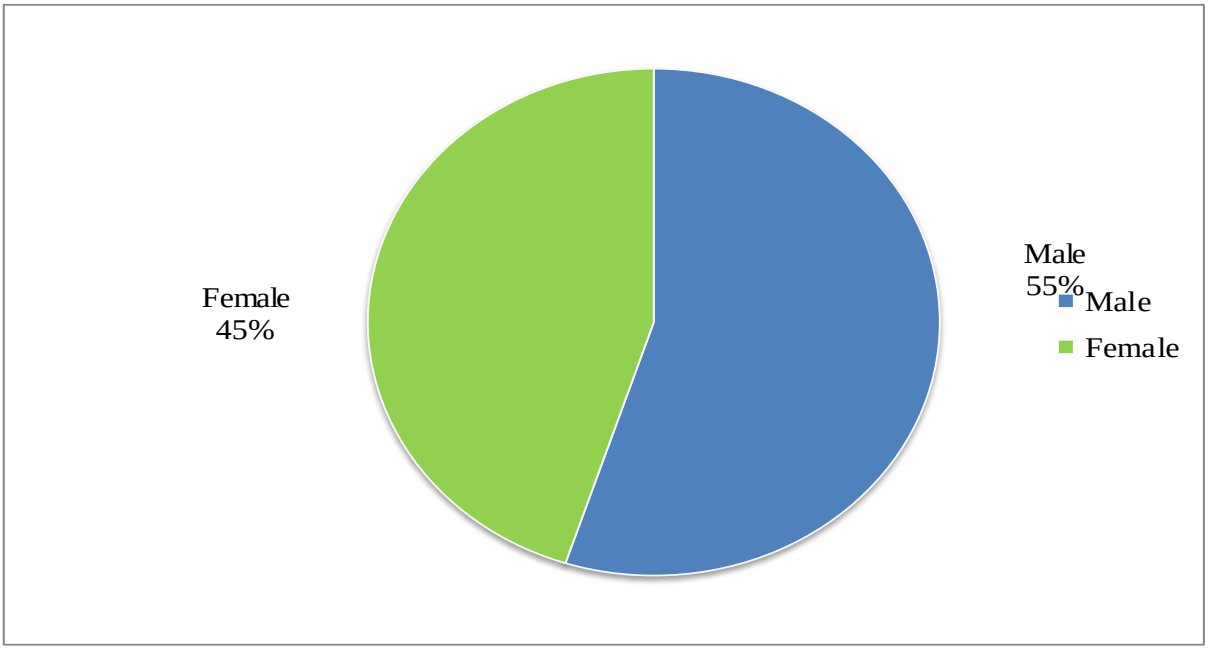


Figure 4. 1 Gender Composition of the Respondents

From the findings, 55% of the respondents were male while 45% of the respondents were female. This implies that the research had good gender representation and took care of the balanced opinions in this study. The gender representation was important in obtaining views from both male and female youth on the contribution of the Catholic Church towards the promotion of social cohesion.

4.3.2 Age of the Respondents

The respondents' age was assessed. The findings derived from the study are shown in Table 4.2

Table 4. 2: Age of the Respondents

	Age	Frequency	Valid Percent
Valid	18–24	77	23.3
	25–29	129	39.0
	30–34	87	26.3
	35 years and above	38	11.5
	Total	**331**	**100.0**

Table 4.2 shows the age distribution of the respondents. The findings indicate that 39.0% of the respondents were aged 25–29 years, followed by 26.3% who were aged 30–34 years. Those aged 18–24 years accounted for 23.3%, while 11.5% of the respondents were aged 35 years and above. This implies that the study obtained views from respondents across the different age categories, providing varied perspectives on the contribution of the Catholic Church towards the promotion of social cohesion among the youth.

4.3.3 Ward of the Respondents

The respondents' ward was assessed. The findings derived from the study are shown in Figure 4.2.

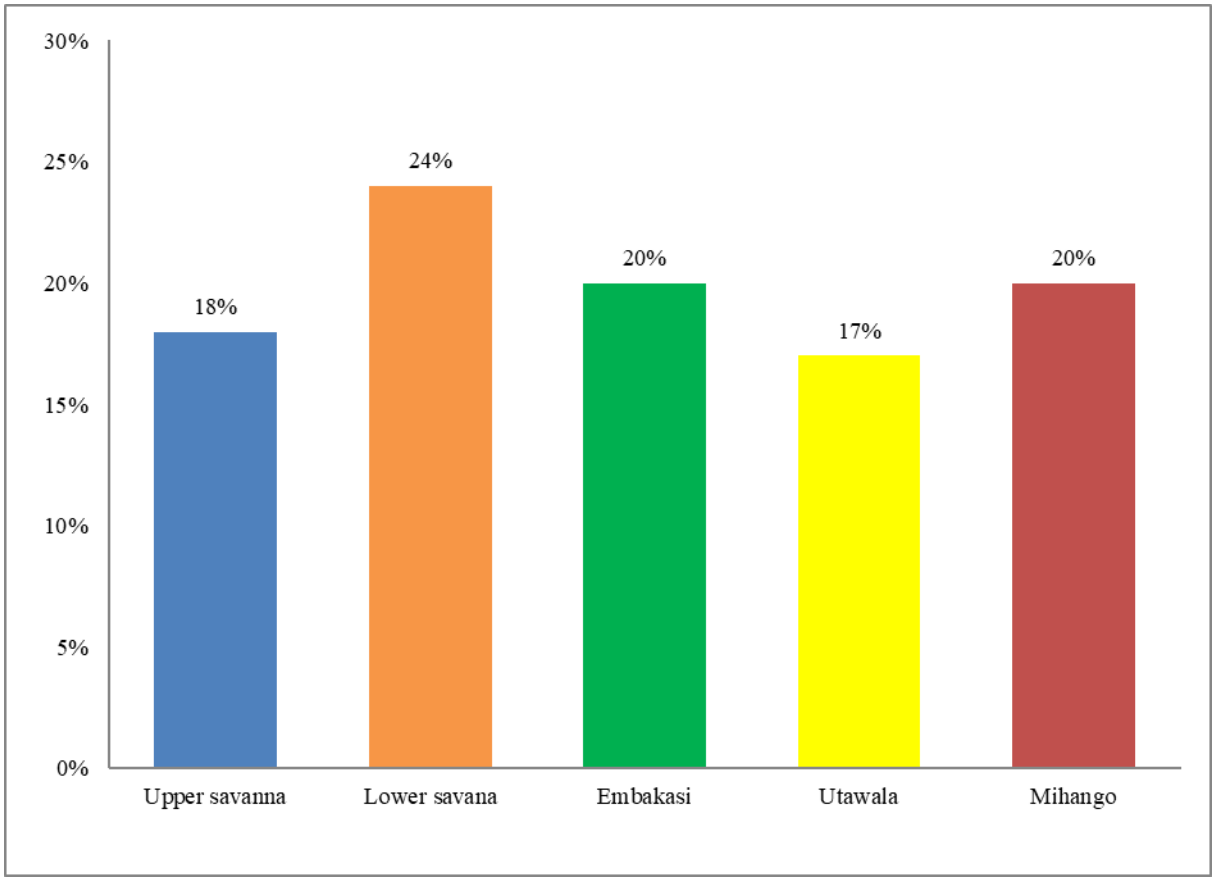


Figure 4. 2: Ward of the Respondents

From the findings in figure 4.2, 24% of the valid respondents were from Lower Savanna, 20% were from Embakasi, 20% were from Mihang'o, 18% were from Upper Savanna, while 17% were from Utawala. This implies that the study obtained responses from all the five wards in Embakasi East Constituency, providing representation of youth from different wards in examining the contribution of the Catholic Church towards the promotion of social cohesion.

4.3.4 Highest Education Level of the Respondents

The respondents' highest education level was assessed. The findings derived from the study are shown in Table 4.3.

Table 4. 3: Highest Education Level of the Respondents

	Education level	Frequency	Valid Percent
Valid	Primary	32	9.7
	Secondary	67	20.2
	Certificate	47	14.2
	Diploma	120	36.3
	Degree	45	13.6
	Postgraduate	20	6.0
	Total	**331**	**100.0**

From the findings in Table 4.4, 36.3% of the respondents had attained diploma level, 20.2% of the respondents had attained secondary education, 14.2% of the respondents had a certificate, 13.6% of the respondents had attained a degree, 9.7% of the respondents had primary education, while 6.0% of the respondents had postgraduate education. This implies that the study obtained responses from youth with different levels of education, providing varied perspectives on the contribution of the Catholic Church towards the promotion of social cohesion among the youth.

