
| RESEARCH ARTICLE

The Impact of Spiritual Formation on Young People in Catholic Secondary Schools in Zimbabwe

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| ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to assess the impact of spiritual formation on Catholic young people in Catholic secondary schools in Zimbabwe. The study seeks to determine the spiritual maturity of young people. The data collection instrument that is used is a questionnaire. The survey is distributed to students who are enrolled in Catholic secondary schools in selected boarding or day schools around the provinces. A sample of 70 students was randomly selected on the basis that they were Catholic. The survey asked the students questions regarding their spirituality (one's spiritual life) and understanding thereof of spirituality in a Roman Catholic Christian context. Analysis of the survey data is done statistically using SPSS v28.0, and the survey results are reported. The major findings of the inquiry are: First, it is noted that most young people were not entirely familiar with basic scriptures about their discipleship with the Lord. Second, the young people have faith in God as they understand why they need to go to Church voluntarily and not just go as a school requirement. Third, it is not clearly determined whether or not the word they know was solely gained as a product of their school activities or from their family backgrounds at home. Fourth, it can be concluded that the spiritual formation of some young people is also attributed to the Catholic education they received at the schools since Catholic schools' programmes are designed to address that gap. The major findings of this study showed commitment on the part of young people to a pathway of discipleship of Jesus Christ. The findings also informed on issues affecting the spiritual formation of the young people in Catholic schools, bearing in mind that 'it is not him that willeth, nor him that runneth, but it is God that sheweth mercy' (Romans 9:16).

| KEYWORDS

Faith, Education, Catholic education, Catholic school, Spiritual formation, Spiritual development, Catholic youth, Catholic young people, Spiritual life, Discipleship

| ARTICLE INFORMATION

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1. Introduction

Historically the subject of Christian spirituality presents divided opinions, even among theologians. Anyone who is interested in spirituality will have to get used to the sighs and rolling of the eyes of many other theologians. However, the study of spirituality is more than necessary because most encounters are with people struggling in search of God (Sheldrake, 2005 in Gay (2009)). There is plenty of literature available, but a few are written in the true Christian tradition of following the scripture's teachings. As a result of these inherent weaknesses and the divided opinions it presents. This study will approach the subject of spiritual formation scripturally. After all, this is how all of us have learnt about God and Jesus Christ himself. Anyone who claims to be a Christian (Christ like) would conform to the Word of God, the Bible. Burer (2006) cites the following passage as underpinning the definition of spiritual formation.

Therefore, I exhort you, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a sacrifice – alive, holy, and pleasing to God – which is your reasonable service. Do not be conformed to this present world, but be transformed by

the renewing of your mind so that you may test and approve what is the will of God – what is good and well-pleasing and perfect. (Romans 12:1-2).

Spiritual formation is taken as the process of becoming conformed to the image of Jesus Christ for the glory of God and the sake of others. It is also explicit in the scripture of II Corinthians 3:17-18, which states that “Now the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord”. Both scriptures agree that spiritual formation is key to the Glory of God. The last scripture confirms God as a Spirit. The Holy Spirit, who directs the continual journey, is at the center of spiritual formation. Submission is the response to the Spirit. From these scriptures, we derive the working definition of spiritual formation for this study as also the process of becoming conformed to the image of Jesus Christ for the glory of God. One of the overall goals of Catholic school education is to form young people who are prepared to reflect this image of Jesus Christ in the world of work and adulthood, both academically and spiritually, in their dealings with others. But as young people, strong and active engagement in Church and spiritual growth events does not guarantee spiritual endurance as young people grow into adulthood (Jecker Regnerus & Vaaler, 2007). As a result, it is recognized that Christian school education does not always guarantee spiritual perseverance over a long period of time in the future (Long, 2014).

In this study, the extent to which spiritual formation has an effect on young people in Catholic secondary schools in Zimbabwe will be explored alongside building an understanding of how to make future interventions more effective in this regard. According to Long (2014), Christian schools may be better equipped to accomplish their goals if they better grasp their role in the development and maintenance of spiritual resilience. Spiritual resilience is understood as the ability to face adverse circumstances and social or personal pressures and remains true to Christian standards of living and attitudes in the students. Spiritual formation and spiritual stamina are closely related in that spiritual stamina needs to sustain what was spiritually formed or gained for God’s glory if someone remains true to Godly standards.

1.2 Background of the study

In recent years, researchers outside of Christian colleges have begun to pay attention to spiritual formation, and this can be a challenge since some young people enjoy one style of worship while others prefer something quite different (Otto and Harrington, 2016). This is especially true when the students are enrolled from diverse backgrounds. Catholic schools enroll from these backgrounds as they hold the principle that they are a universal Church and students are accepted from different denominations. Once the students are accepted in a Catholic school, the Catholic school leader is responsible for developing a shared meaning of spiritual formation, applying the leadership vision of creating an environment for nurturing spiritual growth and formation among the young people through the school constituents of parents, students, teachers and the community or parish (Earl, 2005). The spiritual formation does not only rest with an individual but exposure and a chain of forces that influences young people from home all the way to school. Given this background, the question is, what would be the impact of this spiritual formation on the young people at Catholic secondary schools in Zimbabwe? These are the questions that this research will seek to investigate.

