

Parental Role Modeling and Adolescent Faith Development in Kasarani Constituency, Nairobi, Kenya

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the role of parental involvement in adolescent faith development within Kasarani Constituency, Nairobi County. Drawing on earlier findings and new field interviews, the research highlights how parents serve as primary agents of spiritual socialization, ethical modeling, and faith encouragement. Across 297 respondents, 88% traced their motivation to attend church or mosque services—and their reverence for God—to faith education received at home. Building on these insights, this article explores how parental practices extend beyond formal instruction to include relational warmth, ethical conduct, and structured routines that nurture spiritual discipline and family unity. Thematic analysis revealed five core dimensions of parental influence: spiritual instruction, role modeling, foundational socialization, ongoing support, and the challenges posed by economic pressures. Respondents consistently emphasized that faith formation is cultivated through shared worship, prayer, dialogue, and everyday acts of kindness. Even amid economic hardship, adolescents valued parental presence, emotional availability, and encouragement as decisive factors in sustaining their spiritual engagement. Scriptural references, including Proverbs 22:6 (English Standard Version) and Ephesians 6:4 (New International Version), reinforce the theological imperative of parental guidance. The findings affirm that faith formation begins at home and is most powerfully nurtured through intentional, relational engagement. To strengthen youth participation, interventions must empower parents as spiritual mentors, support family worship routines, and foster environments where adolescents feel seen, heard, and spiritually secure. This study underscores the enduring influence of parental guidance in shaping spiritually grounded and socially responsible youth.

Keywords: parental involvement, adolescent faith formation, spiritual instruction, role modeling, faith engagement, Kasarani Constituency.

INTRODUCTION

Adolescent faith formation critically shapes identity, moral reasoning, and emotional wellbeing. As young people navigate developmental transitions, personal faith provides a framework for resilience, meaning-making, and ethical decision-making. Within this formative period, the family—particularly parents—serves as the primary agent of spiritual socialization.

Through explicit instructions and lived example, parents transmit values, beliefs, and religious practices that influence adolescent faith engagement (Nickerson, 2024). Findings from Syuma (2025) reinforce this perspective: 71% of respondents affirmed parental involvement as central to their spiritual development. Consistent practices such as prayer, scripture reading, and spiritual conversations were shown to deepen spiritual connections and reinforce early religious socialization. However, concerns emerged regarding emotional distance

and lack of guidance at home. These concerns echo Ahen, Cenderato, & Halawa (2021), who emphasize the importance of active parental nurturing to foster lasting engagement.

Building on this evidence, the present article examines parents as a key intervention point in strengthening adolescent participation in faith-based activities. Goodman & Dyer (2020) highlight how shared practices—such as prayer, scripture reading, and spiritual conversations—play a critical role in shaping adolescent commitment to faith. This study therefore positions parents as pivotal actors in adolescent spiritual development, addressing gaps in existing literature on parental mentorship.

The Place of the Child in the Bible

Biblical Foundations of the Child's Place

Before examining parental roles, the child must first be understood through the lens of faith, as Scripture consistently affirms their dignity and the responsibility entrusted to parents. Scripture consistently affirms parental responsibility toward children. Proverbs 22:6 (English Standard Version) instructs parents to train up a child, underscoring their moral and spiritual duty to guide lasting values. Similarly, Deuteronomy 6:7 (English Standard Version) implores parents to teach the statutes of the Lord diligently, situating the family as the foundational space for spiritual and social formation.

Biblical texts highlight reverence, truth, discipline, and compassion as essential values for children's faith formation. Proverbs 3:9–10 calls believers to honor the Lord with their wealth, modeling reverence for children. Proverbs 13:24 and 29:17 affirm discipline as an act of love. Children are further encouraged to embrace hard work (Proverbs 10:4–5) and compassion toward the poor (Proverbs 14:31), reminding parents that instilling values of honesty, accountability, and generosity strengthens both spiritual and social bonds.

Parents therefore bear responsibility for introducing children to the physical, religious, social, economic, and spiritual life of the community. Love, authority, and discipline provide the atmosphere for nurturing psychosocial and spiritual development (Mahoney et al., 2001). Jesus himself received care, love, and protection from Joseph and Mary, modeling parental responsibility. Paul echoes this in Ephesians 6:4 (New International Version), urging parents not to provoke resentment but to raise children with correction and advice inspired by the Lord. Collectively, these teachings underscore the responsibility of parents to nurture children's moral, spiritual, and social development. This biblical foundation naturally extends into Catholic doctrine, which further articulates parental responsibility in nurturing children's faith.

