

**The role of children's ministry on the moral formation of children in Mahikeng**

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## DECLARATION

I **Olebogeng Victor Mogale**, student number 56016395, hereby declare that this dissertation is my original work and has not been submitted before to any institution for assessment purposes.

Further, I have acknowledged all sources used and have cited these in the reference section.



Olebogeng Victor Mogale

18 October 2022

Date

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## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this research to all Ministers/Pastors and Sunday School/Children Ministry teachers who work tirelessly to ensure the effective operation of children's ministry in their respective denominations.

## **ABSTRACT**

Morality has been part of society for ages. Lack of morality in the younger generation shows a gap in terms of moral formation in children and this arguably has a long-lasting negative impact on society. Institutions such as the family and the church play important roles in moral formation. However, problems such as child-headed families and divorce make it difficult for the family to effectively play a role in the moral formation of children and building a sustainable society. This gives the church the task of taking responsibility for ensuring moral formation in children. The study aimed to explore the moral formation of children and youth, and how the church through a children's ministry/Sunday school can assist in minimising challenges such as moral decay and moral unconsciousness in Mahikeng, North West Province in South Africa. This study focused on the moral formation of children and the role that the church can play through the children's ministry to raise morally conscious children in society.

Since the focus of this study is children's ministry, a qualitative research approach was adopted in this study. The research participants for this study were Fifteen (15) children ministry/Sunday school teachers and pastors/ministers. In-depth interviews were used as a method of collecting data and thematic analysis was used to analyse the data.

The findings of this study revealed that three institutions, namely, the family, government and the church are responsible for the moral formation of children, and these institutions need to do this task during childhood. Since some families might not have the capacity to carry out this task and the government might overlook it, therefore it is the responsibility of the church to carry out this task of instilling morals in children. Amongst others, moral formation can be provided through teaching children and living a good and morally exemplary life with adults where children will learn good conduct and behaviour from adults within the family and community. Activities such as sports and drama can be used to instil morals and encourage good behaviour in children. Thus, the church must ensure that the task of teaching takes place continuously in children through children's ministry.

The findings of this study can be used as guidelines by the church and children's ministry for moral formation in children and incorporating them into children's ministry syllabus/teachings.

**Keywords:** morality, moral formation, children ministry, ethics.

## **CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY**

### **1.1 Introduction**

Children's ministry is a part of the Church, and it is through this ministry that morals can be instilled in children. As part of the ministries within the church, it is where the spiritual and religious needs of children ought to be catered to and taken care of. Children's ministry focuses mainly on children and the church plays an important role as children's ministry forms part of the church and children are part of the faith community. Considering that children's ministry is a foundation, it is a stage preceding youth ministry. Thus, it is also important to consider youth ministry. Youth ministry includes ensuring that what was taught and developed during childhood is nurtured and continued to be developed during youth. Furthermore, children's ministry is important within the church because it is where children are taught the word of God, what is good, what is bad, what God expects from them, theological truths and how children should behave.

Due to changes and challenges within society and the world, there are developments and there is a need for further developments in children's ministry. There are challenges and problems within the community where the church through children's ministry can assist in addressing or minimising them. Some of the problems and challenges include and emergence of moral degeneration and immorality within our communities. Society is facing a situation whereby morals seem to be to be disregarded. This harms behaviour and the relationship between and amongst members of society because values and principles such as respect honour and others can be seen as irrelevant and unnecessary.

Religious institutions such as the church cannot be ignored when dealing with morality and moral formation; in fact, it is important to consider the church in the discussion on issues of morality because it is where the background and teachings of morality are based through biblical teachings. The necessity of church involvement in social and community challenges and problems, such as moral degeneration, is that congregants are members of the community and they are directly and

indirectly affected by such challenges and problems. The church encourages people to live Godly and Christ-like lives through acts of ministry such as preaching and teaching. Through children's ministry, the church can carry out the process of moral formation for children.

Issues of morality, such as disrespect by the younger generation towards their elders, and the violence of pupils at primary and secondary school level towards others and teachers depict moral gaps and the degeneration of the morality of children. The effects and impact of moral degeneration go beyond childhood and youth, hence it's important to have moral formation during childhood to groom and raise a morally conscious generation.

When dealing with moral formation from a Christian perspective, the following matters need to be considered. First, the contribution of the church to moral formation for its members and community members. Second, the view of Christians and church leaders regarding the level of morality within its members and community members. Third, the relationship between church, family and community in ensuring moral formation in children.

## **1.2 Background of the study problem**

Moral formation and its transferability from one generation to the other has been part of life for many years, especially in African and Christian life settings. Africans believed that a child is raised by the community and that every elder or parent within the community must guide and instruct any child. Christians believed in teaching the word of God affecting moral formation by encouraging congregants to live according to the will of God, and this has been taught to generations through the ages. Moral formation and its transferability have been a focus from childhood so that children grow up as moral persons. Children's ministry as part of the church is an essential tool and ministry for the impartation of morals. Ceasing this important impartation of morals to the next generation may lead to moral degeneration. We cannot ignore the fact that it is not every behaviour, activity, decision and action that is acceptable in society. Recent behaviour

such as violence at schools in the community, and a high level of disrespect by youth and the younger generation depict a degeneration of morality, which is a serious societal problem.