1.3 Research Proposal

Spiritual formation is a broad topic, but Catholic schools employ a variety of strategies to impact children's spiritual development. According to Grace (2002, p238):

The resources of spiritual capital in Catholic schools stretch well beyond what particular school administrators possess. Spiritual capital (the individual and collective potential that results from affirming and fostering one's spiritual nature) can be found in school boards, classroom teachers, priests and school chaplains, parents, and, last but not least, students themselves.

This statement is an interpretation of activities used to affect student behaviour positively that were previously mentioned in other studies elsewhere (for example, Lydon 2021, Akpannison 2015). Yet, this study on the impact of spiritual formation on young people has not been conducted in Catholic schools in Zimbabwe (Muderedzwa, 2021). There is little, if any, research that specifically focuses on Catholic young people's spiritual formation in Zimbabwe. Therefore, this research study attempts to address this gap in knowledge in the context of Catholic education in Catholic secondary schools.

1.4 Research Aim

To assess the impact of spiritual formation on young people in Catholic secondary schools in Zimbabwe

1.5 Research Objectives

- i. Assess the spiritual formation attained in one’s spiritual life at a Catholic secondary school
- ii. Determine the extent to which the spiritual formation of young people understand faith in God

- iii. Determine the points of variations in the spiritual formation of the young people
- iv. Assess the impact of spiritual formation of young people in reference to Catholic education

1.6 Research Questions

- i. What are the points of consensus in the young people's own spiritual life?
- ii. To what extent does the spiritual formation of youths understand faith in the Lord?
- iii. What are the points of variations in the spiritual formation of young people?
- iv. What is the impact of spiritual formation on young people in Catholic secondary schools?

1.7 Hypothesis

H₀: Catholic education has a direct impact on spiritual formation in Catholic secondary schools

1.8 Scope and Significance of the Study

The purpose of this study is to assess how spiritual formation impact on young people in Catholic schools. The research study will focus on students at Catholic secondary schools in Zimbabwe who are at the end of their secondary education (form 4-6). These students are assumed to have experienced all activities of spiritual formation and development, which aim to enable young people to become committed disciples. This research study is significant in the field of spiritual development and its assessment in Christian education institutions. Assessing spiritual formation aligns with the visions and missions of Christian education institutions the world over to ascertain whether the planned activities have an impact on the spiritual formation and maturity of students involved.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

The study is a student's self-perception of their spiritual formation gained when they enrolled at a Catholic secondary school in Zimbabwe. The study of a person's spiritual formation is not tangible; rather, the spiritual formation can be measured by an individual's exhibited spiritual maturity as demonstrated by one's spiritual life. In this study, spiritual maturity in a Christian context is, in essence, demonstrating discipleship in Jesus Christ. Therefore, a sacramental vision (love of God's ways) underpins this study. Spiritual maturity can be assessed through surveys, observation and day to day eagerness to attend Church activities and live life like a Christian. Some students may have grown up in the faith, attending Church, youth groups, and religious camps throughout their lives, while some are experiencing spiritual formation activities for the first time (Adams, 2009). This study will seek to review literature that is associated with spiritual formation in Catholic schools. The study assesses the impact of Christian activities on students who are invited to attend school in Catholic Church-run secondary schools and their school governing board documents.

2.2 Stages of faith development

James Fowler (1981) asserts that faith is a common human concern about how we interpret the world. Faith is in the context of a world-view or perspective more than in the context of beliefs. Fowler speaks of 7 stages of faith development, starting with primal faith, intuitive/projective faith, mythic/literal faith, synthetic/conventional faith, individuative/reflective faith, conjecture faith and universalised faith (Palmer, 1998; 2000). Flower faith is premised on socialization. There is a sense of movement in the stages from the first to the last as young people move from childhood faith to adult faith. In that sense, we begin to see the way in which the teachings of the Church are a resource for those involved as ways in which the teachings of the Church reflect their own beliefs and values.