Catholic Doctrine on Parental Responsibility

Catholic teaching reinforces this biblical emphasis by framing parenthood as a sacred vocation. In *Familiaris Consortio*, Pope John Paul II (1981) emphasizes that parents are the first and most important educators of their children, entrusted with both care and spiritual formation. The rite of marriage charges couples to accept children lovingly and raise them according to the law of Christ and the Church. In *Catechesi Tradendae* (1979), John Paul II further stresses that parents provide the foundation for a spiritual and religious life, cultivating a family atmosphere animated by love and reverence. This doctrinal perspective situates parental responsibility not only as a social duty but as participation in God's paternal and maternal teaching. Ultimately, these teachings affirm that Catholic doctrine views parental responsibility not merely as guidance, but as a sacred participation in God's own nurturing of His children.

Contemporary Research on Faith Development

Modern scholarship echoes these biblical and doctrinal insights. Van Niekerk and Breed (2018) describe faith development as a deliberate, ongoing process by which parents guide children into a deeper relationship with God, resulting in a transformed lifestyle. Iyamuremye, Kubwimana, Vyizigiro, Buchuma, Ndayishimiye, Bikorimana, Bizimana, Sibomana, Havyarimana, Iyakaremye, and Ntamirukiro (2024) expand this view, emphasizing that nurturing faith is a collective responsibility shared by parents, peers, and the wider faith community.

Further supporting the role of parents in their children's faith development, Grusec (2002) affirms that parents are the primary socializing agents through whom children acquire values. An agent of socialization is a person or group that helps an individual learn the norms, social skills, beliefs, values, and behaviours of a particular society or culture in order to function effectively in society or a particular group (Nickerson, 2024). In the context of faith, these values include prayer, participation in religious activities, engagement with sacred texts such as the Bible or Quran, fasting, personal devotion, self-sacrifice, and accountability for one's actions. This therefore, situates parental responsibility within the transmission of spiritual values, distinct from general social norms.

Nickerson (2024) further highlights that, the family is the first and most influential agent of socialization, given their earliest and most sustained contact with the child. According to Nickerson, it is in the family where children learn norms, values, beliefs, and attitudes both through observed behaviours and explicit instruction. Pope John Paul II (1979), in *Catechesi Tradendae*, echoes this view, affirming that parents are the first educators of their children, laying the foundation for spiritual and religious life.

Extending this line of thought, Roehlkepartain (2016) emphasizes faith modeling, where parents serve as living examples of devotion, reinforcing instruction through lived practice. While faith modeling and parental instruction represent distinct approaches—one grounded in example and the other in deliberate teaching—they often overlap and complement each other in daily parenting. By offering children a variety of positive faith experiences both at home and within the broader community, parents establish the critical foundation for their children's spiritual journey. Roehlkepartain further underscores that adults—especially parents—play a decisive role in transmitting faith to children and adolescents, shaping not only their religious identity but also their moral and social development.

In continuity with this view, biblical teaching, Catholic doctrine, and contemporary research converge on a central theme: *parents are entrusted with nurturing children's faith through love, discipline, instruction, and modeling*. Within this integrated framework, faith is understood as active participation in God's work of grace, cultivated in the home and extended into the wider faith community. This foundation provides a robust basis for examining how parents in Kasarani Constituency intentionally foster adolescent participation in faith-based activities.

Guiding Theories

The current study was guided by two key theories: Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological Theory and Fowler and Dell Theory of Faith Development. Bronfenbrenner's theory emphasizes the interconnectedness of systems such as family, school, and religious institutions, highlighting their collective impact on a child's faith development, beliefs, and values. The theory postulates that daily interactions—such as prayer and modeled faith practices—shape children's spirituality, while participation in religious services fosters community belonging. This framework is particularly relevant to the current article, as it illustrates how parents can model religious behaviours and teach faith through daily practices and rituals.

Fowler's Stages of Faith Development, further highlight the parental role in early faith formation. In infancy, parents are expected to establish a sense of trust and security through consistent, loving care, which becomes the foundation for future faith development of the child. Roehlkepartain (2016) reinforces this view by noting that, when children feel valued and safe through consistent parental bonding, a profound foundation is laid which invariably becomes the cornerstone of their faith. Roehlkepartain further postulates that the more positive the attachment to parents, the stronger the likelihood of a positive attachment to faith and religion. During the preoperational stage (ages 3–7), when children are highly imaginative and drawn to symbols, parents can introduce basic religious concepts through stories and imagery.