4.3.5 Employment Status of the Respondents

The respondents' employment status was assessed. The findings derived from the study are shown in figure

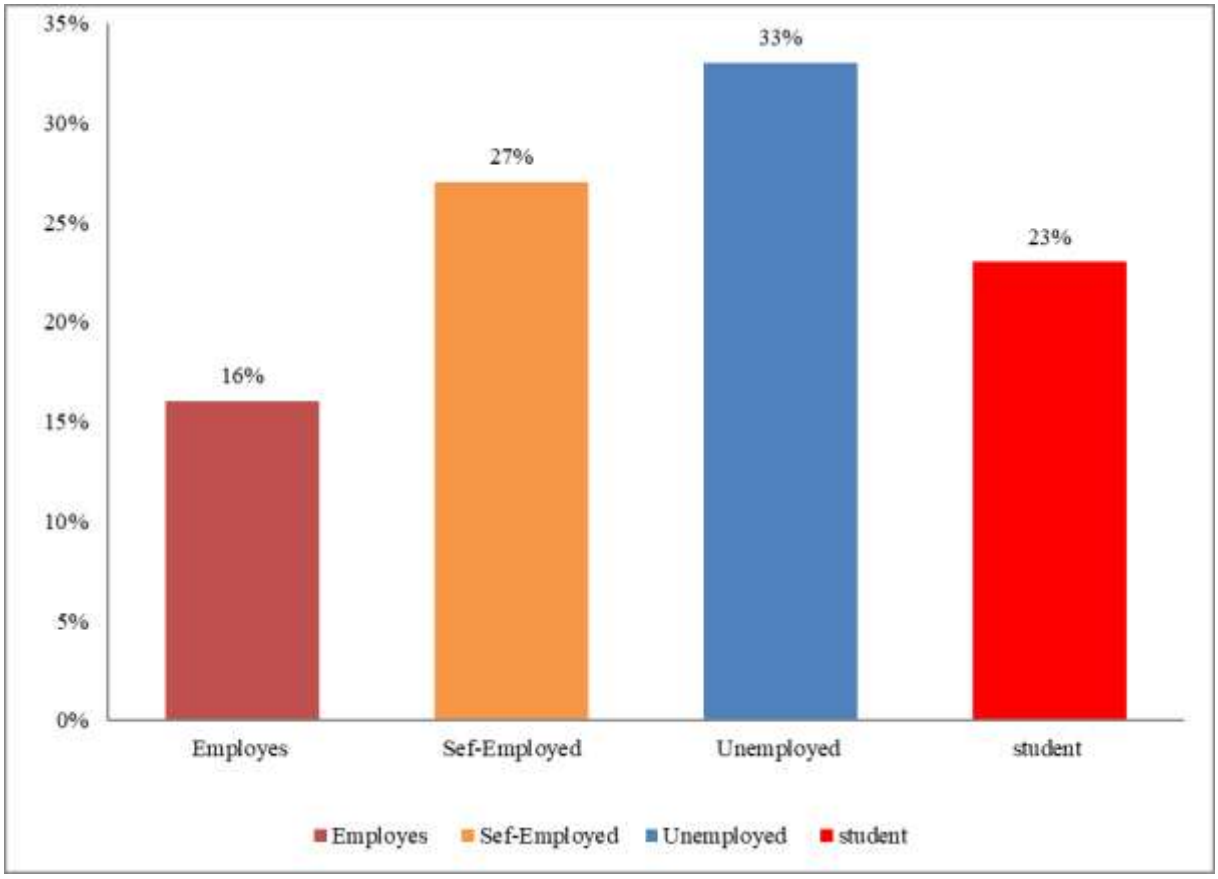


Figure 4. 3: Employment Status of the Respondents

From the findings in Figure 4.5, 33% of the respondents were unemployed, 27% of the respondents were self-employed, 23% of the respondents were students, while 16% of the respondents were employed. This implies that the study included respondents with different employment statuses, providing varied perspectives on the contribution of the Catholic Church towards the promotion of social cohesion among the youth

4.3.6 Catholic Youth Programme(s) Participated in by the Respondents

The respondents' participation in Catholic youth programme(s) was assessed. The findings derived from the study are shown in Table 4.4.

Table 4. 4: Catholic Youth Programme(s) Participated in by the Respondents

	Programme	Frequency	Valid Percent
Valid	YCA	75	22.7
	Choir	55	16.6
	CMA/CWA Youth	48	14.5
	Youth Leadership	56	16.9
	Small Christian Communities	39	11.8
	Justice and Peace	31	9.4
	Environmental activities	27	8.2
	Total	**331**	**100.0**

From the findings in Table 4.6, 22.7% of the respondents participated in YCA, 16.9% of the respondents participated in youth leadership programmes, 16.6% of the respondents participated in choir, 14.5% of the respondents participated in CMA/CWA Youth, 11.8% of the respondents participated in Small Christian Communities, 9.4% of the respondents participated in Justice and Peace, while 8.2% of the respondents participated in environmental activities. This implies that the study included respondents participating in different Catholic youth programmes, providing varied perspectives on the contribution of these programmes towards the promotion of social cohesion among the youth.

4.3.7 Duration of Participation in Catholic Youth Programmes

The respondents' duration of participation in Catholic youth programme(s) was assessed. The findings derived from the study are shown in figure 4.4.

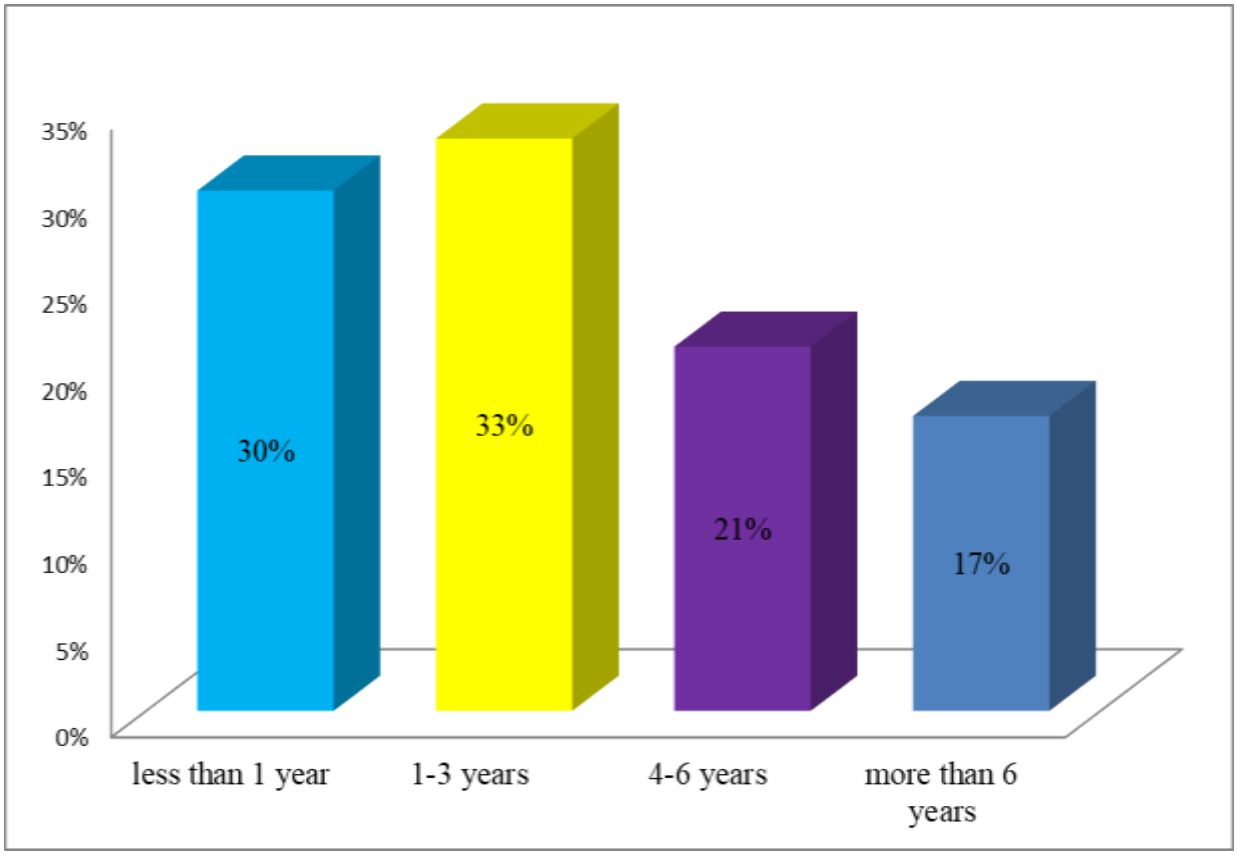


Figure 4. 4: Duration of Participation in Catholic Youth Programmes

From the findings in Figure 4.7, 33% of the respondents had participated in Catholic youth programmes for 1–3 years, 30% of the respondents had participated for less than 1 year, 21% of the respondents had participated for 4–6 years, while 17% of the respondents had participated for more than 6 years. This implies that the study included respondents with different durations of participation in Catholic youth programmes, providing varied experiences on the contribution of the programmes towards the promotion of social cohesion among the youth.