According to Andrade (2004), the definition of faith differs from the religion to which individuals belong. In the opinion of the researcher based on the scripture, "faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" (Hebrews 11.1, KJV) and is therefore based on scripture. Faith development is a process of accepting Jesus Christ and believing that he can give you your desires through prayer according to his promises in his Word - the scriptures. You cannot have faith in God unless you believe in the scriptures about him, which are anchored in him as your personal saviour. Therefore, this study focuses on the faith development of the students from how they are exposed to the basic scriptures whilst there are at school. Faith needs to be nurtured, and faith comes by hearing, hearing the word of God (Romans 10:17). In Catholic schools, a sacramental vision is used to nurture Faith in young people. Whilst Fowlers' faith development is based on socialization, Faith in God is nurtured through the hearing of the word. This and Fowler's faith development theory will inform this study since one of the most beneficial aspects of the Catholic students' spiritual development is knowing that the Lord has a purpose for their lives to be his disciples.

2.3 Parents as Primary Educators

The Second Vatican Council's proclamation on Christian education (1965), which underlined the importance of teachers in assisting parents, reasserts the fundamental nature of the duty of parents in fostering the faith of young people received at baptism. Gravissimum Educationis (Vatican Council II) speaks of teachers "working as partners with parents and together with them in every

phase of education give due consideration to the difference of sex and the proper ends Divine Providence assigns to each sex in the family and in society". The family is the young person's first faith community since it is there that they first encounter God's love and start to consider their calling, despite all of its imperfections and limitations. When children attend Catholic schools, they should observe in the educators the Christian values and conduct that are frequently glaringly lacking in their secular surroundings (Lydon, 2021). The young people who are the product of Catholic education must reflect the discipleship of the Lord Jesus Christ. This means knowing the word (scriptures) relating to his teachings about faith. In the aspect of Christian community life, the emphasis is on teachers working collaboratively with parents, students and governors. It is primarily the responsibility of instructors, both individually and collectively, to uphold the Catholic school's specific culture (CCE 1988:26). Teachers have to work alongside parents and other religious people for faith to have a profound effect on the lives of students.

2.4 Spiritual Capital – resources of faith

Grace (2002:232) defines spiritual capital as resources of faith and values derived from a commitment to a religious tradition". The spiritual capital which constitutes the resources of faith is underpinned by various concepts such as the sacramental vision, accompaniment, liturgy and the youth (young people), etc. The study draws from Vatican documents on spiritual formation, in particular, the final document of the Synod of Bishops on Young People (2018) entitled *Young People, The Faith and Vocational Discernment* (Synod of Bishops, 2018). The Synodal document's definition of "vocation" states that the Christian's vocation is to follow Christ (n.61). In spite of the limitations and shortcomings of the family, the young person first encounters God's love in the family and starts to consider a career. The last two Synods, as well as the Apostolic Exhortation *Amoris Laetitia* that resulted from them, repeatedly emphasized that the role of the family as a domestic Church is to bring all of its members to live the joy of the Gospel in daily life, according to their circumstances, while remaining open to the dimension of vocation and mission (n.72). Without keeping in mind that everyone, without exception, is called to holiness, it is impossible to comprehend the baptismal vocation's significance in its entirety (n.84). Once the process of Christian initiation is complete, Catholic schools are especially crucial because they give young people a chance to develop their Christian vocation (n.96). The primary mission of the Christian community is to proclaim Jesus Christ as the crucified and risen Lord who has revealed the Father and given the Holy Spirit (n.133).

According to Klein (2018), the "four pillars" of growth outlined by Pope St. John Paul II in his Apostolic Exhortation *Pastores Dabo Vobis* in 1992 can be shaped by the human, spiritual, intellectual, and pastoral parts of seminary preparation when implemented in schools. The booklet offers guidelines on the importance of listening, youth ministry activities, entry into the Christian life, and the burden of administration on the route to a young person's spiritual growth. These rules may influence how secondary school students are reached with spiritual development programmes. They decide how the young caregivers will be trained to affect students' spiritual development while educating them in schools.

2.4.1 A sacramental vision (the Emmaus Paradigm)

Sacramental vision is a Catholic vision that has a central place in Catholic education. According to the Second Vatican Council (1965), the purpose of a sacramental vision is "to bring the light of Christ to all men, a light brightly visible on the countenance of the Church" (Vatican Council IIa 1965:1). The Emmaus paradigm serves this purpose. The journey to Emmaus an encounter with the Lord Jesus Christ is reflected in this scriptural verse "Did not our hearts burn within us as he talked to us on the road and explained the scriptures to us?" (Luke 24:32). This saying makes it clear that faith is something to be fed through hearing the word, that needs nourishing. It is about a personal relationship with Jesus Christ in the context of a community. A mature faith is productive in that it is discernible and articulated in the Christian spirit, in the fruits of justice and compassion, and in the fruits of evangelization—always encouraging us to share the basis for the hope we have with others. All catechesis, preaching, formation, and religious education involve a significant amount of teaching regarding the sacraments (O'Leary, 1999). Some examples of sacramentals are the Holy water which is a sacramental that believers use to recall their baptism, Blessed candles often given to Churchgoers on Candlemas, Blessed palms given away at Churches on Palm Sunday, Blessed ashes placed on believers' foreheads on Ash Wednesday services, a Cross neckless, etc.