The role of the church should not end within its premises and amongst its member. This means the church has a role to play in the moral formation of its members and society. It is important to consider the role of the church in the community in its attempt to address the degeneration of morality. This requires proactive church leaders and members who will use available resources within the church to deal with issues of moral degeneration and ensure continual moral formation. The other institution that needs attention when dealing with moral formation is the 'family'. Challenges within the family contribute to problems associated with morality within society. Challenges such as child-headed families and single parenting make it difficult to transfer moral lessons from one generation to the other and for moral formation to take place within the family.

### **1.3 Research Problem**

Due to social challenges such as child-headed families, divorce, family conflicts, and the death or absence of parents, some or most families lose the capacity for the moral formation of children. The absence of morals in many children and young people shows a critical gap in moral formation that needs to be addressed as soon as possible. Moral degeneration is a major social problem with the potential to result in other societal problems.

There is moral decay and moral unconsciousness in children and youth within society due to the lack and decline of moral formation in some families.

### **1.3.1 Research Aim and Objectives;**

This study aims to explore the moral formation of children and youth and how the church, through children's ministry, can assist in minimising this problem in Mahikeng, North West Province, South Africa.

The objectives of this study are;

- To discover the significance of morality and ethics on children and youth.
- To investigate the possible risks of ignoring the current ethical and moral challenges.
- To examine the role of the church through children's ministry in grooming a morally formed generation.
- To discover ways of preventing or minimising unethical and immoral behaviour among children and youth.
- To discover the possible positive impact of moral formation on children and youth.

### **1.3.2 Key Research Questions**

Main Research Question: What is the significance of moral formation in children?

- What is the significance of morality and ethics in youth and children?
- What are the potential risks of ignoring the current ethical and moral challenges?
- What is the role of the church through children's ministry in grooming a morally formed generation?
- How do we minimise or prevent unethical and immoral behaviour in children and youth?
- What is the possible impact of moral formation in children and youth?

## **1.4 Preliminary Literature Review**

When we talk about moral formation through children's ministry there are important concepts that we need to understand. This can be done through consultation with different sources. The main

concepts include; ‘family’, as this is where children come from. Therefore, it is important to define and understand the impact and role of family on issues related to moral formation. Morality and ethics form part of moral formation and therefore it is important to analyse and unpack these two concepts and look specifically at their practicality. The other main concept is ‘Children’s Ministry’. For this study, children’s ministry can be used for the moral formation of children, therefore the role of this ministry within the church must be understood and the incorporation of moral formation in children's ministry be realised.

### **1.4.1 Family**

Every individual belongs to a family. This is the first institution that provides basic needs for every person. The Oxford Dictionary defines family as “a group consisting of one or two parents, their children and close relations. All people who are related to each other including those who are now dead” (Oxford Dictionary 2010:532). A family is formed by more than one person. This means even two closely related people can be regarded as a family. The other important fact that needs to be considered is that two or more people who do not have one or both parents can also be regarded as a family, as long as they are closely related, an example of this is ‘child-headed families’.

The family is the main organisation/institution where the first learning takes place. It is where a child is taught many things which include morality (good behaviour), conduct and other things. Learning within the family might take place whereby a parent or adult verbally or practically teaches the child. Children learn many things through the behaviour of the adults within the family. Kritzinger (2004:73) explains aspects concerning relationships within the family by stating that “Family cohesion refers to the emotional bonding between members of the family and the degree of individual autonomy they experience. There are four levels of cohesion; “very low (disengaged), moderately low (separated), moderately high (connected), and excessively high (enmeshed)”. Very low and moderately low levels of family cohesion mean there are problems and threats to this essential structure/institution called a ‘family’. Due to gaps and problems within the families, it becomes difficult for effective learning and transfer of morality to take place from elders to

children. This is where the church should assist to ensure that moral formation takes place from childhood.

The absence of one or both parents can have a negative impact on children and affects aspects of moral formation. The impact of the absence of parents is discussed in detail in chapter 2. “From the Renaissance, the Reformers, and Calvin in particular, borrowed the ideal of the moral shaping of societies. Conscientious parenting was important for both the public good and the well-being of the individual” (Spierling 2005:789). The Renaissance and the Reformer's view about shaping the morality of society compels us to look at the following aspects; shaping and developing morality at the appropriate stage to shape morality as well as the role players in shaping and developing morality. These and other questions must be answered to ensure the effective shaping of society on issues of morality. Although attentive parenting is important, it can be affected by the absence of one of the parents. “Early education was seen as important, and the role of fathers in educating the young was emphasized” (Cunningham 1995:43). This indicates the important role of the family in the life of children. The father as head of the family plays an important role within the family, especially for children. Unfortunately, one of the challenges faced by most families is absent fathers which opens critical gaps within the family. This can make it difficult for other family members to fully participate in the process of moral formation in children.