4.3.8 Reliability Results

Table 4. 5: Results of Reliability Testing

Study Variable	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient
Youth-Focused Programmes	6	0.766
Youth Empowerment Programmes	6	0.874
Youth Engagement Programmes	6	0.826
Challenges Affecting the Church's Contribution	7	0.898
Social Cohesion	9	0.885

The reliability results indicate that all study variables exhibit acceptable to excellent internal consistency, as measured by Cronbach's Alpha. Youth-Focused Programmes ($\alpha = 0.766$) show acceptable reliability, while Youth Empowerment Programmes ($\alpha = 0.874$), Youth Engagement Programmes ($\alpha = 0.826$), and Social Cohesion ($\alpha = 0.885$) demonstrate good reliability, indicating strong internal consistency. Challenges Affecting the Church's Contribution ($\alpha = 0.898$) approaches excellent reliability, reflecting a high correlation among its items. Overall, the study's measurement tools are reliable for assessing the variables under investigation.

4.4 Descriptive Statistical Results

This section presents descriptive findings and comments that are directly relevant to the study objectives. The presentation of the findings included both means, which are assessments of central tendency, and standard deviations, which are measures of variation or dispersion. Based on the five-point Likert scale, the analysis of the given data may be stated as follows: The numerical scale used in this context is as follows: Five corresponds to "Strongly Agree," four corresponds to "Agree," three corresponds to "Neutral," two corresponds to "Disagree," and one corresponds to "Strongly Disagree."

4.4.1 Youth-Focused Programmes and the Promotion of Social Cohesion

Within Embakasi East Constituency, the researcher wanted to ascertain the degree of consensus on the influence that youth-focused programmes have on the promotion of social cohesion among the youth. The opinions of the respondents are shown in Table 4.6

Table 4. 6: Youth-Focused Programmes and the Promotion of Social Cohesion

Responses	Strongly agree		Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
The parish regularly organizes youth programmes.	165	50%	120	36%	7	2%	12	4%	27	8%
Catholic youth programmes address issues affecting young people.	154	44%	123	37%	11	3%	5	2%	38	11%
The Church encourages active youth participation in parish activities.	156	44%	110	33%	21	6%	20	6%	24	7%
Youth programmes promote moral and spiritual development.	157	45%	105	30%	35	10%	18	5%	16	5%
Youth programmes provide mentorship opportunities.	142	43%	99	30%	37	11%	23	7%	30	9%
The programmes respond to current social challenges facing youth.	146	44%	119	36%	32	10%	12	4%	22	6%

From the findings in Table 4.4, 50% of the respondents strongly agreed that the parish regularly organizes youth programmes, 36% of the respondents agreed that the parish regularly organizes youth programmes, 2% of the respondents were neutral on whether the parish regularly organizes youth programmes, 4% of the respondents disagreed that the parish regularly organizes youth programmes, while 8% of the respondents strongly disagreed that the parish regularly organizes youth programmes.

Regarding whether Catholic youth programmes address issues affecting young people, 44% of the respondents strongly agreed that Catholic youth programmes address issues affecting young people, 37% of the respondents agreed that Catholic youth programmes address issues affecting young people, 3% of the respondents were neutral on whether Catholic youth programmes address issues affecting young people, 2% of the respondents disagreed that Catholic youth programmes address issues affecting young people, while 11% of the

respondents strongly disagreed that Catholic youth programmes address issues affecting young people.

On whether the Church encourages active youth participation in parish activities, 44% of the respondents strongly agreed that the Church encourages active youth participation in parish activities, 33% of the respondents agreed that the Church encourages active youth participation in parish activities, 6% of the respondents were neutral on whether the Church encourages active youth participation in parish activities, 6% of the respondents disagreed that the Church encourages active youth participation in parish activities, while 7% of the respondents strongly disagreed that the Church encourages active youth participation in parish activities.

Further, 45% of the respondents strongly agreed that youth programmes promote moral and spiritual development, 30% of the respondents agreed that youth programmes promote moral and spiritual development, 10% of the respondents were neutral on whether youth programmes promote moral and spiritual development, 5% of the respondents disagreed that youth programmes promote moral and spiritual development, while 5% of the respondents strongly disagreed that youth programmes promote moral and spiritual development.

On whether youth programmes provide mentorship opportunities, 43% of the respondents strongly agreed that youth programmes provide mentorship opportunities, 30% of the respondents agreed that youth programmes provide mentorship opportunities, 11% of the respondents were neutral on whether youth programmes provide mentorship opportunities, 7% of the respondents disagreed that youth programmes provide mentorship opportunities, while 9% of the respondents strongly disagreed that youth programmes provide mentorship opportunities.

Finally, 44% of the respondents strongly agreed that the programmes respond to current social challenges facing youth, 36% of the respondents agreed that the programmes respond

to current social challenges facing youth, 10% of the respondents were neutral on whether the programmes respond to current social challenges facing youth, 4% of the respondents disagreed that the programmes respond to current social challenges facing youth, while 6% of the respondents strongly disagreed that the programmes respond to current social challenges facing youth. The responses from the key informants indicated that the Catholic Church currently implements various youth-focused programmes, including Youth Catholic Action (YCA), choir activities, youth leadership programmes, Small Christian Communities, Justice and Peace activities, and environmental activities. These programmes provide opportunities for young people to participate in church and community activities. The finding agrees with Cortez-Arrevillaga (2025), who found that Catholic parish structures promote youth participation in community-based activities. It also agrees with Duke et al. (2025), who emphasized meaningful youth participation in ecclesial life.

"The parish organizes youth programmes such as YCA, choir, youth leadership and other activities that bring young people together and encourage their participation in church activities" (Parish Youth Coordinator/PYC01). *"The youth programmes provide opportunities for spiritual formation through prayer, teachings and participation in church activities, while also helping young people to interact and develop relationships with one another"* (Parish Priest/PP01). *"Through youth leadership activities, young people are given opportunities to develop leadership skills, confidence and a sense of responsibility within the Church and the wider community"* (Youth Leader/YL01). *"Small Christian Communities and other parish activities enable young people to meet, share experiences and support one another in addressing challenges affecting them"* (Parish Youth Coordinator/PYC02). *"Justice and Peace activities help young people to understand peaceful coexistence, dialogue and responsible participation in community affairs"* (Justice and Peace Youth Leader/JPYL01). *"Environmental activities encourage young people to work together in*

caring for the environment and strengthen their sense of responsibility towards the community" (Youth Leader/YL02). *"The programmes contribute to personal development by providing mentorship, guidance and opportunities for young people to develop skills that can assist them in their daily lives"* (Parish Priest/PP02). *"Participation in these activities brings young people from different backgrounds together, allowing them to interact, cooperate and develop a sense of belonging within the Church community"* (Parish Youth Coordinator/PYC03).

4.4.2 Impact of Youth Empowerment Programmes on the Promotion of Social Cohesion

The purpose of this study was to ascertain the degree of consensus on the influence of youth empowerment programmes on the promotion of social cohesion among the youth in Embakasi East Constituency. The opinions of the respondents are shown in Table 4.7

Table 4. 7: Impact of Youth Empowerment Programmes on the Promotion of Social Cohesion

Responses	Strongly agree		Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
Church programmes have improved my leadership skills.	145	44%	122	37%	25	8%	12	4%	27	8%
I have gained confidence through Church activities.	163	49%	114	34%	19	6%	15	5%	20	6%
Church programmes encourage responsible decision-making.	150	45%	115	35%	13	4%	20	6%	33	10%
The Church equips youth with life skills.	174	53%	76	23%	30	9%	12	4%	39	12%
Church programmes encourage economic self-reliance.	144	41%	87	26%	31	9%	20	6%	49	15%
Empowerment programmes have positively influenced my personal growth.	146	44%	110	33%	23	7%	13	4%	39	12%

From the findings in Table 4.7, 44% of the respondents strongly agreed that Church programmes have improved their leadership skills, 37% of the respondents agreed that Church programmes have improved their leadership skills, 8% of the respondents were neutral on whether Church programmes have improved their leadership skills, 4% of the respondents disagreed that Church programmes have improved their leadership skills, while 8% of the respondents strongly disagreed that Church programmes have improved their leadership skills.

Regarding whether respondents had gained confidence through Church activities, 49% of the respondents strongly agreed that they had gained confidence through Church activities, 34% of the respondents agreed that they had gained confidence through Church activities, 6% of the respondents were neutral on whether they had gained confidence through Church activities, 5% of the respondents disagreed that they had gained confidence through Church activities, while 6% of the respondents strongly disagreed that they had gained confidence through Church activities.