According to Groome (1980), those who adhere to what he refers to as a shared praxis approach to Christian religious education have made the Emmaus story into a paradigm. The term "shared praxis" emphasizes how a journey is essential to enable the Christian faith to develop. The phrase also emphasizes Groome's belief that student-teacher interaction must be a key element of all religious instruction. A sacramental vision must be established in order to develop a substantial relationship and be available to walk a portion of the journey together.

2.4.2 Accompaniment

In a Catholic Christian Context, accompaniment is rooted in the way in which Jesus accompanied his disciples at every stage of their journey. Based on the Emmaus story, a five-stage process is described below that serves as the foundation for many Catholic religious education programs and is equally important in the context of St. John Bosco's (1815–1888) educational philosophy, which placed emphasis on meeting students where they are in their spiritual journeys.

The Emmaus Story (Luke 24:13-35)	Five Stages
Verses 13-17	1. Jesus joins the disciples on their journey
Verses 18-24	2. Jesus encourages the disciples to talk about what they have experienced and how they feel
Verses 25-27	3. Jesus reminds the disciples of the scriptures, and the faithful Saviour God portrayed in their tradition
Verses 28-32	4. The disciples find joy and encouragement in Jesus' company. He shares their meal, and, in the blessing and breaking of bread, they recognise him.
Verses 33-35	5. They run back to share the news with the other disciples.

Extract from Thomas Groome (1980)

Each of the five stages is essential to the idea of presence and accompaniment, which is reflected in the Salesian accompaniment. These stages include taking the initiative to engage young people in dialogue by letting them share their stories and by making space for intentional conversation about the path to following Christ Jesus. The main purpose of this study is to assess the impact of stage 3 on young people who experience Catholic education. It is the scriptures that make us know about Jesus Christ as our saviour. The study will assess the impact of Catholic education based on how these scriptures have been unpacked to remind young people of this important Word of God. The whole purpose of Christianity is based on the faith in Jesus Christ to be partakers of all his promises in the scriptures.

2.4.3 Liturgy and youth ministry

Liturgy is a style of Christian worship or a ritual that is required for public worship. The structured worship that takes place when Christians gather in churches is referred to as liturgy. A weekly (Church service) and yearly structure and rhythm for worship are provided by liturgy. Our faith is rightfully centered on the liturgy in all of its variety (O'Leary, 1999). The young people in Catholic schools get involved in this pattern throughout their school life. Young people participate in a variety of activities that make up the Christian education programs in the Catholic Church's youth ministry (Groome, 1980; Bosco, 1884). Bosco (1884) claimed that constructive engagement in the form of recreation (Lydon, 2011) with the boys was fundamental to the realization of his educational philosophy. The secret to winning the young people's trust was the educators' presence in the form of positive interaction. The educator's presence was the first rule of pastoral care in that worldview.

2.5 Contemporary Challenges

2.5.1 A Materialistic soteriology

Soteriology refers to the study of the nature of salvation as well as the ideas and teachings of salvation in any particular religion. Soteriology and Christology are inseparably intertwined in Christianity because they both center on the significance of Christ as the Savior. A materialistic soteriology, on the other hand, constitutes a culture within which religion is marginalised, reduced to the edges of society, constantly faced with the uphill challenge of justifying its existence in a world dominated by the belief that a person can be saved or fulfilled by consuming or experiencing an ever-increasing variety of products and lifestyle experiences. References to God and religion, then, are frowned upon by many as simply reflecting a need for reassurance for those unable to compete in the real world. (Lydon 2021:5)

The bigger challenge is the changing nature of the role of schoolheads, teachers and parents in the schools (Lydon, 2018). While, according to Grace (2002), the administrative jurisdictions and local cultures in which these schools operate vary greatly, it seems likely that the leadership challenges and dilemmas faced by this constituency of school leaders will generate a lot of interest in shaping the young people. These individuals embrace the challenges to embed core Catholic education principles and maintain the integral mission of Catholic schools. Governors have a key role to play in the evaluation of Catholic schools. There is often a gap between the ideal type of Catholic school described by the Vatican and the reality in individual Catholic schools (Lydon, 2018). These and other issues make up the contemporary challenges in Christian education programmes.

2.5.2 Commitment in a Contemporary Context

The Synodal document on Young People of 2018 is of seminal importance for this study. In essence, it builds upon the Emmaus paradigm, developed by Thomas Groome, which underpins the methodology of contemporary Religious Education programmes. Accompaniment and the journey to Emmaus feature prominently in this narrative. This document features contemporary issues in

Catholic education programmes, and we note the frequency of the following words in the 2018 document; journey (55), accompaniment (59), discern (60), vocation (103), commitment (29), discipleship (5) and model (5). In line with this commitment, we note that many Christian educational institutions, according to research, do not conduct annual reviews of their spiritual development process (Thomas, 2019), and as such, some have not conducted a research study on the impact of spiritual formation, hence the need to conduct this assessment now in Zimbabwe.