Grobbelaar and Breed (2016:193) link the family with the church and moral formation by indicating that “The household was spiritualised as a covenant community that served as a prototype for the church. The moral formation of children received great attention, and families had to become more child-oriented to produce upright and virtuous future citizens”. As I have indicated that family is where learning takes place first. This should be where the moral formation of children begins. Family and societal challenges such as child-headed families, the distance between children and parents due to work/profession or other reasons, divorce, conflicts and other reasons hinder some families from fully taking responsibility for the moral formation of their children. This makes it difficult for families to raise virtuous children.

Family as the primary institution has the responsibility over its members and children need to be given more attention when family members perform their different roles. Regardless of the situation within the family parents must not fail or cease to provide parental roles for their children.

### **1.4.2 Morality**

Morality can be regarded as one of the points of pride in family and society. A family takes pride in raising morally formed children while society takes pride in raising morally formed generations. The immorality of a child brings shame to the family while the immorality of a particular generation brings shame to society. Lack of morality is a concern to both family and society/community. In an African context morality is an important aspect whereby previously the whole community (not only the family) considered morals as important aspects which should be applied in everyday life.

Kritzinger (2004:118) explains the formation of the term morality by stating that “Morality is derived from the Latin word ‘*moralis*’ referring to orderly, legal and good conduct”. Society appreciates and accepts good conduct. When we talk about morality and a moral society or a moral generation we talk about a group of people who can live a good or virtuous life, people who behave in a morally acceptable manner, and people who choose to do legal things and abstain from illegal actions. Masitah 2019:914 emphasises the necessity of morality in defining this term by stating that “Morality is a basic element that must be studied and applied by all generations because it is the core of all religions. All religions aim to change the morality of society into perfect morality which will benefit society”. Masitah 2019 points out an important aspect of morality, this concept is not limited to certain people or religions, it applies to everyone. The most important aspect of morality is that it must be applied to our daily lives, activities, decisions and intentions. Its application by everyone will create peace in society and lead to a community with law-abiding citizens with fewer immoral activities. Applying morality to daily life has the potential to transform members of the community into a virtuous and principled society.

A lack of morality can lead us to the conclusion that most families no longer have the capacity for moral formation. A lack of morality during childhood requires family, the church and society to consider and start imparting 'moral formation' to children.

### **1.4.3 Moral Formation**

When we talk about moral formation concepts such as learning and development are very important. One may ask what happens during moral formation. This is the process where moral principles are transferred from one person/s to the other.

According to Motlhabi (2001:90) "In moral formation individuals are trained to become moral agents, and so to become people who are morally conscious and responsible, who are capable of behaving in ways considered morally worthy and acceptable". Moral formation challenges parents and the church to take steps in ensuring that people (children) understand the significance of moral and ethical life. After being taught and understanding the significance of morality in life they (children/youth) became good examples to others by living a moral life. The question that one may ask is, what is the right time for moral formation?

Reader (2008:86) directs a need for moral formation in children by stating that

Young children are portrayed as externalised in their orientation, motivated to conform to the external constraints by the fear of losing their parent's love or approval by the possibility of being rewarded in some way if they do as they are told. So they are presented as being pre-moral or pre-conventional in Kohlberg's terms, not at a stage where they can begin to think and make judgments based on anything other than learned behaviour.

If children are pre-moral this means it is during childhood when the moral formation is supposed to start. This is where life-long learning starts and moral formation can be regarded as a good

foundation for raising morally formed children. If childhood is the best stage to start moral formation, then children's ministry is the best tool and ministry to be used for moral formation. According to Motlhabi (2001:97) "Moral formation, ensures the development of a good character. Such character will help to bring about good moral actions, which in turn will result in good moral habits or virtues". Moral formation can bring good results to the community. Society and the church that consider moral formation as an important task become proactive in preventing negative effects/consequences which may come as a result of ignoring moral formation.

When done accordingly, moral formation can have positive results in producing well-mannered children and other members of the community who portray good and acceptable behaviour in their daily lives and through their decisions and actions.

#### **1.4.4 Ethics**

Every action or decision can either be good or bad. Decisions and actions taken by a person tell others about the morality of such a person. It is through decisions and actions that we see the ethics of an individual.

Crook (2013:3) defines ethics as,

A systematic critical study concerned with the moral evaluation of human conduct. The evaluation of past conduct however is not for creating a sense of guilt but of helping make decisions about the future. Its concern is 'what am I to do now? How am I to relate to other people? How am I to relate to the communities of which I am a part? Such evaluation requires some standard, some canon by which to measure.