On whether Church programmes encourage responsible decision-making, 45% of the respondents strongly agreed that Church programmes encourage responsible decision-making, 35% of the respondents agreed that Church programmes encourage responsible decision-making, 4% of the respondents were neutral on whether Church programmes encourage responsible decision-making, 6% of the respondents disagreed that Church programmes encourage responsible decision-making, while 10% of the respondents strongly disagreed that Church programmes encourage responsible decision-making.

Further, 53% of the respondents strongly agreed that the Church equips youth with life skills, 23% of the respondents agreed that the Church equips youth with life skills, 9% of the respondents were neutral on whether the Church equips youth with life skills, 4% of the

respondents disagreed that the Church equips youth with life skills, while 12% of the respondents strongly disagreed that the Church equips youth with life skills.

On whether Church programmes encourage economic self-reliance, 41% of the respondents strongly agreed that Church programmes encourage economic self-reliance, 26% of the respondents agreed that Church programmes encourage economic self-reliance, 9% of the respondents were neutral on whether Church programmes encourage economic self-reliance, 6% of the respondents disagreed that Church programmes encourage economic self-reliance, while 15% of the respondents strongly disagreed that Church programmes encourage economic self-reliance.

Finally, 44% of the respondents strongly agreed that empowerment programmes have positively influenced their personal growth, 33% of the respondents agreed that empowerment programmes have positively influenced their personal growth, 7% of the respondents were neutral on whether empowerment programmes have positively influenced their personal growth, 4% of the respondents disagreed that empowerment programmes have positively influenced their personal growth, while 12% of the respondents strongly disagreed that empowerment programmes have positively influenced their personal growth. This implies that the majority of the respondents agreed that Church youth empowerment programmes contribute to leadership skills, confidence, responsible decision-making, life skills, economic self-reliance and personal growth, which are important in promoting social cohesion among the youth. The finding agrees with Kabugi (2025), who linked Catholic youth empowerment to skills acquisition, social cohesion and nonviolent conflict resolution. It also agrees with Chigudu (2025), who found that skills and entrepreneurship programmes enhance economic independence and community cohesiveness.

The results were supported by interviewees who stated that: *"The Church's youth empowerment programmes have helped young people to develop leadership skills by giving*

them opportunities to take up responsibilities in youth groups and participate in Church activities" (PYC01). *"Through mentorship and guidance, young people gain confidence and learn how to make responsible decisions in their personal lives and in the community"* (PYC02). *"The programmes equip youth with life skills such as communication, teamwork, problem-solving and leadership, which enable them to relate well with others"* (PP01). *"Youth are encouraged to participate in Church and community activities, which helps them to understand their responsibilities as members of the community and promotes responsible citizenship"* (PP02). *"The leadership opportunities given to young people enable them to develop confidence, accountability and a willingness to serve others"* (YL01). *"The programmes also encourage young people to work together, respect different views and participate in activities that promote peaceful coexistence within the community"* (YL02)

4.4.3 Influence of Youth Community Engagement Programmes on the Promotion of Social Cohesion

The researcher sought to determine the level of agreement on the influence of youth community engagement programmes on the promotion of social cohesion among the youth in Embakasi East Constituency. Table 4.8 shows the respondents' views**.**

Table 4. 8: Influence of Youth Community Engagement Programmes on the Promotion of Social Cohesion

Responses	**Strongly agree**		**Agree**		**Neutral**		**Disagree**		**Strongly disagree**	
I regularly participate in community service through the Church.	143	43%	109	33%	29	9%	28	8%	22	6%
Church activities encourage volunteerism.	169	48%	133	38%	8	2%	24	7%	17	5%
Community activities strengthen relationships among youth.	152	43%	117	33%	34	10%	13	3%	35	10%
Church programmes encourage peaceful conflict resolution.	151	43%	144	41%	26	7%	17	5%	13	4%

Youth participate in environmental conservation activities.	149	43%	116	33%	37	10%	21	6%	28	8%
Community engagement has increased my sense of social responsibility.	201	57%	86	25%	18	5%	31	9%	15	4%

From the findings in Table 4.8, 43% of the respondents strongly agreed that they regularly participate in community service through the Church, 33% of the respondents agreed that they regularly participate in community service through the Church, 9% of the respondents were neutral on whether they regularly participate in community service through the Church, 8% of the respondents disagreed that they regularly participate in community service through the Church, while 6% of the respondents strongly disagreed that they regularly participate in community service through the Church.

Regarding whether Church activities encourage volunteerism, 48% of the respondents strongly agreed that Church activities encourage volunteerism, 38% of the respondents agreed that Church activities encourage volunteerism, 2% of the respondents were neutral on whether Church activities encourage volunteerism, 7% of the respondents disagreed that Church activities encourage volunteerism, while 5% of the respondents strongly disagreed that Church activities encourage volunteerism.

On whether community activities strengthen relationships among youth, 43% of the respondents strongly agreed that community activities strengthen relationships among youth, 33% of the respondents agreed that community activities strengthen relationships among youth, 10% of the respondents were neutral on whether community activities strengthen relationships among youth, 3% of the respondents disagreed that community activities strengthen relationships among youth, while 10% of the respondents strongly disagreed that community activities strengthen relationships among youth.

Regarding whether Church programmes encourage peaceful conflict resolution, 43% of the respondents strongly agreed that Church programmes encourage peaceful conflict resolution, 41% of the respondents agreed that Church programmes encourage peaceful conflict resolution, 7% of the respondents were neutral on whether Church programmes encourage peaceful conflict resolution, 5% of the respondents disagreed that Church programmes encourage peaceful conflict resolution, while 4% of the respondents strongly disagreed that Church programmes encourage peaceful conflict resolution.

Further, 43% of the respondents strongly agreed that youth participate in environmental conservation activities, 33% of the respondents agreed that youth participate in environmental conservation activities, 10% of the respondents were neutral on whether youth participate in environmental conservation activities, 6% of the respondents disagreed that youth participate in environmental conservation activities, while 8% of the respondents strongly disagreed that youth participate in environmental conservation activities.

Finally, 57% of the respondents strongly agreed that community engagement has increased their sense of social responsibility, 25% of the respondents agreed that community engagement has increased their sense of social responsibility, 5% of the respondents were neutral on whether community engagement has increased their sense of social responsibility, 9% of the respondents disagreed that community engagement has increased their sense of social responsibility, while 4% of the respondents strongly disagreed that community engagement has increased their sense of social responsibility. This implies that the majority of the respondents agreed that youth community engagement programmes encourage community service and volunteerism, strengthen relationships among youth, promote peaceful conflict resolution, encourage environmental conservation and increase social responsibility, thereby contributing to the promotion of social cohesion among. The finding agrees with Kouassi (2022), who found that Catholic youth civic engagement promotes social

mixing and solidarity. It also agrees with Onguka et al. (2024), who found that organized youth groups provide platforms for community peacebuilding.

The results were supported by interviewees who stated that: *"The Church creates opportunities for youth to participate in community activities, which helps them to feel included and valued in the life of the community"* (PYC03). *"Participation in Church activities encourages young people to share their views, cooperate with others and take responsibility in community matters"* (PYC04). *"Activities such as Justice and Peace programmes encourage dialogue and peaceful conflict resolution, which helps to build trust among young people"* (PYC05). *"Environmental conservation and other community activities provide opportunities for young people to work together and develop a sense of belonging and social responsibility"* (PYC06).

4.4.4 Challenges Affecting the Church's Contribution

The researcher sought to determine the level of agreement on the challenges affecting the Catholic Church's contribution towards the promotion of social cohesion among the youth in Embakasi East Constituency. Table 4.9 shows the respondents' views

Table 4. 9: Challenges Affecting the Church's Contribution

Responses	Strongly agree		Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
Unemployment limits youth participation in Church programmes.	178	51%	116	33%	24	7%	14	4%	19	65
Drug and substance abuse affects youth participation.	193	55%	101	29%	18	5%	11	3%	30	8%
Political manipulation influences some youths negatively.	165	47%	123	35%	20	6%	11	3%	32	9%
Monitoring and evaluation challenges	195	57%	73	21%	31	8%	15	5%	37	10%
Financial constraints limit implementation of youth programmes.	187	53%	80	23%	25	7%	14	4%	45	13%

Intergenerational Relationship challenges	155	44%	91	26%	38	10%	30	8%	37	10%
Changing Nature of Youth needs	198	56%	64	18%	35	10%	23	7%	31	9%

From the findings in Table 4.9, 51% of the respondents strongly agreed that unemployment limits youth participation in Church programmes, 33% of the respondents agreed that unemployment limits youth participation in Church programmes, 7% of the respondents were neutral on whether unemployment limits youth participation in Church programmes, 4% of the respondents disagreed that unemployment limits youth participation in Church programmes, while 6% of the respondents strongly disagreed that unemployment limits youth participation in Church programmes.