This study is built around an evaluation of Christian education institutions' commitment to generating profound feelings of belonging to a Christian community of believers, especially at Christian secondary schools. In Zimbabwe, most Catholic secondary schools have a shared formal plan for developing students' spirituality which they share in their annual or periodic meetings at the regional if not national, level (Muderedzwa, 2021). The formal plan is drawn from New Year retreats where all school authorities attend workshops to plan a set of uniform activities they will agree on to use throughout the year, such as the spiritual themes needed. These activities are informed by school governing boards and national and Vatican documents on spiritual formation and development. In light of this, it is necessary to employ a reviewed theoretical framework to direct the creation of a research study that offers a better grasp of the study's underlying assumptions (Grant & Osanloo, 20014). Based on that, a comparative study of other researchers' work is necessary to inform this study on what has been covered by others.

2.6. Comparative studies on building spiritual formation

There are many studies that have been done on the subject of the spirituality of Catholic education. This study will retrieve critically such recent studies below to compare them and put into context the focus of this study. The study interest is also on the nature of spiritual capital, which Grace (2002, 236) defined as "resources of faith derived from a religious tradition". The researcher specifically recognized the contribution of senior students in this study to enhance the religious and spiritual programmes of the school. Looking at the more recent research, Lydon (2021) investigated the extent to which spiritual capital is a major issue for Catholic schools in the twenty-first century, as well as approaches to increase such capital within Catholic school communities based on and beyond Grace Studies. The researcher gave reflections on 'Spiritual Capital' on its value and future development suggestions in his work. It looks at the definition of the term, as well as possible connections to other significant ideas like culture, before surveying potential obstacles and opportunities for Catholic schools in the twenty-first century. This echoes the key themes within this article, community, embodiment and witness. Going beyond Grace's emphasis on the role of headteachers in sustaining spiritual capital, Lydon suggests that it will be maintained by the empowering witness of a core group of committed teachers, not necessarily all Catholics, who have themselves been empowered by teachers who, in Flynn's words, model the "core beliefs, values, traditions, symbols and patterns of behaviour which provide meaning to the school community." Such example, more than words, will ensure, in the words of Grace (2010, p. 9) in his developed definition, that spiritual capital will remain a source of empowerment in so far Catholic school leaders do not act simply as professionals but professionals and witnesses" in shaping spirituality.

Further building on Grace's work, Casson (2021) explores the significance and influence of empirical spiritual capital research in Catholic education in England, which has the ability to illuminate the changing Catholicity of schools and improve policy and practice. The research work finishes with a look at some examples of empirical research, as well as a list of critical areas where more research is needed. In Zimbabwe, Muderedzwa (2021) reported on the activities that are used to influence spiritual formation among some Catholic schools to incorporate faith-based components of Catholic education into classroom instruction, service opportunities and retreats (work-shops). The activities include one Catholic doctrine lesson per week presented by a priest, a Catholic teacher, or a Catechist, the celebration of Mass at least once a week, prefect training in Catholic ethos, once-a-term organized sessions on Catholic doctrine, and finally, non-Catholic staff orientation in the doctrine. The work of Casson (2021), Lydon (2021) and Muderedzwa (2021) are complementary studies which tend to appraise each other on furthering the work started by Grace (2002). The present study builds on these works.

2.7 Summary of Literature Review

This study focuses on the impact of spiritual formation on Catholic young people in Catholic Secondary Schools in Zimbabwe. The research question is centered on the extent to which spiritual formation in Catholic secondary schools has impacted the vocational journey of young people. The questions in the study survey will be derived from areas covered by the literature review to try to address that gap in knowledge, as this has not been done in Zimbabwe. It is believed that this would assess the true picture of those interventions which are led by parents, school leaders, chaplains and teachers, etc. If this is not the case, then what needs to be done to remedy the situation in future interventions to complement other studies (Lydon, 2021; Casson, 2021)? The researcher believes that this approach has not been explored in prior studies by other researchers. All research studies seem to focus on who leads the spiritual formation activities. A follow up study from this research's results may need to focus on integrating findings from research among young people alongside deliberations on the role of leaders. Such studies may provide a greater synergy in the context of the future development of spiritual formation programmes.