In ethics, the conduct and behaviour of an individual can either be good or bad (ethical or unethical). The important thing is that the focus is not only on the current behaviour or conduct

but it's also on behaviour, conduct and decisions which will be made later or in future. This is important because an individual becomes aware of doing the right or the good thing in the future. The other important thing is that ethics also includes relating/relationships with others, good relationships with other learners, good relationships with members of the community, and good relationships with parents and churchmates. When we talk about children and ethics, this definition of ethics compels us to look at the definitions of 'morality' and 'moral formation'. According to Kritzinger (2004:67), "The word ethics has since come to mean not simply customary conduct, but good conduct as well as the conscious reflection on what is good (and why is it good). Ethics discusses the issues of good and evil, right and wrong". Kritzinger indicated important aspects of 'ethics'. Ethics goes beyond conduct and behaviour. It also includes being aware of what you do. This means learning should have taken place whereby a person understands the significance of his/her good action/behaviour and this happens through 'moral formation'.

Ethics has an element of judging or evaluating the decision or action among others. This is a concept that allows people to analyse the behaviour, situation, actions or decision to determine whether the behaviour, situation, actions or decision is acceptable or unacceptable, good or bad.

#### **1.4.5 Children's Ministry**

There are different ministries within the church e.g. men, women, children and youth ministry. Children's ministry is the foundation of all other ministries. This is where a faith-based life starts. In a case where a person joins a particular denomination or affiliates with Christianity at an adult stage, there is a catechism class for adults of different denominations. Other denominations have new converts classes for people who join the denomination at an adult age. This makes children's ministry a critical ministry for both the church and community, therefore children's ministry should not be overlooked.

What is children's ministry? According to Houser (2008:3),

Children's ministry is about building followers of Christ from physical infancy, rather than waiting until children become adults and having to tear down the building and rebuild. Why is it important? Because God says so, that's why.

It is important to note that children's ministry is mainly the role of the church. Children's ministry plays a role in laying good foundations during childhood to raise morally formed children and teach children the word of God. Jesus Christ did not overlook children during his ministry. It is therefore important for the church as the body of Christ not to overlook this ministry. When we talk about children's ministry the focus will be on Sunday school and catechisms because this is where we find children.

When we talk about children's ministry our foundation should be a 'theology of children'. According to Grobbelaar and Breed (2016:97),

The task of 'theologies of childhood' is to provide sophisticated understandings of children and childhood and our obligations to children themselves. Just as theologians have served the church by offering 'theologies' on a number of subjects of common concern such as 'theologies of just war', 'theologies of the church' or 'theologies of human sexuality', theologians can serve the entire church by crafting 'theologies of childhood': biblically-informed and sophisticated reflection on children and adults' obligations to them.

A theology of childhood makes us aware of important aspects of children's ministry for example; basic guidelines for having effective children's ministry, possible challenges and solutions of children's ministry and other aspects. These aspects and others must be considered when we talk about children's ministry. Where there is a child, there is a need for adult or parental care. This care is beyond basic needs such as shelter, food and other things. Parents have a role and obligation to raise children; however, it must be noted that this role is not just raising children, but raising morally formed children who will be responsible citizens/adults in the future. Ignorance of these obligations and responsibilities, and failure to consider them as well as a failure to fulfil them will have some negative impacts because it means the process of moral formation will not take place which may result in immoral children/generation. 'Sophisticated understandings of children and childhood' must be explained so that parents can overcome obstacles of raising a morally

conscious generation. As I have indicated that there are gaps and challenges in the families and this requires other institutions such as the church to play roles which were supposed to be played by the family for example 'moral formation in children'. Jesus Christ did not ignore children during his ministry, instead, he welcomed them and healed children who were sick. The church as the body of Christ must take responsibility for nurturing children and providing necessary guidance to children through children's ministry.

The church leaders need to create a platform for children at church through active and effective children's ministry. This means church leaders and parents have to do their level best to ensure that this ministry exists. By ensuring that children's ministry exists church leaders and parents will be doing what Christ did by allowing children to come to Him. Church leaders and parents have the responsibility of bringing children to the church and ministry that teach children about the kingdom of God while empowering them (children) to live a Godly moral life.

### **1.5 Conceptualisation of Key Concepts.**

Four main concepts that need to be conceptualised in this study are; children's ministry, morality, moral formation, and ethics.

Ethics and morality are inseparable.

There is acceptable and unacceptable behaviour. The behaviour may not be acceptable at home, school or within society. This brings a need to discover the meaning and definition of morality as it deals with issues of behaviour. "The word morality refers to commonly accepted behaviour within a society or accepted norms and values" (Kretzchmar, Bantley and Van Niekerk 2009:16). Morality is mainly about the good behaviour of the person. This includes good behaviour and adhering to principles which are acceptable to society. In this study, morality is viewed as an important principle which should be made known to children and guide their behaviour. Schweiker and Clairmont 2020:17 define morality as "a set of convictions and practices regarding the proper conduct of life and the kinds of persons and communities one should strive to become".

Although behaviour is the responsibility of each person when we talk about morality we view and analyse the behaviour of a person considering how other people (society) view the behaviour and actions of a person to be acceptable.