In the formal operational stage (12 years and above), children begin to develop logical reasoning. According to Fowler and Dell (2006), parents are encouraged to provide clear and concrete explanations of religious stories and teachings since children at this stage often interpret concepts literally. Additionally, parents are expected to encourage dialogue and be good role models, and demonstrate their own faith through observable actions and attitude children can observe and emulate. Children internalize much of their faith by observing parental behaviour and values, making parental influence decisive across developmental stages (Fowler & Dell, 2006).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This article explores the interventions available to parents for enhancing participation in faith-based activities among secondary school students in Kasarani Constituency, Nairobi County, Kenya.

The study adopted a qualitative research design, which was particularly appropriate because qualitative methods allow for the exploration of lived experiences, perspectives, and suggestions in depth, providing insights that a quantitative design may not capture. By focusing on narratives and meanings, the study highlighted how parental roles are perceived and enacted in promoting faith engagement among adolescents.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with secondary school students in Kasarani Constituency, selected using purposive sampling to ensure diverse representation, in order to capture their perspectives on parental interventions in faith-based activities. This methodological choice aligns with Creswell's framework, which emphasizes that qualitative research is best suited for exploring central phenomena through participants' perspectives and lived experiences (Creswell, 2014).

Sampling and Participants

A Purposive sampling strategy was employed to identify participants capable of providing rich and relevant insights into the study's objectives. Seventeen secondary school students from Kasarani Constituency were purposively selected from the author's earlier study of 297 respondents for further analysis. Extreme Case Sampling was used to select the seventeen students who had demonstrated markedly high or low scores in personal faith engagement and subjective wellbeing, thereby ensuring diverse perspectives.

However, for the purposes of this article—specifically in responding to questions about parental involvement in faith formation—participants were not required to exhibit predefined levels of faith engagement. The focus was on their capacity to reflect meaningfully on parental influence, regardless of their individual faith profiles. Participants were drawn from Form One to Form Four, thereby representing different stages of secondary schooling. This purposive selection ensured that they could meaningfully reflect on parental influence across diverse faith profiles.

Data Collection

Data were collected through Semi-structured Interviews guided by open-ended questions to elicit rich, reflective responses on how parents can enhance youth participation in faith-based activities. The interview guide included prompts on spiritual mentorship, worship practices at home, and parental modeling of faith.

To explore worship experiences and the role of the home as a nurturing space for faith, the interviews were guided by two central questions:

1. *Do you think parents could do something to enhance worship experiences for young people?*
2. *Some teachings suggest that the church begins at home—a concept often emphasized in Christian and Islamic traditions. If this is the case, what should parents do to ensure their home nurtures faith and functions as a 'small church' for their children?*

Interviews were conducted in a confidential setting, each lasting approximately 35–50 minutes, and scheduled over a two-week period to accommodate participants' availability. Ethical considerations were observed throughout, with informed consent obtained from all participants, confidentiality maintained, and sessions recorded and transcribed verbatim for thematic analysis.

Data Analysis

The transcribed interviews were analyzed using Content Analysis, a qualitative method suitable for identifying recurring themes, categories, and patterns within textual data (Ayton, 2023). This process involved open coding of participant responses, grouping similar ideas, and interpreting the data to identify parental interventions that

support adolescent faith engagement. An iterative coding technique was applied to refine emerging categories and ensure analytical depth. This involved repeated engagement with the data, and progressive development of themes through comparison and reinterpretation.

To enhance trustworthiness, coding decisions were reviewed and refined for consistency. Through this Iterative analysis, distinct themes emerged regarding the role of parents in enhancing faith engagement among adolescents in Kasarani Constituency. The key themes identified through this analysis are presented in the following section on findings, where they are discussed in detail.

Theme A: Parental Instructions

Parental instructions encompass the intentional spiritual guidance and religious education that parents offer their children. In Kasarani Constituency, this role is deeply embedded in daily life, extending beyond formal teaching to include devotional routines, moral direction, and emotional support.

Parents are regarded not only as conveyors of religious knowledge but also as foundational figures in shaping their children's spiritual identity and ethical behaviour. Their influence is expressed through consistent practices such as prayer, scripture reading, and participation in religious services, and through the values they model in everyday interactions.

Findings

Syuma's (2025) study, based on 297 respondents, found that 88% traced their motivation to attend church or mosque services—and their reverence for God—to faith education received at home. Building on these insights, this article highlights how faith education extends beyond formal instruction to include structured and informal practices that nurture spiritual discipline and family unity, underscoring the foundational role of parents in shaping their children's faith engagement.

Devotional routines emerged as central to respondents' upbringing. Respondent 003 shared, *"My mother always woke us up early for morning prayers. She said starting the day with God brings peace to the home."* Similarly, Respondent 021 recalled, *"Every evening, my father would read the Bible with us. It wasn't just about the words—it was about learning how to live."* These moments were not only instructional but also emotionally grounding. Respondent 025 noted: *"We had a prayer hour every Sunday evening. It brought us together as a family and helped me understand the importance of faith."* For Respondent 036, faith was woven into daily life: *"My parents taught me to pray before meals and before sleep"*. Such seemingly minor yet consistent practices were embedded in daily habits and relational interactions, becoming part of the respondents' spiritual identity.