3. Methodology

The goal of this research is to assess the spiritual maturity of young people in Catholic secondary schools in Zimbabwe. The research design adopted is the quantitative approach to research, reaching out to a number of students in the form of a questionnaire. Quantitative approaches rely on the gathering and analysis of numerical data to forecast, explain, characterize, or control variables and phenomena of interest, whereas qualitative methods rely on the collection and analysis of qualitative data (Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2012). This is why this approach is adopted in place of the qualitative design to quantify the number of students who prove to have acquired spiritual maturity. A questionnaire survey was utilized as the data collection tool. Students in Catholic secondary schools are chosen in boarding and day schools in and around the provinces to receive the questionnaires. In addition, the students should be at the terminal end of their secondary education in forms 4- 6. The reason is that they will have been exposed to Catholic education for a sufficient time to have acquired some spiritual maturity. A sample of 70 students was chosen at random based on their religious affiliation of being at a Catholic secondary school from 3 geographically different provinces. This study, therefore, follows a purposive sampling technique. Purposive sampling is chosen based on the researcher's exclusive discretion (Kothari, 2012; Neuman, 2014).

In order to generalize the findings, the survey focused on three Catholic secondary schools. The students in the survey were asked questions on their spirituality and spiritual understanding of God's purpose in their lives based on the scriptures. The study questionnaire also determined the students' perceptions of their levels of spirituality (Thomas, 2019). The survey data on students' perceptions were statistically analyzed using the SPSS version 28.0, and the survey results were provided to assess the impact on spiritual formation.

4. Research Results

The study's main findings aim to reveal the students' relationship with Jesus Christ that is gained so far in their lives as a result of spiritual formation in the context of Catholic schools. In addition, when they are exposed to the Lord's Word, they will express the Lord's purpose in their lives, which reflects on one's spiritual life. The first part of the questionnaire (Appendix 1) dealt with the scripture-based questions, and the second part dealt with the perceptions of young people on spiritual formation. In this inquiry, of the 3 participating secondary schools in three provinces, 70 questionnaires were provided. We are reminded that Catholic schools in Zimbabwe enroll both Catholics and non-Catholics, who are all subjects of this study selected randomly.

4.1 Findings on Scripture based Spiritual Formation

Table 4.1: Total Scores of Respondents' Results

	No. Passed	No. Failed	Total Response
No. Students	14	55	69
% Totals	20%	80%	100%

Of the questionnaires distributed, 69 respondents managed to complete all the questions in section A of the questionnaire provided, and only 1 was returned unanswered. Out of those who successfully responded, only 20% of the young people managed to get 50% or better on the correctness of responses. 80% performed poorly, suggesting that young people are not sufficiently exposed to the scripture. It means the Emmaus story if implemented seriously, is capable of addressing this gap since Christ in the story referred his audience back to what the scripture said about him. It is only more appropriate for Catholic schools to put more emphasis on scripture teaching in their education programmes. The responses to the questions were further analysed for correctness question by question, and the results summarized in Table 4. 2 below.

Table 4.2: Distribution of Responses by Question

Question No	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
Total Score	37	23	41	6	20	10	17	12	11	35	58	39	43	36	11	24	20	0	32	28

The findings reveal those questions the young people tended to understand more and those they did not. The bar chart in Figure 4.1 below summarises the distribution of the findings of the results more clearly.