When we talk about morality the concept of ethics cannot be overlooked. “Ethics is an analysis of and a deliberate reflection on moral judgments, actions and lifestyle” (Kretzchmar, et al, 2009:16). Ethics gauge and evaluate the morality of a person. This is where a distinction is made between morality and immorality and this is mostly realized through the behaviour of an individual. This study views morality and ethics as interrelated concepts. According to Angle, 2004:18 Ethics includes judging good behaviour and, the analysis of both good and bad behaviour”. Although Angle 2004:18 attach behaviour to the definition of ethics, it is important to emphasise the fact that ethics also includes analysis and judgment of the actions, and intentions of the person.

Schweiker and Clairmont 2020:15 show us the link between ethics and morality by alluding that “Ethics is a form of meta-reflection that seeks to interpret the meaning of some ‘morality’ to assess its validity for orienting human existence”. Ethics and morality go hand in hand. Ethics enables one to analyse and make a judgment on the behaviour, actions, and intentions of a person/s, therefore these two terms can be regarded as inseparable.

In ethics, the conduct and behaviour of an individual can either be good or bad (ethical or unethical). The important thing is that the focus is not only on the current behaviour or conduct but it is about behaviour, conduct and decisions which will be made later or in future. This is important because an individual becomes aware of doing the right or the good thing in the future. The other important thing is that ethics also includes relating/relationships with others, good relationships with other learners, good relationships with members of the community, and good relationships with parents, colleagues and churchmates. When we talk about children and ethics, this definition of ethics compels us to look at the definitions of ‘moral formation’.

Meaning and definitions of ethics and morality as well as the relationship between these two concepts lead and encourage one to understand the term ‘moral formation. While ethics looks at the evaluation of morality, there is a need to teach people, particularly children and the younger generation morals and impart moral principles to them and this is where moral formation should be considered.

To have a morally formed generation means the morals of the children must be developed and shaped. This leads to the concept of moral formation. According to Motlhabi (2001:99) “Moral formation, strictly speaking, refers to the formation of character for it to steer our moral life in a way that is considered befitting human beings”. Moral formation focuses on two main things which are developing and training persons on issues of morality. The focus is more on shaping and developing a good character. Children are born knowing nothing; they learn everything as they grow. This learning includes good and bad, ethical and unethical, and moral and immoral things. This learning compels a necessity for moral formation and it is important to do this in childhood. In moral formation people specifically, children are taught to act and behave morally. The importance of doing this in childhood is that a good character can be developed from an early age. This should be a process throughout the development stages of a child to develop a morally formed generation and have adults who understand the significance of morality in the future. Although moral formation can be done on and by everyone, focusing on children, Cavalekskie 2016:4 says “Moral formation is partly about teaching children the bounds of what some specific moral community deems to decent and acceptable behaviour”. For moral formation to take place teaching must be considered. When doing moral formation people (children) are taught and referred to socially acceptable behaviour and a good way of living. Moral formation must also include training, whereby people (children) are trained to be morally firm in their actions and decisions.

Some institutions play significant roles in the moral formation of children and the Church is one of them. Amongst ministries within the church, children’s ministry is specifically established for children. It is through children’s ministry that the church can carry out moral formation in children. “Children ministry refers to all those ministerial practices and activities that are done with

children” (Csinos and Beckwith 2013:37). This is a ministry which focuses on the needs of children, particularly spiritual needs, however, this ministry is not limited to the spiritual needs of children. It is a ministry that looks at nurturing, developing and mentoring children to be better and responsible people now and in the future. This ministry includes Sunday school and a confirmation class where children are taught the word of God. The impact of what is taught in the church should be seen in the community, therefore this makes the church a relevant institution to play a part in moral formation. This study looks at children’s ministry beyond Sunday school and broadens the scope of this concept to accommodate churches that engage in children’s ministry activities on other days of the week. Costock and Hamilton outline some importance of children’s ministry by indicating that ‘children’s ministry helps the church to grow numerically’. Since well this ministry is mainly concerned with children’s activities, the church gains from the existence and effective operation of a children’s ministry. This is the ministry that has the potential to increase church membership and help children to be spiritually conscious.

## **1.6 Theoretical Framework**

There are various theories of ethics and theories of morality that can be applied to moral formation. These theories can assist us to use different approaches and institutions to raise morally formed children. The Church as an institution can be used in assisting families and society to raise morally conscious children.

According to Heller (1990:1), “Moral philosophies should be formulated to provide guidelines for all possible moral advice given to any actor who asks ‘what is the right thing for me to do?’ in any given situation”. Moral teachings and moral formation should be guided by relevant theories. This will assist those who are responsible for moral formation on how to do it and make them aware of important aspects which need to be covered in the process of moral formation.

Various scholars and theologians developed ethical theories.

- **Augustine**

Augustine was a philosopher and a bishop of Hippo. His focus in terms of studies was on Catholicism, Reformation as well as confessions. He did not overlook issues of ethics and morality, as they form part of daily life.

Voster (2004:70) defines the ethical theory of Augustine by stating that,

God is the absolute good and the created human being's existence and goodness are founded in the goodness of God. Augustine grounded his ethical view on this principle. The Good in man can only be good when his life is determined by his dependence on God and his living relationship with God. God must be the centre of Life.