In addition to spiritual instructions, **emotional support** and **parental presence** were emphasized. Despite economic pressures, adolescents consistently expressed a longing for meaningful conversations about faith and emotional connection with their parents, highlighting that even brief but intentional dialogues had a lasting impact.

For instance, one respondent noted that their father's evening Bible readings were not just about the words, but about learning how to live.

Discussion

These findings affirm theological perspectives that position parents as the prime educators of faith. Pope John Paul II (1981) described the family as the *"domestic church,"* where belief is nurtured through both instruction and example. Faith education, according to him, involves guiding children toward full human and Christian maturity, including the development of conscience and a personal relationship with God. This view is echoed by Ahen et al. (2021), who advocate for holistic parental education that includes spiritual, physical, social, and psychological development.

Building on this holistic vision, scholars further reinforce the practical dimension of parental involvement, highlighting the importance of daily accompaniment in faith practices and the shaping of moral character. Hidayatulloh (2022) reinforces the importance of daily parental accompaniment in faith practices, while Grusec

(2002) highlights the role of parents in character formation through moral instruction. The emphasis on parental presence and emotional availability aligns with Mahoney et al. (2001), who argue that parental religiosity—even under time constraints—can positively influence adolescent wellbeing. The implication is that interventions should prioritize not merely increasing the quantity of parental involvement, but enhancing the quality of spiritual engagement within families. Brief yet intentional faith-based dialogues can foster deeper emotional bonds and spiritual growth among adolescents.

In Kasarani, parental instruction is not confined to formal teaching—it is expressed through presence, practice, and values. The convergence of findings and literature affirm the transformative power of everyday parental engagement in nurturing adolescent faith, especially in contexts where institutional religious support may be limited.

While Theme A emphasizes intentional instruction, Theme B highlights the role of lived example in reinforcing these values in everyday life, a point further elaborated below.

Theme B: Parental Faith Role Modeling

Parental faith role modeling consistently demonstrated religious values and practices, shaping children's spiritual and moral development. In Kasarani Constituency, adolescents reported that observing their parents' worship habits, acts of service, ethical behaviour, and daily routines significantly shaped their own spiritual identity and moral behaviour. In this regard, parents were portrayed not merely as providers, but as intergenerational anchors of faith whose daily actions shaped their children's understanding of religious commitment and ethical conduct. This lived example reflects Hidayatulloh's (2022) emphasis that parents must embody the moral and spiritual principles they wish to instill, demonstrating faith through consistent and observable practices

Findings

Respondents consistently described how their parents' behaviour—such as attending worship services, praying regularly, helping others, and demonstrating kindness and discipline—encouraged them to embrace religious practices and values. For example, Respondent 010 shared, *“My father never missed Sunday service, and he always took us with him. Watching him worship made me want to know God more.”* Respondent 011 shared, *“My father didn't speak much about religion, but his everyday choices reflected deep conviction. Watching him quietly pray and extend generosity to others stirred something in me—I wanted to live the way he did.”* This sentiment was echoed by Respondent 021 noting, *“It was through my mother's gentle spirit and unwavering patience that I came to understand the nature of God—far more than any formal preaching.”*

Beyond individual accounts, several respondents (009, 010, 012, 022, 023, and 036) agreed that parental encouragement builds children's confidence in attending religious services and instills moral values. These collective testimonies highlight the broader impact of **Parental Role Modeling** in shaping adolescents' spiritual identity and moral behaviour.

Evening routines such as reading scripture, singing hymns, and praying together were described as powerful tools for fostering spiritual discipline and family harmony. Respondent 038 remarked, *“Every evening, we would read a verse and sing a hymn together. It made our home feel peaceful and connected.”*

Respondent 021 added, *“My parents made sure we prayed before and after meals and before bed and after waking up. It became part of our life, not just a rule.”* Multiple respondents echoed this practice of prayer before meals, noting that it reminded them daily that God was part of family life. These practices reinforced the belief that faith was woven into daily life rather than confined to formal worship. This integration of faith into everyday routines was closely tied to virtues such as humility, which respondents described as being ‘humble before God’ and regarded as essential for spiritual growth.

Respondents affirmed that adolescents raised by religious parents were more eager to attend services and deepen their faith, inspired by the values they witnessed at home. Supporting this, the current author's earlier study in Kasarani found that 53% of respondents identified self-control, humility, and kindness as values inculcated through parental guidance.