Regarding whether drug and substance abuse affects youth participation, 55% of the respondents strongly agreed that drug and substance abuse affects youth participation, 29% of the respondents agreed that drug and substance abuse affects youth participation, 5% of the respondents were neutral on whether drug and substance abuse affects youth participation, 3% of the respondents disagreed that drug and substance abuse affects youth participation, while 8% of the respondents strongly disagreed that drug and substance abuse affects youth participation.

On whether political manipulation influences some youths negatively, 47% of the respondents strongly agreed that political manipulation influences some youths negatively, 35% of the respondents agreed that political manipulation influences some youths negatively, 6% of the respondents were neutral on whether political manipulation influences some youths negatively, 3% of the respondents disagreed that political manipulation influences some youths negatively, while 9% of the respondents strongly disagreed that political manipulation influences some youths negatively.

Regarding monitoring and evaluation challenges, 57% of the respondents strongly agreed that monitoring and evaluation challenges affect the Church's contribution, 21% of the respondents agreed that monitoring and evaluation challenges affect the Church's contribution, 8% of the respondents were neutral on whether monitoring and evaluation challenges affect the Church's contribution, 5% of the respondents disagreed that monitoring and evaluation challenges affect the Church's contribution, while 10% of the respondents strongly disagreed that monitoring and evaluation challenges affect the Church's contribution.

Further, 53% of the respondents strongly agreed that financial constraints limit implementation of youth programmes, 23% of the respondents agreed that financial constraints limit implementation of youth programmes, 7% of the respondents were neutral on whether financial constraints limit implementation of youth programmes, 4% of the respondents disagreed that financial constraints limit implementation of youth programmes, while 13% of the respondents strongly disagreed that financial constraints limit implementation of youth programmes.

On intergenerational relationship challenges, 44% of the respondents strongly agreed that intergenerational relationship challenges affect the Church's contribution, 26% of the respondents agreed that intergenerational relationship challenges affect the Church's contribution, 10% of the respondents were neutral on whether intergenerational relationship challenges affect the Church's contribution, 8% of the respondents disagreed that intergenerational relationship challenges affect the Church's contribution, while 10% of the respondents strongly disagreed that intergenerational relationship challenges affect the Church's contribution.

Finally, 56% of the respondents strongly agreed that the changing nature of youth needs affects the Church's contribution, 18% of the respondents agreed that the changing nature of youth needs affects the Church's contribution, 10% of the respondents were neutral on whether the changing nature of youth needs affects the Church's contribution, 7% of the respondents disagreed that the changing nature of youth needs affects the Church's contribution, while 9% of the respondents strongly disagreed that the changing nature of youth needs affects the Church's contribution. This implies that the majority of the respondents agreed that unemployment, drug and substance abuse, political manipulation, monitoring and evaluation challenges, financial constraints, intergenerational relationship challenges and the changing nature of youth needs affect the Church's contribution towards the promotion of social cohesion among the youth. The finding agrees with Yingi (2023), who identified political interference and youth marginalization as barriers to empowerment and peacebuilding. It also agrees with Zvaita and Kaye (2023), who found that unemployment, political manipulation and social inequality constrain youth peacebuilding.

The results were supported by interviewees who stated that: *"Unemployment affects youth participation because some young people are more concerned with looking for employment opportunities and may have limited time to participate in Church programmes"* (P01). *"Drug and substance abuse affects the participation of some young people because it can lead to withdrawal from Church activities and reduce their involvement in community programmes"* (P02). *"The changing nature of youth needs makes it difficult for some Church programmes to remain relevant to all young people, especially when their social and economic concerns are changing"* (P03). *"Financial constraints affect the implementation of some youth programmes because the Church may not always have adequate resources to support all planned activities"* (P04). *"Political manipulation can influence some young people and create divisions, especially when political interests affect relationships among youth in the*

community" (P05). *"Intergenerational differences can also affect youth participation because young people may have different expectations from older members of the Church concerning the way programmes should be conducted"* (P06)

4.4.5 Promotion of Social Cohesion among the Youth

The researcher sought to determine the level of agreement on the promotion of social cohesion among the youth in Embakasi East Constituency. The opinions of the respondents are shown in Table 4.10.

Table 4. 10: Promotion of Social Cohesion among the Youth

Responses	Strongly agree		Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
I trust other young people in my community.	190	54%	92	25%	23	7%	23	7%	23	7%
Church programmes have increased trust among youth.	153	47%	136	39%	17	5%	11	3%	34	10%
Young people willingly cooperate during Church activities.	162	46%	111	32%	29	8%	7	2%	42	12%
The Church welcomes all youth regardless of background.	146	42%	126	36%	35	10%	12	3%	32	9%
Youth from different communities participate together.	161	46%	114	32%	32	9%	11	3%	33	9%
Church programmes reduce discrimination among youth.	161	46%	108	30%	25	7%	22	6%	35	10%
I actively participate in community development activities.	122	35%	112	32%	56	18%	32	9%	29	8%
I participate in peacebuilding activities.	136	40%	122	35%	38	11%	21	6%	34	10%

Church programmes encourage responsible citizenship.	154	44%	114	32%	29	8%	15	4%	39	11%

From the findings in Table 4.10, 54% of the respondents strongly agreed that they trust other young people in their community, 25% of the respondents agreed that they trust other young people in their community, 7% of the respondents were neutral on whether they trust other young people in their community, 7% of the respondents disagreed that they trust other young people in their community, while 7% of the respondents strongly disagreed that they trust other young people in their community. Regarding whether Church programmes have increased trust among youth, 47% of the respondents strongly agreed that Church programmes have increased trust among youth, 39% of the respondents agreed that Church programmes have increased trust among youth, 5% of the respondents were neutral on whether Church programmes have increased trust among youth, 3% of the respondents disagreed that Church programmes have increased trust among youth, while 10% of the respondents strongly disagreed that Church programmes have increased trust among youth.

On whether young people willingly cooperate during Church activities, 46% of the respondents strongly agreed that young people willingly cooperate during Church activities, 32% of the respondents agreed that young people willingly cooperate during Church activities, 8% of the respondents were neutral on whether young people willingly cooperate during Church activities, 2% of the respondents disagreed that young people willingly cooperate during Church activities, while 12% of the respondents strongly disagreed that young people willingly cooperate during Church activities. Regarding whether the Church welcomes all youth regardless of background, 42% of the respondents strongly agreed that the Church welcomes all youth regardless of background, 36% of the respondents agreed that the Church welcomes all youth regardless of background, 10% of the respondents were neutral on whether the Church welcomes all youth regardless of background, 3% of the

respondents disagreed that the Church welcomes all youth regardless of background, while 9% of the respondents strongly disagreed that the Church welcomes all youth regardless of background.

Further, 46% of the respondents strongly agreed that youth from different communities participate together, 32% of the respondents agreed that youth from different communities participate together, 9% of the respondents were neutral on whether youth from different communities participate together, 3% of the respondents disagreed that youth from different communities participate together, while 9% of the respondents strongly disagreed that youth from different communities participate together. On whether Church programmes reduce discrimination among youth, 46% of the respondents strongly agreed that Church programmes reduce discrimination among youth, 30% of the respondents agreed that Church programmes reduce discrimination among youth, 7% of the respondents were neutral on whether Church programmes reduce discrimination among youth, 6% of the respondents disagreed that Church programmes reduce discrimination among youth, while 10% of the respondents strongly disagreed that Church programmes reduce discrimination among youth.

Regarding active participation in community development activities, 35% of the respondents strongly agreed that they actively participate in community development activities, 32% of the respondents agreed that they actively participate in community development activities, 18% of the respondents were neutral on whether they actively participate in community development activities, 9% of the respondents disagreed that they actively participate in community development activities, while 8% of the respondents strongly disagreed that they actively participate in community development activities. On whether respondents participate in peacebuilding activities, 40% of the respondents strongly agreed that they participate in peacebuilding activities, 35% of the respondents agreed that they participate in peacebuilding

activities, 11% of the respondents were neutral on whether they participate in peacebuilding activities, 6% of the respondents disagreed that they participate in peacebuilding activities, while 10% of the respondents strongly disagreed that they participate in peacebuilding activities.

Finally, 44% of the respondents strongly agreed that Church programmes encourage responsible citizenship, 32% of the respondents agreed that Church programmes encourage responsible citizenship, 8% of the respondents were neutral on whether Church programmes encourage responsible citizenship, 4% of the respondents disagreed that Church programmes encourage responsible citizenship, while 11% of the respondents strongly disagreed that Church programmes encourage responsible citizenship. This implies that the majority of the respondents agreed that the Catholic Church contributes to social cohesion among youth by promoting social trust, cooperation, inclusion, participation across different communities, reduced discrimination, community development, peacebuilding and responsible citizenship. his finding agrees with Kouassi (2022), who found that Catholic youth civic engagement promotes social mixing, solidarity and peace education. It also agrees with Akinyetun, Bakare and Adedini (2023), who found that youth civic engagement contributes to peace, inclusion and social cohesion. Similarly, Onguka et al. (2024) found that organized youth groups provide platforms for community peacebuilding and collective engagement in Nairobi.