The centre of a good life is God. On their own, people cannot do good; it is God who enables people to do good. One of the things that can be considered in the view of Augustine is that this world is full of evil and if God is excluded goodness will not prevail. This view is likely to be rejected by those who believe that goodness exists in people who don't believe in the existence of God.

Augustine shares similar views with Karl Barth. According to Kretzschmar, Bantley and Van Niekerk (2009:75) on Barth, "humanity cannot be moral through its strength or knowledge. It depends on God to reveal what it means to live a moral life". Both Augustine and Barth show the weaknesses and limitations of human beings and the dependency of human beings on God to act and behave well. The initiator of goodness and morality (God) is the one who guides His people on how to be good. According to Fitzpatrick (2008:9),

The argument that only religion can provide a secure foundation for morality is well known. He further suggests that It is almost obligatory to quote Ivan in 'the Brothers Karamazov' to the effect that if there is no God everything is permitted. But the idea that without love or fear of God human has no convincing reasons to act ethically is much older.

God through His word (the Bible) established morals. The Bible, therefore, should be considered when we talk about morality and approach moral issues/topics. We also realise the danger of

excluding God in approaching morality, as St Augustine indicated. If there is no God, it means His laws are also not considered and everyone will do his/her will irrespective of whether that action hurt another person or not. Here we realise the reason behind Augustine's view of 'God as the centre of goodness'. Fitzpatrick (2008) and Voster (2004) share similar opinions by attaching love to morality. Voster (2004:71) further explains that,

Man can be shaped by one of two loves, namely; worldly love and heavenly love. Worldly love is the essence of self-love and it leads to imperiousness. Heavenly love is love for God and the neighbour and it leads to an attitude of service. The motivation for ethical behaviour is the search for happiness; the core of ethical behaviour is heavenly love and the purpose of the behaviour is peace.

A child doesn't shape him/herself but is shaped by elders/youth. Two types of love indicated by Augustine are important; people who are created by God live in this world. The reason for talking about heavenly love is that without God who is in heaven, people cannot have love because God is love. Having heavenly love will lead one to live a peaceful and moral life because he/she will do the will of God.

When we talk about moral formation 'heavenly love' should be considered because the love of God (heavenly love) means the presence of God who wants His people to live an ethical life. Detaching God from human actions and decisions can lead to immoral actions and decisions. Therefore, it is important to link God and His love to morality, to have moral-driven children and society.

- **Luther**

Luther is a former Catholic priest who later established reformation due to his doubts and different views on the catholic faith.

According to Voster (2004:73) “Luther’s well-known thesis, namely righteousness through faith alone, can be seen as the paradigm for his ethic. Christian ethical behaviour is the fruit of redemption”. Faith seems to be important according to Luther. This is one of the Solas of reformation ‘*Sola Fide*’. When we talk about ethical and moral matters, faith should be considered. This shows an element of considering God and God’s presence in ethical and moral issues. Those who are redeemed by God live ethical lives. A link can be made between the theories of Luther and Augustine. In Augustine’s view, man cannot do good on his own, while Luther sees ethical behaviour as a result of redemption. God who redeemed His people is the initiator and the centre of ethical and moral life and behaviour. His absence means bad and unethical things are allowed because He is the God of order and justice.

The foundation of ethics according to Luther’s theory is faith in Christ. This takes us to the words of Paul in Philippians 4:13 “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me”. Christ enables his followers to live a moral life. Christ is the centre of morality and moral formation. Alone and on his own a man cannot live a moral life. This means faith is important for every individual.

Voster (2004:73) continues to elaborate on Luther’s theory of ethics by stating that “Man, who has been justified through faith, is capable of doing good deeds. Only a good person can do good deeds. The reversal of sinful being can only happen through faith in Christ on the grounds of the free grace of God”. Luther also brings Christ to the centre of his views on ethics. Sin involves some unethical actions and behaviour, and it is (through) Christ only that sin can be forgiven, and the sinner is made a new morally formed person.

- **Calvin**

John Calvin is one of the reformers and a philosopher. He was influenced by Luther’s views and teachings.

According to Cunningham (1995:42),

Calvin's theology on childhood was informed by the moral and educational agendas of the Renaissance and Reformation. The Reformation was strongly influenced by the Renaissance, which revived interest in classical times and endeavoured to shape a more virtuous society. The Renaissance regarded family as a prototype of the state and children were seen as holding 'the key to the future of the state'.

John Calvin supported a theology of childhood and instilled morality during childhood. The best way of creating a moral and ethical society and raising an ethical generation is moral formation through children's ministry. The importance of a childhood theology gives children's ministry value. Challenges experienced by most families make it difficult if not impossible for a family to play the role of moral formation. As the moral formation of children does not take place due to challenges faced by families the church needs to ensure that the process of moral formation does not cease. The church can perform this task through children's ministry.