Alongside worship attendance, respondents highlighted service to others as a vital dimension of faith modeling. Respondents viewed activities like feeding the hungry, visiting the sick, and participating in community outreach as powerful expressions of religious commitment. These acts were not only charitable but also examples of faith modeling—where parents demonstrated spiritual values through lived action. In this connection, Respondent 018 shared, *“My parents always took us to visit the sick in our neighborhood. They said it was part of loving others like Jesus did.”* Respondent 023 reflected, *“Helping others was never optional in our home—it was a living expression of our faith.”* Respondent 019 shared, *“My parents taught me that being a Christian means showing love—even when it is hard.”* Similarly, Respondent 025 noted, *“My mother taught me to be kind to others because that is what God wants. She did not just say it—she lived it.”* These testimonies illustrate how parental behaviour served as a model for faith in action, shaping children’s understanding of compassion, humility, and service.

The respondents emphasized that faith development continued beyond childhood. Ongoing mentorship was seen as vital for navigating spiritual challenges during adolescence and young adulthood. To reinforce children’s faith, respondents highlighted the importance of shared worship and family fellowship. Several likened the family to a “small church,” suggesting that consistent worship at home fosters unity and spiritual anchoring. As Respondent 003 explained; *“Collective worship should promote both spiritual growth and family cohesion.”*

Others (021, 025, and 036) advocated for regular family worship through songs, prayers, and Bible reading, practices habitually described as models of faith that cultivate discipline and reinforce the belief that “the church begins at home.”

Discussion

The findings affirm that parental faith role modeling is a powerful mechanism for spiritual and moral development. Adolescents in Kasarani consistently described how their parents’ actions—more than their words—shaped their understanding of faith. This supports Roehlkepartain’s (2016) assertion that parents’ habits and behaviours influence their children’s lifelong relationship with spirituality.

Syuma’s (2025) fieldwork in Kasarani further demonstrates that modeling faith is not limited to religious rituals but also includes ethical conduct and relational integrity. This convergence of theory and field evidence affirms that parents shape not only children’s spirituality but also their moral and relational development. As Hidayatulloh (2022) emphasizes, parents should embody the moral and spiritual principles they wish to instill, guiding children in developing good character, respectful relationships, and attitudes of fairness and patience.

Consistent with this view, respondents in Kasarani reported observing these traits in their parents’ daily lives, reinforcing the practical impact of parental modeling. Scriptural references further affirm the importance of nurturing both faith and character within family relationships. For instance, 1Timothy 5:8 (NIV) underscores the responsibility of parents to provide for their families as an expression of faith, while Colossians 3:21 (NIV) cautions fathers against embittering their children. Similarly, the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25–37) and the definition of love in 1 Corinthians 13 emphasize empathy, kindness, humility, and forgiveness—values adolescents reported learning through parental example.

Building on this foundation, parental mentorship extends the concept of modeling by showing how parents’ lived example shapes children’s values and choices. Van Niekerk et al. (2018) found that 95% of adolescents attributed their Christian values to parental modeling, and 91% said their life choices were shaped by these examples. In Kasarani, respondents similarly described how continued spiritual conversations and emotional support helped them navigate complex questions of faith into young adulthood.

Supporting these theological foundations, Hartkamp (2021) underscores the importance of daily practices such as Bible reading, prayer, worship attendance, and acts of charity as tangible expressions of faith. Roehlkepartain (2016) adds that serving others plays a pivotal role in faith formation, particularly when guided by nurturing adults. He further affirms that parental involvement through worship, dialogue, and mentorship is essential for adolescent faith, noting that children who are invited to lead worship develop a deeper connection to their faith community. These perspectives align with Syuma (2025), who found that 54% of respondents affirmed that parents should consistently encourage prayer, scripture engagement, and Bible study.

This continuity underscores the transformative power of parental presence in shaping resilience and lifelong faith engagement. By reinforcing spiritual discipline and unity, families affirmed the home as a sacred space where faith is actively cultivated. Together, these insights highlight that parental faith role modeling is not merely formative but decisive in shaping adolescent resilience, moral integrity, and lifelong engagement with faith communities. Parents in Kasarani function as spiritual mentors whose influence extends across generations—cultivating spiritually grounded and socially responsible youth.

Theme C: Parental Foundations and Spiritual Development

Parental Foundations and Spiritual Development explores how spiritual socialization and early religious exposure shape adolescent faith engagement in Kasarani Constituency. This theme highlights the foundational role parents play in introducing religious practices, modeling ethical values, and cultivating spiritual identity from early childhood through adolescence. This process extends beyond doctrine, encompassing beliefs, behaviours, and relational habits that reflect moral standards. As Hidayatulloh (2022) notes, parents should aspire to raise children who demonstrate piety, responsibility, and moral integrity—positioning them as active contributors to both their faith communities and society at large.