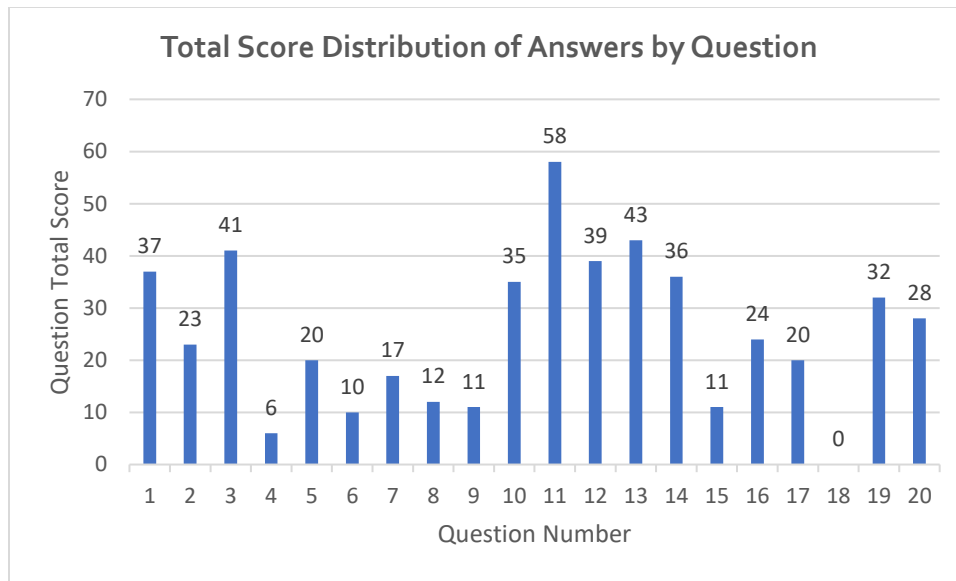


Figure 4.1: Summary of Question Answers

It can be seen From Figure 4.1 that the most popular questions were 1, 3 and 10 – 14, which spoke of repentance, the Holy Spirit and Jesus Christ himself on His first coming, death and second coming. These questions were answered reasonably correctly by the majority of the respondents. This suggested that, first, the respondents knew how to accept Jesus Christ as their personal saviour. Second, they had a reasonable idea about the role of the Holy Spirit. On the other hand, questions 4 and 18 were also answered inadequately. Firstly, it suggests that most students did not know that unbelief is the only sin that causes all others. Secondly, as no one could answer question 18 correctly, it meant that the young people did not know that God sealed his bride with the Holy Spirit in these last days. Given the statistics in Table 2 and Figure 4.1, it means that there is a need to do more to teach young people on scriptures concerning the person of Jesus. This is what is expected in the Emmaus story and envisaged by the Catholic education programmes in order to establish a personal relationship with Jesus to able the young people to be his disciples.

4.2 Findings on Perception Based Spiritual Formation

Table 4.3 below shows the results of correlation coefficient r_0 , which depicts a strong relationship between variables of the study since p-values are generally small. The results show that these findings are valid on the spiritual formation of young people in Catholic secondary schools to the extent that some spiritual formation is taking place during Catholic education programmes.

Table 4.3: Partial Correlations Co-efficient (r_{12}) of the Variables Used

		Saviour	Saved	Revelation	GodChild	Grace	HSealed	SchReq	LoveJesus
Saviour	Pearson Correlation	1	.338**	.079	.228	.100	-.015	-.341**	.464**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.005	.524	.064	.422	.904	.005	<.001
	N	67	67	67	67	67	67	67	67
Saved	Pearson Correlation	.338**	1	.035	.274*	.329**	.169	-.343**	.340**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.005		.776	.025	.007	.172	.005	.005
	N	67	67	67	67	67	67	67	67
Revelation	Pearson Correlation	.079	.035	1	.200	.202	.052	-.024	.212
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.524	.776		.104	.100	.678	.849	.086
	N	67	67	67	67	67	67	67	67
GodChild	Pearson Correlation	.228	.274*	.200	1	.375**	.326**	-.132	.382**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.064	.025	.104		.002	.007	.287	.001

	N	67	67	67	67	67	67	67	67
Grace	Pearson Correlation	.100	.329**	.202	.375**	1	.109	-.202	.283*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.422	.007	.100	.002		.379	.101	.020
	N	67	67	67	67	67	67	67	67
HSealed	Pearson Correlation	-.015	.169	.052	.326**	.109	1	.153	.229
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.904	.172	.678	.007	.379		.216	.062
	N	67	67	67	67	67	67	67	67
SchReq	Pearson Correlation	-.341**	-.343**	-.024	-.132	-.202	.153	1	-.095
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.005	.005	.849	.287	.101	.216		.446
	N	67	67	67	67	67	67	67	67
LoveJesus	Pearson Correlation	.464**	.340**	.212	.382**	.283*	.229	-.095	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	.005	.086	.001	.020	.062	.446	
	N	67	67	67	67	67	67	67	67

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

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

In this study, the hypothesis testing of results is illustrated in Table 4.4 below, in which the mean variance of the variables is shown.

Table 4.4: The Descriptive Statistics of the Anova Variations

		Saviour	Saved	Revelation	GodChild	Grace	HSealed	SchReq	LoveJesus
N	Valid	67	67	67	67	67	67	67	67
	Missing	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Mean		4.3881	4.3582	3.4925	3.3433	4.0149	3.5224	1.7910	4.4776
Variance		1.120	1.476	1.254	1.592	1.530	2.284	1.441	.950

The results show that the means between the variables are not significantly different from each other, and hence we accept the null hypothesis H_0 that Catholic education has a direct impact on spiritual formation in Catholic secondary schools. In other words, the means are almost the same, and in this way, the means are used to accept the null hypothesis as stated. Catholic education programs try to instill Christian values among the young people who attend their schools, as evidenced by these findings.

5. Discussion

The discussion of research findings is based on the headings derived from the research objectives to find out whether the research questions of the study have been addressed. The headings are the main themes in both the research questions and objectives on assessment of spiritual formation, understanding faith in God, points of variation in the spiritual formation and its impact thereof.

5.1 Assessment of spiritual formation

This section discusses the research findings based on the results. The fact that the young people performed inadequately on scripture-based spiritual formation concerning their discipleship of Jesus meant that the education programmes have to be reviewed, especially on what they teach in the youth ministry and the compulsory Church activities. They should concentrate more on unpacking or explaining the scriptures as in the Emmaus paradigm (Groome, 1980). The Lord Jesus Christ, on the road to Emmaus, reminded his disciples of the importance of the scriptures as a way of remembering his word by his followers. In essence, the study of scripture underpins spiritual formation. It cannot be fully understood whether the young people who answered correctly the questions on the Holy Spirit had prior knowledge of that from the school or their families at home. This is because other students from the same school could not answer the same questions correctly when they, in fact, attend the same schools together with others, or this is affirming the assertion Jesus said, 'you don't come to me unless my father calls you' (John 6:44). It is suggested that the schools could teach more of the scriptures in their educational programmes to help such as those who are lost.