In addition to what Cunningham said about Calvin's theology of childhood, Voster (2004:75) alludes,

For Calvin, the central question of all human behaviour is: how does God receive his glory? However, this does not mean that Calvin retreated into another worldly pietistic attitude to life. The love of God and grace must bring man to a life in service of God. This life in service of God entails that the Christian has the calling to Christianize the structures of society. Out of gratitude, the believer must produce fruits of faith in all spheres of life. Without the free grace of God man naturally tends to do evil. He is enchained in the servitude of sin and he cannot move himself to goodness.

Calvin put God in human behaviour. God must be seen through the good deeds and behaviour of those who believe in Him. This means the behaviour of those who know God is seen through their actions. Calvin does not want people to separate God from their actions and behaviour. Godly

behaviour and action must not end within the church premises, but they must be practised everywhere. This means that society must see the good deeds and behaviour learned in the church. It is important to teach congregants a moral and ethical life from childhood and children's ministry can assist in this regard. The fruits of God's teachings must be beneficial to society.

Out of three theories from three scholars (Augustine, Luther and Calvin), the views of Calvin and Luther are the most relevant for this study, while the view of Augustine serves as a bond that connects the views of Calvin and Luther. The view of Calvin shows us that children's ministry is essential and that moral formation should start in childhood. John Calvin also indicates the expected results of moral formation, which is to create and form a virtuous society and generation. To link the views of Calvin with the views of Luther, Augustine raises an important view that God cannot be ignored when we talk about a moral and ethical life because on his own man cannot do good, it is God who enables man to do good. There are goals and expectations for moral formation. Luther's views amongst others indicate the expected result of moral formation is 'ethical Christian behaviour'. The results of moral formation in ethical behaviour come from God who redeemed his people to live an ethical life.

## **1.7 Research design and methodology**

Research Methodology and Design provide guidelines which assist the researcher to cover important aspects of the research topic.

### **1.7.1 Research Design**

A research design is part of a research project where the researcher indicates and explains the type/method he/she going to use for his/her research. According to Seale (2004:130), the research design maps out the research project. This is part of the research project where the researcher

outlines the research method he/she is going to use in his/her research. This study adopted a qualitative approach.

Leavy (2017:124) states that a qualitative approach is used to explore the meaning and people's independent life experiences. This approach allows researchers to build a strong understanding of a topic, and to explain the meanings people ascribe to their lives, activities, and situations. This approach is inductive and it generates meaning to produce rich descriptive data. Qualitative methodology enables the researcher to get quality data from the participants. In support of what Leavy said, Bazeley (2013:3) states that "Qualitative research is a covering term for a variety of research approaches that tend to focus on the qualities of things more than their quantity". The reason for using this research design is that it enables the researcher to acquire detailed descriptive information about the research topic. A qualitative approach is the most relevant methodology for this study because it enables the researcher to get the detailed experience, understanding and views of the participants on issues of morality and children's ministry. This also enables the researcher to understand the views of different people (participants) on 'children and morality' in depth.

### **1.7.2 Study Population**

The researcher needs to know and identify a group of people who might possess the information required for the research topic. These are part of the sources of data for research. This leads the researcher to identify a population for his/her study. Lim and Ting (2012:2) define a population as a "group of people or subjects that poses similar characteristics". For this study, the research population is all Sunday school teachers, children's ministry leaders and church leaders/pastors from churches that have Sunday school/ children's ministry, in Mahikeng, North West Province, South Africa.

### **1.7.3 Sampling**

A researcher cannot collect data from the entire population. This is where sampling plays an important role. From the population, the researcher needs to narrow the focus to the people/interviewees who are likely to possess sufficient knowledge of the research topic.

Participants were purposively selected for this study. According to Swinton and Mowat (2006:69), purposive sampling is the process of selecting a manageable size from the population who are likely to answer the research questions. The researcher must select people who are most likely to possess information about the research topic, research questions and interview questions. In this study, fifteen (15) participants which comprised of Sunday school or Catechism teachers were selected. Participants are selected based on their years of experience. The more years of experience in children's ministry within the church, the more knowledge and experience. Therefore, participants who have many years of experience in children's ministry were selected as participants for this study, for sampling purposes, preference was given to participants with 5 years of experience and above in children's ministry.

Participants who were interviewed are Pastors and Sunday school or Catechism teachers. The reason for choosing these participants is that they are implementers of children's ministry and they possess information which is required, and which is useful for this research project. This study is not based on a particular denomination or congregation, but it is based on and conducted within the Christian community in Mahikeng. Thus, participants were chosen from different denominations within the boundaries of Mahikeng as those denominations form part of the Christian community within this area.

#### **1.7.4 Data collection**

In-depth Interviews involving structured and semi-structured questions were used as data collection methods in this study. The main reason why interviews are chosen as a method of collecting data in this study is that the research topic amongst others enables the interviewees to give their experience, detailed understanding and knowledge of the research topic. The researcher

needs to formulate the interview questions. This enables him/her to draft questions which assist in gathering important and relevant information which covers all important aspects of the study.