Findings

Across interviews, respondents consistently highlighted that *parents serve as the primary architects of their children's religious and moral development*. This process unfolds through daily routines, intentional guidance, and lived example—making parents the central agents in shaping spiritual identity. In this connection Respondent 036 reflected, *“My parents are Muslims, and because of the way I was brought up by them, I am still a Muslim today,”* illustrating how early exposure to religious practices within the family creates enduring spiritual commitments.

Similarly, Respondent 014 shared, *“My parents taught me to pray before I could even read. They said praying was the first step to knowing God,”* emphasizing how prayer was prioritized as the first step to knowing God and cultivating spiritual habits from an early age.

Participation in communal worship also emerged as a key aspect of parental spiritual socialization. Respondent 027 recalled, *“We went to church together every Sunday with my parents. It wasn’t just a routine—it was a way of life,”* demonstrating how consistent parental involvement reinforces faith as a lived experience. Respondent 011 observed, *“Definitely, knowledge about faith begins at home,”* while Respondent 022 added, *“Parents are the first teachers of faith. What they show us is what we carry.”* These reflections suggest that spiritual identity is shaped not only through instruction but also through consistent exposure to religious environments and practices at an early age.

Alongside rituals, respondents described how parents model ethical behaviour and social responsibility as expressions of faith. Respondent 017 noted, *“My father always reminded us to greet people politely and help those in need. He said that this is how faith shows in everyday life.”* Respondent 030 echoed this sentiment, recalling, *“My mother used to say, “Faith without kindness is empty. She made sure we treated others with respect”*. Notably, respondents emphasized that parental modeling conveyed faith through everyday actions, demonstrating how values were lived out in practice. These narratives reveal that parental spiritual socialization is not confined to doctrine—it encompasses relational warmth, moral guidance, and consistent modeling of faith in action. Through this holistic approach, adolescents internalize spirituality as both belief and behaviour, deeply rooted in the family context.

Discussion

The findings affirm that parental spiritual socialization—beginning with early religious exposure—is a multidimensional process that integrates religious instruction with ethical modeling and relational support. In Kasarani, parents serve as the first point of contact for faith, introducing children to prayer, scripture, worship attendance, and moral values. Importantly, the data reveals that adolescents internalize faith through both daily routines and informal interactions. The consistency of parental involvement—whether through attending worship together or modeling kindness—creates a spiritual rhythm that shapes identity over time. This aligns with

Hardy, White, Zhang, and Ruchty (2011), who describe spiritual socialization as a blend of mentoring, modeling, and intentional engagement.

Adolescents in this study did not merely learn faith through formal teachings; they learned it by observing how their parents lived out their beliefs. Respondent 010 captured this dynamic succinctly: *“My father never preached to us—he lived the faith.”* Such reflections reinforce the importance of authenticity and consistency in parental behaviour. As Stonehouse (1998) asserts, *“The spiritual formation of children should begin with the spiritual formation of their parents.”* When parents manifest their faith in everyday interactions, they create a powerful template for their children to follow. Conversely, if parents are uncertain in their own spiritual journey, it becomes difficult to nurture faith in their children.

This modeling extends beyond religious instruction to encompass social and moral education. Moreover, respondents suggested that faith-based programs should build on this foundation by promoting character formation through value-driven activities such as, service learning, peer mentorship, and intergenerational dialogue. These initiatives reinforce the idea that spirituality is not confined to religious spaces but expressed through ethical living and compassionate relationships.

As adolescents navigate increasingly complex social environments, they benefit from spiritual frameworks that connect moral choices to faith principles (Iyamuremye et al., 2024). These authors further affirmed that, parenting involves shaping behaviour, attitudes, and relationships—skills essential for thriving in both religious and secular contexts. Collectively, these findings suggest that parental foundations are not merely formative but decisive in shaping adolescent resilience and lifelong faith engagement.

In summary, this study highlights the transformative power of parental spiritual socialization and early religious exposure. By modeling faith through everyday actions and nurturing moral awareness, parents in Kasarani help cultivate spiritually grounded and socially responsible youth. Their influence extends beyond instruction, shaping the very fabric of adolescent identity and ethical engagement.

Theme D: Parental Support and Encouragement

Drawing from the framework of spiritual socialization, theme D explores how ongoing Parental Support and Encouragement sustain adolescent faith engagement through emotional connection and practical involvement. In addition to modeling faith, parents in Kasarani were described as active encouragers—providing emotional affirmation, spiritual guidance, and practical support that helped young people navigate their faith journeys.