The results were supported by interviewees who stated that: *"The Church provides guidance to young people on the importance of making independent decisions and avoiding being used by politicians during politically sensitive periods"* (P01). *"Young people are encouraged to participate in peacebuilding activities and to resolve disagreements through dialogue rather than violence"* (P02). *"The Church uses youth meetings and mentorship programmes to educate young people on responsible citizenship and the need to avoid political*

manipulation" (P03). *"Through Justice and Peace activities, young people are encouraged to promote peaceful coexistence, respect different views and reject violence during political periods"* (P04). *"The Church encourages young people to be careful about political information and to avoid activities that may expose them to exploitation or conflict"* (P05). *"Young people are encouraged to participate positively in community activities and to use peaceful means when addressing issues affecting them"* (P06).

4.5 Inferential Statistical Results

Inferential analysis, as described by Bryman and Bell (2015), is a technique used to assess the magnitude and direction of the relationship between variables by making inferences about the whole population. This study sought to examine the relationship between youth-focused programmes, youth empowerment programmes, youth community engagement programmes, and the promotion of social cohesion among the youth in Embakasi East Constituency, Nairobi County, Kenya. This was achieved through the process of inferential analysis. The analysis established the relationship between the independent variables and the dependent variable.

4.5. Relationship between Youth-Focused Programmes on the Promotion of Social Cohesion

An investigation was conducted to determine the relationship of youth-focused programmes on the promotion of social cohesion among the youth in Embakasi East Constituency, Nairobi County, Kenya. The table displays the results of the correlation analysis.

Table 4. 11: Relationship between Youth-Focused Programmes on the Promotion of Social Cohesion

		Social Cohesion
Youth-Focused Programmes	Pearson Correlation	.109**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.036
	N	331

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

The results indicate a positive relationship between youth-focused programmes and the promotion of social cohesion among the youth in Embakasi East Constituency, Nairobi County, Kenya. This is supported by a Pearson correlation coefficient of 0.109 and a significant p-value of 0.036. The p-value is below 0.05, indicating that the correlation is statistically significant. This positive correlation suggests that youth-focused programmes are associated with the promotion of social cohesion among the youth. The statistically significant p-value indicates that the observed relationship is unlikely to be due to chance, highlighting the contribution of youth-focused programmes in promoting social cohesion among young people.

4.5.2 Relationship between Youth Empowerment Programmes on the Promotion of Social Cohesion

The research assessed the relationship of youth empowerment programmes on the promotion of social cohesion among the youth in Embakasi East Constituency, Nairobi County, Kenya. The correlation between the two research variables was determined. The findings are shown in Table 4.12.

Table 4. 12: Relationship between Youth Empowerment Programmes and the Promotion of Social Cohesion in Embakasi East Constituency

		Social Cohesion
Youth Empowerment Programmes	Pearson Correlation	.381**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001
	N	331

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

The results revealed a positive and statistically significant relationship between youth empowerment programmes and the promotion of social cohesion among the youth in Embakasi East Constituency, Nairobi County, Kenya. This was shown by a correlation coefficient of 0.381 and a p-value of 0.001. The p-value is below the threshold of 0.05, indicating that the correlation is statistically significant. These findings indicate that youth

empowerment programmes are associated with the promotion of social cohesion among the youth. The significant relationship suggests that programmes that develop leadership skills, confidence, life skills, responsible decision-making and personal growth contribute to strengthening social cohesion among young people.

4.5.3 Relationship between Youth Community Engagement Programmes on the Promotion of Social Cohesion

The research examined the relationship of youth community engagement programmes on the promotion of social cohesion among the youth in Embakasi East Constituency, Nairobi County, Kenya. The correlation between the two research variables was determined. The results of the analysis are shown in Table 4.13.

Table 4. 13: Relationship between Youth Community Engagement Programmes and the Promotion of Social Cohesion

		Social Cohesion
Youth Community Engagement	Pearson Correlation	.099**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.035
	N	331

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

The results indicate a positive relationship between youth community engagement programmes and the promotion of social cohesion among the youth in Embakasi East Constituency, Nairobi County, Kenya. This is shown by a correlation coefficient of 0.099 and a significance value of 0.035. The p-value is below the threshold of 0.05, indicating that the correlation is statistically significant. This suggests that youth community engagement programmes are associated with the promotion of social cohesion among the youth. The positive relationship, although small, indicates that participation in community service, volunteerism, peaceful conflict resolution, environmental conservation and other community activities is related to social cohesion among young people.

4.5.4 Relationship between Challenges Affecting the Church's Contribution on the Promotion of Social Cohesion

The research examined the relationship of challenges affecting the Catholic Church's contribution on the promotion of social cohesion among the youth in Embakasi East Constituency, Nairobi County, Kenya. The correlation between the two research variables was determined. The results of the analysis are shown in Table 4.14.

Table 4. 14*:* Relationship between Challenges Affecting the Church's Contribution and the Promotion of Social Cohesion

		Social Cohesion
Challenges Affecting the Church's Contribution	Pearson Correlation	.487**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001
	N	331

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

The results indicate a positive relationship between challenges affecting the Catholic Church's contribution and the promotion of social cohesion among the youth in Embakasi East Constituency, Nairobi County, Kenya. This is shown by a correlation coefficient of 0.487 and a significance value of 0.001. The p-value is below the threshold of 0.05, indicating that the correlation is statistically significant. This suggests that challenges affecting the Church's contribution are significantly associated with the promotion of social cohesion among the youth. The findings indicate that challenges such as unemployment, drug and substance abuse, political manipulation, financial constraints, monitoring and evaluation challenges, intergenerational relationship challenges and changing youth needs are important factors in understanding the Church's contribution towards the promotion of social cohesion among young people..

4.5.5 Regression Analysis for Overall Model

Within the context of Embakasi East Constituency, Nairobi County, Kenya, the research investigated the ways in which youth-focused programmes, youth empowerment

programmes, youth community engagement programmes, and challenges affecting the Catholic Church's contribution jointly influence the promotion of social cohesion among the youth. The combined effect of youth-focused programmes, youth empowerment programmes, youth community engagement programmes, and challenges affecting the Catholic Church's contribution was determined through the use of multiple regression analysis and analysis of variance (ANOVA).

Table 4. 15*:* Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0.7563	0.57199	0.52761	0.56741

The R-Squared statistic in statistical analysis quantifies the proportion of the dependent variable's fluctuation that can be explained by the independent variables. The study yielded an R-squared value of 0.572, indicating that the four independent variables (youth-focused programmes, youth empowerment programmes, youth community engagement programmes, and challenges affecting the Catholic Church's contribution) account for 57.2% of the promotion of social cohesion among the youth in Embakasi East Constituency, Nairobi County, Kenya. The remaining 42.8% of the variation in the promotion of social cohesion is attributed to other factors not included in the model.

Table 4. 16*:* Analysis of Variance

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	20.203	4	5.051	20.897	0.001
	Residual	78.795	326	0.242		
	Total	98.330	330			

The analysis of variance was employed to determine whether the model is a suitable match for the data within the scope of this investigation. The model is effective in predicting the

influence of the four independent variables, namely youth-focused programmes, youth empowerment programmes, youth community engagement programmes, and challenges affecting the Catholic Church's contribution, on the promotion of social cohesion among the youth in Embakasi East Constituency, Nairobi County, Kenya, as evidenced by the p-value of 0.001, which is less than 0.05. Furthermore, the F-calculated value of 20.897 indicates that the model provides a statistically significant explanation of variation in the promotion of social cohesion. This suggests that the four independent variables jointly have a statistically significant relationship with the promotion of social cohesion among the youth in Embakasi East Constituency.

Table 4. 17*:* Regression Coefficients

		Unstandardized Coefficients		**Standardized Coefficients**	**t**	**Sig.**
		Beta	**Std. Error**	**Beta**		
1	(Constant)	2.922	.350		8.344	.001
	Focused programmes	.090	.059	.018	1.526	.006
	Empowerment programs	.192	.047	.051	4.084	.001
	Engagement programmes	.096	.053	.049	0.938	.008
	Challenges	.209	.054	.239	3.878	.001

a. Dependent Variable: Social Cohesion

Table 4.15 shows the overall significant test results for the hypothesized research model.

The interpretations of the findings indicated follow the following regression model.