5.2 Understanding faith in God

The research's findings among young people revealed a lack of understanding regarding what is unbelief and faith in God. The young people did not know that unbelief is the source of all sins because if only people could believe in Jesus Christ the Word, no one would willingly commit sin. Hebrews 3:12 warned us that unbelief can only make us depart from God, while Romans 19:17 teaches us that "so faith comes by hearing, and hearing the word of God". The teaching of these basic scriptures will help refocus young people on the Emmaus paradigm (Groome, 1980). A reference to God's word and teachings of Jesus Christ, who is the word himself. In the Emmaus story, Jesus referred his audience to the scriptures pertaining to himself as the redeemer. The Catholic schools, therefore, should be a 'journey' of opening the scriptures about Jesus Christ, the redeemer. This way, it will shape the young people's moral behaviours to mirror that of Christ.

5.3 Points of variations in spiritual formation

The study findings had no points of significant variations in spiritual formation among the young people as they are all coming from one Catholic education system. It is, therefore, necessary for the future to compare the points of variations on spiritual formation from different schools of other Christian denominations among young people. Possibly the points of variation may become clearer since each denominational Church may approach the subject of spiritual formation differently. In Zimbabwe, Catholic education programs are run at the national level, and, as a result, the approaches by Catholic schools to spiritual formation are more or less the same. The Catholic education programs are derived mostly from the Vatican documents (Synod of Bishops, 2018; Second Vatican Council, 1965). In addition, the Catholic education programs are harmonised at the national level by the Zimbabwe Council of Bishops' Conference (ZCBC).

5.4 Impact of spiritual formation

The research findings on the young people's perceptions of spiritual formation showed a significant relationship between the variables. It suggested the variables used to fit the inquiry, and this phenomenon is attributed to familiarity with the Word of God. This resonates with other researchers such as Groome (1980), who viewed spiritual formation as a form of journey in the context of accompaniment of the students in their faith journey. Hence the acceptance of the Null (H₀) hypothesis to affirm and ascertain that Catholic education has a bearing on the spiritual formation of the young people who attend Catholic schools. In the context of a contemporary commitment to Catholic education, accompaniment and the journey to Emmaus feature prominently in this narrative.

6. Conclusion

When the research findings are compared to the study's research objectives and research questions, the appropriate conclusions are drawn in the context of the impact of spiritual formation on young people who are exposed to Catholic education. Bearing in mind the following verse "So then it is not him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy" (Romans 9:16). It is not whether you will, or whether you want to, or where your desires are, but it is whether it is God's will or not. You are not a Christian by your desire; you are a Christian by God's desire, called to discipleship by virtue of baptism. Therefore, this kind of study is important in the context of discerning the impact of spiritual formation programmes on the lives of young people.

Such studies will provide feedback to improve those interventions for the benefit of the young people who experience them. In that regard, the study arrived at the following conclusions. First, it is noted that most young people were not entirely familiar with basic scriptures about the nature of Christian discipleship. The evidence based on the findings shows that some effort has been made towards teaching the said scriptures, but more still needs to be done to address the small percentage of students who become familiar with the scriptures. Second, the young people have faith in God in the sense that they understand why they need to go to Church voluntarily and not just go as a school requirement. Third, it is not clear whether or not their knowledge and understanding of scripture was gained solely as a result of formation programmes alone or was a product of their family backgrounds. This is because there were also participants who were entirely ignorant of almost all the scriptures asked. It was a significant number to some extent who were lacking in this aspect. Fourth, it can be concluded that the spiritual formation of some young people is also attributed to the Catholic education that they receive at the schools they attend. The Catholic schools have programmes that are designed to address their discipleship with the Lord, as illustrated in the literature review section. A limitation of this study is that it was limited to a survey questionnaire to find out what students have learnt towards their spiritual formation. Future research may use follow-up interviews to do an in-depth study of how scriptures are used for spiritual formation in the schools' program. Comparative studies are also necessary to compare these research findings with other Christian denominations on the spiritual formation of young people in those settings.

Statement and Declaration: Permission has been granted by the faculty ethical board to carry out this study observing the ethical guidelines. The content of the paper is significant to Christian schools to influence all Christian education programmes towards young people's spiritual formation and mould them morally and spiritually into God fearing adults. I can confirm that no content or part of this manuscript has been submitted anywhere for publication and has no funding for publication.

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