This aligns with findings by Van Niekerk et al. (2018), who argue that parental involvement in faith development fosters a sense of belonging and spiritual confidence among adolescents.

Findings

Respondents described diverse forms of parental support that reinforced their religious identity. Respondent 025 shared, *“Even now that I’m older; my parents still talk to me about faith. It is not just for children—it is a lifelong journey.”* This statement reflects the enduring nature of parental encouragement, extending beyond childhood into young adulthood. Respondent 018 reinforced the emotional dimension of support: *“Whenever I feel confused about life or faith, my mother listens and prays with me. This encounter makes me feel like I’m not alone.”* Similarly, Respondent 032 noted, *“My father always reminds me that God is with me, especially when I am going through hard times.”* These reflections highlight how spiritual encouragement provides comfort and reinforces a sense of trust in God’s presence.

Alongside emotional reassurance, practical support also featured prominently. Respondent 007 remarked: *“My parents make sure I have time to go to church and attend youth meetings. They even help with transport sometimes.”* Respondent 015 added, *“When I wanted to join the church choir, my parents encouraged me and helped me to buy the uniform.”* These examples show how logistical and material support can facilitate active participation in religious life. However, the respondents also emphasized that sustained participation depends heavily on parental encouragement and practical support.

As Respondent 022 suggested, *“Parents should intentionally create time for children to engage in these programs, even when schoolwork and domestic chores compete for attention.”* This highlights the need for deliberate parental involvement to ensure that faith-based activities remain a priority within the family schedule. Participants expressed a strong need for safe and trusting environments where adolescents could explore spiritual questions without fear of judgment. These spaces—often created through parental empathy, active listening, and emotional availability—were described as essential for fostering openness, emotional well-being, and spiritual growth.

As Respondent 003 affirmed, *“Parents should create a safe space for the young people not to feel stressed by trusting and understanding them.”* While many examples focused on the home, the underlying principle extended beyond family boundaries, pointing to a broader need for relational environments where youth feel spiritually secure.

This foundational insight lays the groundwork for deeper discussion on how structured interventions and cultural shifts can further cultivate safe spaces for adolescent faith development.

Adding on this need for emotional safety, respondents highlighted the power of parental affirmation in reinforcing spiritual identity. When parents acknowledged their efforts and expressed pride, adolescents felt recognized not just as children, but as meaningful contributors to their faith communities. As Respondent 028 shared, *“My mother always says she is proud of me when I serve in church. It makes me want to keep going.”* This sense of being noticed and valued nurtures spiritual motivation and strengthens a faith-based self-image.

Discussion

The findings affirm that parental support and encouragement play a crucial role in sustaining adolescent faith engagement. Emotional availability, spiritual reassurance, and practical assistance create a nurturing environment where young people feel safe to explore and express their beliefs. This supports Van Niekerk et al.’s (2018) assertion that parental involvement fosters spiritual confidence and belonging.

Moreover, Syuma’s (2025) study in Kasarani Constituency revealed that encouragement was expressed not only through words but also through actions. Parents actively facilitated religious activities and offered empathetic presence during spiritual struggles.

As Roehlkepartain (2016) notes, adolescents thrive when they feel supported in their spiritual development, especially during moments of doubt or transition.

Scriptural references also underscore the importance of parental encouragement. Proverbs 22:6 (New International Version) advises, *“Start children off on the way they should go, and even when they are old they will not turn from it.”* This verse reflects the long-term impact of early and consistent support. Similarly, Ephesians 6:4 (New International Version) urges parents to *“bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord,”* emphasizing the dual role of guidance and encouragement.

In Kasarani, respondents described how parental support helped them remain engaged in faith communities, even amid challenges. Whether through prayer, conversation, or practical help, parents were seen as partners in the spiritual journey—providing strength, direction, and affirmation. These findings highlight the significance of intentional, affirming parenting in nurturing spiritually grounded youth.

Collectively, parental support and encouragement are decisive in adolescent faith development. Through emotional presence, spiritual guidance, and practical assistance, parents in Kasarani help young people cultivate resilience and meaningful engagement with their faith.

Theme E: Economic Pressures and Limited Parental Availability

Economic demands emerged as a significant barrier to consistent parental involvement in adolescent faith development. In Kasarani Constituency, many parents—particularly those engaged in informal businesses such as selling vegetables, fruits, and secondhand clothes—found it difficult to balance livelihood responsibilities

with spiritual mentorship. This tension between Economic survival and faith engagement created emotional distance and spiritual longing among adolescents.