$Y= \beta_0 + \beta_1X_1+ \beta_2X_2+ \beta_3X_3+ \beta_4X_4 + \varepsilon$

Therefore,

$Y= 2.922+ 0.090X_1+0.192X_2 +0.096X_3+ 0.209X_4$

According to the data, there is a positive relationship between youth-focused programmes and the promotion of social cohesion among the youth in Embakasi East Constituency, Nairobi County, Kenya. This is shown by a regression coefficient of 0.090. The findings further indicate a positive relationship between youth empowerment programmes and the

promotion of social cohesion among the youth. This is demonstrated by a regression coefficient of 0.192. Furthermore, the findings indicate a positive relationship between youth community engagement programmes and the promotion of social cohesion among the youth, as demonstrated by a regression coefficient of 0.096. Finally, the findings demonstrate a positive relationship between challenges affecting the Catholic Church's contribution and the promotion of social cohesion among the youth, as shown by a regression coefficient of 0.209.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on the summary of major findings of the study; both descriptive and inferential. This is followed by a presentation of the conclusions inferred from the findings. The relevant recommendations are then suggested. Finally, the chapter outlines the areas suggested for further research.

5.2 Summary

The major study findings are summarized in this section. It outlines the summary of the findings in line with the objectives of the study.

5.2.1 Youth-Focused Programmes and the Promotion of Social Cohesion

The study found that the majority of the respondents agreed that the parish regularly organizes youth programmes. The study further found that the majority of the respondents agreed that Catholic youth programmes address issues affecting young people. The study also found that the majority of the respondents agreed that the Church encourages active youth participation in parish activities. Further, the majority of the respondents agreed that youth programmes promote moral and spiritual development. The study also found that the majority of the respondents agreed that youth programmes provide mentorship opportunities. Finally, the majority of the respondents agreed that the programmes respond to current social challenges facing youth. The study found that youth-focused programmes had a positive and statistically significant relationship with the promotion of social cohesion among the youth in Embakasi East Constituency.

5.2.2 Youth Empowerment Programmes and the Promotion of Social Cohesion

The study found that the majority of the respondents agreed that Church programmes have improved their leadership skills. The study further found that the majority of the respondents agreed that they have gained confidence through Church activities. The study also found that

the majority of the respondents agreed that Church programmes encourage responsible decision-making. Further, the majority of the respondents agreed that the Church equips youth with life skills. The study also found that the majority of the respondents agreed that Church programmes encourage economic self-reliance. Finally, the majority of the respondents agreed that empowerment programmes have positively influenced their personal growth. The study found that youth empowerment programmes had a positive and statistically significant relationship with the promotion of social cohesion among the youth in Embakasi East Constituency

5.2.3 Youth Community Engagement Programmes and the Promotion of Social Cohesion

The study found that the majority of the respondents agreed that they regularly participate in community service through the Church. The study further found that the majority of the respondents agreed that Church activities encourage volunteerism. The study also found that the majority of the respondents agreed that community activities strengthen relationships among youth. Further, the majority of the respondents agreed that Church programmes encourage peaceful conflict resolution. The study also found that the majority of the respondents agreed that youth participate in environmental conservation activities. Finally, the majority of the respondents agreed that community engagement has increased their sense of social responsibility. The study found that youth community engagement programmes had a positive and statistically significant relationship with the promotion of social cohesion among the youth in Embakasi East Constituency.

5.2.4 Challenges Affecting the Catholic Church's Contribution towards the Promotion of Social Cohesion

The study found that the majority of the respondents agreed that unemployment limits youth participation in Church programmes. The study further found that the majority of the respondents agreed that drug and substance abuse affects youth participation. The study also

found that the majority of the respondents agreed that political manipulation influences some youths negatively. Further, the majority of the respondents agreed that monitoring and evaluation challenges affect the Church's contribution. The study also found that the majority of the respondents agreed that financial constraints limit implementation of youth programmes. The study further found that the majority of the respondents agreed that intergenerational relationship challenges affect the Church's contribution. Finally, the majority of the respondents agreed that the changing nature of youth needs affects the Church's contribution. The study found that challenges affecting the Catholic Church's contribution had a positive and statistically significant relationship with the promotion of social cohesion among the youth in Embakasi East Constituency.

5.2.5 Promotion of Social Cohesion among the Youth

The study found that the majority of the respondents agreed that they trust other young people in their community. The study further found that the majority of the respondents agreed that Church programmes have increased trust among youth. The study also found that the majority of the respondents agreed that young people willingly cooperate during Church activities. Further, the majority of the respondents agreed that the Church welcomes all youth regardless of background. The study also found that the majority of the respondents agreed that youth from different communities participate together. The study further found that the majority of the respondents agreed that Church programmes reduce discrimination among youth. The study also found that the majority of the respondents agreed that they actively participate in community development activities. Further, the majority of the respondents agreed that they participate in peacebuilding activities. Finally, the majority of the respondents agreed that Church programmes encourage responsible citizenship.

5.3 Conclusions

The study concludes that Catholic youth-focused programmes contribute to the promotion of social cohesion among the youth in Embakasi East Constituency. The programmes provide

opportunities for young people to participate actively in Church activities, address issues affecting young people and promote moral and spiritual development. The programmes also provide mentorship and create opportunities for young people to interact, develop relationships and strengthen their sense of belonging. The positive and statistically significant correlation further shows that youth-focused programmes are associated with the promotion of social cohesion among the youth.

The study concludes that Catholic youth empowerment programmes contribute to the promotion of social cohesion among the youth in Embakasi East Constituency. Through these programmes, young people develop leadership skills, confidence, life skills and responsible decision-making abilities. The programmes also encourage economic self-reliance and personal growth, while creating opportunities for youth to take responsibility in Church and community activities. The positive and statistically significant relationship established in the study indicates that youth empowerment programmes are associated with the promotion of social cohesion among young people.

The study concludes that Catholic youth community engagement programmes contribute to the promotion of social cohesion among the youth in Embakasi East Constituency. The programmes encourage young people to participate in community service, volunteerism, environmental conservation and other community activities. They also provide opportunities for young people to cooperate with others, resolve conflicts peacefully and develop social responsibility. The positive and statistically significant relationship established between youth community engagement programmes and social cohesion indicates that participation in these activities is associated with stronger social cohesion among the youth.

The study concludes that the Catholic Church's efforts to promote social cohesion among the youth are affected by several challenges. Unemployment, drug and substance abuse, political manipulation, financial constraints, monitoring and evaluation challenges, intergenerational relationship challenges and changing youth needs affect the participation and implementation of youth programmes. These challenges can limit the ability of the Church to reach young people effectively and to respond to their changing social and economic needs. The findings also established a statistically significant relationship between the identified challenges and the promotion of social cohesion, showing the importance of addressing these factors in strengthening Church programmes.

5.4 Recommendations

The study recommends that the Catholic Church should strengthen and expand youth-focused programmes at the parish level to increase opportunities for youth participation. The programmes should continue providing spiritual formation, mentorship and opportunities for young people to interact and develop relationships. The Church should also regularly review the programmes to ensure that they address the current social challenges and changing needs affecting the youth.

The study recommends that the Catholic Church should strengthen youth empowerment programmes by providing more opportunities for leadership development, life skills, mentorship and responsible decision-making. The Church should also support activities that promote economic self-reliance and personal growth among young people. Greater involvement of youth in planning and implementation of these programmes should also be encouraged to enhance their participation and leadership responsibilities.

The study recommends that the Catholic Church should strengthen community engagement programmes by increasing opportunities for youth participation in community service, volunteerism, environmental conservation and peacebuilding activities. The programmes

should bring together young people from different backgrounds to participate in common activities, thereby creating opportunities for cooperation, social trust, social responsibility and peaceful coexistence.

The study recommends that the Catholic Church should strengthen measures to address challenges affecting the implementation and effectiveness of youth programmes. The Church should improve resource mobilization and monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to support effective implementation of youth activities. Greater attention should also be given to unemployment, drug and substance abuse, political manipulation, intergenerational relationship challenges and changing youth needs that affect youth participation in Church programmes.

The study recommends that the Catholic Church should continue strengthening programmes that promote social trust, social inclusion, cooperation, peaceful coexistence and responsible citizenship among young people. The Church should provide more platforms where youth from different communities and backgrounds can interact and participate in joint activities. The Church should also encourage youth participation in peacebuilding and community development activities to strengthen their contribution to peaceful coexistence within the community.

5.5 Limitations of the Study

The study had several limitations that should be considered when interpreting its findings. First, the cross-sectional research design enabled the researcher to examine the relationships between Catholic Church youth-focused programmes and social cohesion at a particular point in time but did not permit the establishment of causal relationships. The study was also geographically limited to Embakasi East Constituency, Nairobi County; therefore, the findings reflect the specific social, economic and institutional context of the constituency and may not be directly generalised to other constituencies or counties. In addition, the study

relied partly on self-reported information from youth respondents and key informants, which may have been influenced by respondents' personal experiences, perceptions or social desirability.