Findings

Respondents noted that their parents' busy schedules—though understandable—often limited opportunities for spiritual connection at home. Respondent 029 shared, *“My parents leave early to sell vegetables and come back tired. We do not get time to talk about faith.”* Similarly, Respondent 026 noted, *“They work hard, and I respect that—but I wish we could pray together more often.”* Across the interviews, adolescents continually emphasized that emotional support and parental presence are essential to spiritual development.

Despite significant economic pressures, respondents expressed a strong desire for more deliberate parental involvement in matters of faith. These reflections highlight the value of even brief but meaningful conversations about faith, suggesting that stable emotional availability can significantly influence youth participation in religious life. Ultimately, they reinforce the emotional cost of economic strain, where time scarcity diminishes opportunities for spiritual bonding.

To mitigate these challenges, respondents affirmed the importance of parental presence and open communication. Respondent 037 stated, *“I wish my parents would ask me what I believe. Just talking about faith helps me feel closer to them, because good behaviour in the church starts at the family level.”* These insights highlight the adolescent desire for relational connection over material provision.

In addition, to help bridge the gap created by limited parental availability, respondents pointed to church-based programs such as Sunday School, and youth fellowships (PIA-Parish Youth Apostolate, PIR-Parish Intercessory Revival & OMK-Organization of Missionary Kids) as valuable supplements to home-based spiritual education. Respondent 018 and 041 advised that parents should prioritize quality time with their children, using it to explain the importance of worship and spiritual values.

These findings underscore a broader pattern in Kasarani, where economic pressures shape the framework of parental spiritual involvement. Guided by these perspectives, the following discussion explores how livelihood demands intersect with faith formation and what this means for adolescent spiritual development. While economic challenges persist, respondents expressed a strong desire for more intentional engagement in faith matters. As Respondent 019 poignantly stated, *“We need parental advice more than money—we need guidance. Faith grows when parents are present.”*

While acknowledging these challenges, respondents underscored the importance of intentional time investment in spiritual mentorship. As Respondent 008 noted, *“Even if they are busy, parents should find time to talk to us about God. It makes a difference.”* This reinforces the need for supportive interventions that enable parents to balance work demands with meaningful spiritual engagement.

Discussion

The findings reveal that economic challenges play a crucial role in shaping the extent and nature of parental involvement in nurturing their children's faith development. While parents in Kasarani are deeply committed to providing for their families, the demands of informal labour often reduce their capacity for spiritual mentorship. This aligns with Roehlkepartain's (2016) observation that economic hardship can limit parents' ability to engage meaningfully in their children's spiritual development. Nevertheless, King and Boyatzis (2004) note, faith-based parenting fosters resilience and moral growth even within economically strained environments.

Importantly, respondents did not view their parents' absence as neglectful but rather as a consequence of structural realities. Yet, they consistently emphasized that faith formation requires more than material support—it demands time, presence, and conversation. As Ahen et al. (2021) note, spiritual growth is nurtured through close relationships and intentional engagement.

In light of these reflections, the theme of economic constraints regarding parents highlights the nuanced nature of parental involvement in adolescent faith formation. While modeling, mentorship, and structured routines are

ideal, emotional support and time prioritization are equally critical. The findings reinforce the notion that faith engagement is significantly shaped by the home environment and parental behaviour—regardless of the adolescent’s initial level of personal faith.

Taken together, economic pressures present significant challenges to parental spiritual involvement in Kasarani. Nevertheless, adolescents continue to value emotional availability, spiritual conversation, and quality time as essential components of faith development. These findings highlight the need for community support structures and intentional parenting practices that prioritize relational engagement, even amid demanding schedules.

CONCLUSION

This study explored parental interventions that enhance faith-based participation among secondary school students in Kasarani Constituency, Nairobi County. Drawing from respondent insights, the research revealed that parental involvement—through presence, modeling, emotional support, and structured engagement—is central to adolescent faith development.

Across themes such as spiritual socialization, ethical modeling, and economic constraints, a consistent thread emerged: faith is most powerfully nurtured through intentional, relational engagement. Findings affirm that faith formation begins at home, where early exposure to prayer, scripture, and worship routines lays the foundation for lifelong spiritual commitment. In addition, respondents emphasized the value of shared worship, safe spaces for dialogue, and integrating faith with everyday social values. Even amid economic hardship, parental encouragement and time investment proved vital.

To foster youth participation, interventions must empower parents as spiritual mentors, support family worship routines, and create environments—both at home and in faith communities—where adolescents feel seen, heard, and spiritually engaged. Future interventions must integrate parental mentorship with community-based support systems to ensure adolescent faith resilience in economically strained contexts.

Collectively, the voices in this article call on faith leaders, educators, and families to recognize the enduring influence of parental guidance and invest in strategies that make faith engagement both relevant and transformative.

Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article.

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