The study also focused on youth who fell within the defined study population and had experience or knowledge of Catholic Church youth-focused programmes. Consequently, the findings may not fully represent young people who had no interaction with such programmes. Furthermore, the study examined selected dimensions of social cohesion, particularly social trust, social inclusion and community participation, and therefore did not cover all possible dimensions of social cohesion. These limitations were considered when interpreting the findings and developing the recommendations and suggestions for further research.

5.6 Suggestions for Further Research

The study recommends that a similar study be conducted to further explore the role of Catholic Church youth-focused programmes in promoting social cohesion among youth. Future research should assess the effectiveness of youth-focused programmes and examine the extent to which different programmes contribute to or hinder the promotion of social cohesion among young people. Such studies may provide additional evidence on the factors that enhance or constrain the successful implementation of Catholic Church youth-focused programmes in strengthening social cohesion among youth.

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APPENDIX I: QUESTIONNAIRE

YOUTH LEADERS AND CHURCH MEMBERS

Introduction

Dear Respondent,

I am a Master's student at the Catholic University of Eastern Africa conducting a study entitled:

"The Role of Catholic Church Programs in Promoting Social Cohesion in Embakasi East Sub-County, Nairobi County, Kenya."

You have been selected to participate in this study. The information you provide will be treated with strict confidentiality and will only be used for academic purposes. Kindly answer all questions honestly.

Please tick (✓) the appropriate response.

SECTION A: DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

Tick (✓) the appropriate response.

1. Gender

□ Male □ Female

2. Age

□ 18–24 □ 25–29 □ 30–34 □ 35 years and above

3. Ward

□ Upper Savanna □ Lower Savanna □ Embakasi

□ Utawala □ Mihang'o

4. Highest Education Level

□ Primary □ Secondary □ Certificate

□ Diploma □ Degree □ Postgraduate

5. Employment Status

□ Employed □ Self-employed □ Unemployed □ Student

6. Which Catholic youth programme(s) do you participate in?

□ YCA □ Small Christian Communities

□ Choir □ Justice and Peace

□ CMA/CWA Youth □ Environmental activities

□ Youth Leadership

□ Other (Specify)

7. How long have you participated?

□ Less than 1 year □ 1–3 years □ 4–6 years □ More than 6 years

SECTION B

Youth-Focused Programmes

Statement	SD	D	N	A	SA
The parish regularly organizes youth programmes.	□	□	□	□	□
Catholic youth programmes address issues affecting young people.	□	□	□	□	□
The Church encourages active youth participation in parish activities.	□	□	□	□	□
Youth programmes promote moral and spiritual development.	□	□	□	□	□
Youth programmes provide mentorship opportunities.	□	□	□	□	□
The programmes respond to current social challenges facing youth.	□	□	□	□	□

SECTION C

Youth Empowerment Programmes

Statement	SD	D	N	A	SA
Church programmes have improved my leadership skills.	□	□	□	□	□
I have gained confidence through Church activities.	□	□	□	□	□
Church programmes encourage responsible decision-making.	□	□	□	□	□

Statement	SD	D	N	A	SA
The Church equips youth with life skills.	□	□	□	□	□
Church programmes encourage economic self-reliance.	□	□	□	□	□
Empowerment programmes have positively influenced my personal growth.	□	□	□	□	□

SECTION D

Youth Community Engagement Programmes

Statement	SD	D	N	A	SA
I regularly participate in community service through the Church.	□	□	□	□	□
Church activities encourage volunteerism.	□	□	□	□	□
Community activities strengthen relationships among youth.	□	□	□	□	□
Church programmes encourage peaceful conflict resolution.	□	□	□	□	□
Youth participate in environmental conservation activities.	□	□	□	□	□
Community engagement has increased my sense of social responsibility.	□	□	□	□	□

SECTION E

Challenges Affecting the Church's Contribution

Statement	SD	D	N	A	SA
Unemployment limits youth participation in Church programmes.	□	□	□	□	□
Drug and substance abuse affects youth participation.	□	□	□	□	□
Political manipulation influences some youths negatively.	□	□	□	□	□
Monitoring and evaluation challenges	□	□	□	□	□
Financial constraints limit implementation of youth programmes.	□	□	□	□	□
Intergenerational Relationship challenges	□	□	□	□	□
Changing Nature of Youth needs	□	□	□	□	□

SECTION F

Social Cohesion

A. Social Trust

Statement	SD	D	N	A	SA
I trust other young people in my community.	□	□	□	□	□
Church programmes have increased trust among youth.	□	□	□	□	□
Young people willingly cooperate during Church activities.	□	□	□	□	□

B. Social Inclusion

Statement	SD	D	N	A	SA
The Church welcomes all youth regardless of background.	□	□	□	□	□
Youth from different communities participate together.	□	□	□	□	□
Church programmes reduce discrimination among youth.	□	□	□	□	□

C. Community Participation

Statement	SD	D	N	A	SA
I actively participate in community development activities.	□	□	□	□	□
I participate in peacebuilding activities.	□	□	□	□	□
Church programmes encourage responsible citizenship.	□	□	□	□	□

APPENDIX I1: KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEW GUIDE

Interview Questions

1. In what ways have the Church's youth empowerment programs influenced leadership, life skills, and responsible citizenship among young people?
2. How do community engagement activities organized by the Church promote social trust, social inclusion, and community participation?
3. In your experience, what evidence demonstrates that these programs have strengthened social cohesion among the youth?
4. What challenges affect the implementation and effectiveness of Catholic youth programs?
5. To what extent do unemployment, drug and substance abuse, social media, and political manipulation affect young people's participation in Church programs?
6. What strategies has the Church adopted to help young people resist political manipulation, violence, and other forms of exploitation, especially during politically sensitive periods?
7. What additional measures would you recommend to strengthen the Catholic Church's contribution to promoting social cohesion among the youth in Embakasi East Constituency?

APPENDIX III: AUTHORIZATION LETTER

THE CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF EASTERN AFRICA

Centre for Social Justice and Ethics

C.S.J.E

15th September 2026

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

Dear Sir/Madam

RE: AUTHORIZATION FOR DATA COLLECTION – MERCY OCHIENG (REG. NO. 1065995)

Greetings.

This letter serves to introduce **Mercy Ochieng**, a Master's Degree student at the **Centre for Social Justice and Ethics**, currently pursuing Master of Arts in Justice, Peace and Cohesion.

As part of the requirements for the award of the Master's degree, she is undertaking a research study entitled:

"The Catholic Church and Promotion of Social Cohesion among the Youth in Embakasi East Constituency, Nairobi County, Kenya."

We kindly request that you accord her the necessary assistance and cooperation during the period of data collection. Any support extended toward facilitating this research exercise will be highly appreciated.

Thank you for your cooperation and support.

Yours faithfully,

for **REV. DR. PETER MBARO**
Director
Centre for Social Justice and Ethics

THE CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF EASTERN AFRICA HOD JUSTICE AND PEACE 15 SEP 2026 CENTRE FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE AND ETHICS P.O. Box 62157-00200, NAIROBI

THE CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF EASTERN AFRICA (CUEA) P.O. BOX 62157 00200 Nairobi – KENYA
Tel: 020-2525811-5, 8890023-4, Fax: 8891084, Email: csje@cuea.edu, Website: www.cuea.edu
Founded in 1984 by AMECEA (Association of the Member Episcopal Conference in Eastern Africa)

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APPENDIX IV: RESEARCH PERMIT

REPUBLIC OF KENYA

NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY & INNOVATION

Ref No: **541240**

Date of Issue: **22/September/2026**

RESEARCH LICENSE



This is to Certify that Ms.. MERCY ADHIAMBO OCHIENG of Catholic University of Eastern Africa, has been licensed to conduct research as per the provision of the Science, Technology and Innovation Act, 2013 (Rev.2014) in Nairobi on the topic: The Catholic Church and Promotion of Social Cohesion among the Youth in Embakasi East Constituency, Nairobi County, Kenya for the period ending : 22/September/2027.

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APPENDIX V: TURNITIN ORIGINALITY REPORT

THE CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF EASTERN AFRICA
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TURNITIN ORIGINALITY REPORT

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I HEREBY CONFIRM THAT **MERCY ADHIAMBO OCHIENG** REG NO: **1065995**, SUBMITTED A CHECK OF ANTIPLAGIARISM ON EVALUATION OF **THE CATHOLIC CHURCH AND PROMOTION OF SOCIAL COHESION AMONG THE YOUTH IN EMBAKASI EAST SUBCOUNTY, NAIROBI COUNTY, KENYA. A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE CENTRE FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE AND ETHICS IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENT FOR THE AWARD OF MASTERS OF ARTS IN JUSTICE PEACE AND COHESION AT THE CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF EASTERN AFRICA, KENYA.**

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