Swinton and Mowat (2006:63) define interviews as,

concentrated human encounters that take place between the researcher who is seeking knowledge and the research participant who is willing to share their experience and knowledge. Such encounters are designed to enable the researcher to access and understand the unique meanings, interpretations and perspectives that the participant places on the chosen subject.

A research interview takes place between the interviewer who in most cases is the researcher and the participant/s (the interviewees). The researcher must create a conducive environment where the participants/interviewee can answer questions to the best of his/her ability or knowledge. In this study one (1) minister and fourteen (14), Sunday school/children ministry teachers were interviewed.

### **1.7.5 Data Analysis**

For a researcher to find meaning from the raw material collected and compile a structured meaningful report, it is compulsory to engage in the process of data analysis.

Thomas and Hodges (2010:56) define data analysis as “Analysis of material normally involves developing a set of categories, topic areas or themes. Any data storage system should allow easy identification and retrieval of case study material and quotations”. For this study, data is classified according to sub-topic areas and themes. Data were analysed according to themes and sub-topics that emerged from the collected data. Microsoft word is used to type, and store data collected through interviews. Data is stored on a password-protected laptop and folders are named according to codes representing each participant to ensure adherence to confidentiality.

### **1.7.6 Ethical consideration**

Ethical consideration is important for research. Overlooking ethical considerations may have negative results on the research or put the researcher and the participants at risk. The researcher must protect him/herself, his/her research work and the participants of the study. This way, the researcher can identify risks associated with the research study and minimise or prevent them.

To ensure adherence to ethical considerations in this study, the researcher followed the guidelines provided by Robson (2011). According to Robson (2011:200), it is not always possible to verify if everyone is available to participate in the study before data collection. However, he highlights the importance of informing participants about the study. Therefore, the researcher ensured that no one was forced to participate in this research study. All participants were informed of important and basic details of the study including what is expected from them. After explaining the aims of the study and being informed about their right to accept or decline to participate in this study, informed consent forms (**Addendum B**) were provided to request participants to participate in this research project. Participants were also informed that they have the right to decline or withdraw at any given time.

An interview as a method of collecting data was used for this research study. The life and health of the participants were not put at risk. Data were collected during the Covid-19 pandemic however at the time when the interviews were conducted, restrictions on social interaction were lifted. Therefore, the researcher ensured adherence to social distancing, wearing of masks and regular sanitisation.

### **1.7.7 Methodology**

There are different methodologies in doing practical theology, these include Osmer, Zerfass, and Browning. Osmer's methodology was used in this research study.

Osmer's methodology is a model of practical theology designed by Richard Osmer. According to Osmer (2011:2), this model entails; *Descriptive-empirical task* where the researcher collects information to understand incidents, circumstances, people or the environment. The *Interpretive task* is to discover the cause of the incidents and circumstances and why are they happening. This can be done through consultation with various sources of information. After the interpretive task, the *Normative task* investigates what should be happening while the *Pragmatic task* suggests or brings a response to the situation, incident, people or environment. The pragmatic task can assist in suggesting a solution to the problem.

The different tasks of Osmer's methodology can assist to unpack and analyse issues related to moral formation. The descriptive task of this methodology requires us to consult different sources on moral formation. This includes the origin or history of moral formation and its practicality. The practical part of moral formation covers aspects such as how society understands moral formation which is one of the things which should be discovered by the interviewee of this study.

After understanding different contexts of 'moral formation' which is enabled by the descriptive task, the interpretive task of this methodology requires one to observe the practicality of 'moral formation' through the actions and behaviour of the people to interpret them against our understanding obtained through the descriptive task. The interpretive task mainly assists us to discover the reasons and motives behind certain or every action or behaviour. This task is very relevant for this study because it assists us to learn whether a particular behaviour is displayed or action is taken based on moral consciousness. This will assist in discovering whether people strive to take moral and ethical decisions and live an ethical life.

Collecting information is the first task of Osmer's methodology, which is relevant to the first chapter of this research study. Osmer 2008:5 explain the importance of this task by alluding that 'Gathering information that helps us discern patterns and dynamic is the descriptive-empirical task

of practical theological interpretation'. Without gathering relevant information about the subject, the researcher will not be able to 'discern patterns' and apply the relevant ones to the research project. Osmer 2008:7 continue to elaborate on the importance of an interpretive task by indicating that 'The interpretive description of practical theological interpretation draws on theories of this sort to better understanding and explain why certain events are occurring'. This task gives the researcher the freedom to consult various sources to understand the motives and reasons for certain behaviours, actions events et cetera.

Based on what is happening and why is it happening, the reasons and motives behind actions, we can discover gaps and problems; moral degeneration within the society specifically among children and youth and its roots or causes as well as lack of moral formation. This leads us to develop an intervention which will be determined by understanding 'what ought to be happening (the normative task). This is where we look at institutions and other role players in the process of moral formation, what should the family as an institution be doing? What the church ought to be doing? What parents ought to be doing? As the role players and relevant institutions for the moral formation of children.

The important and progressive task is 'pragmatic' where the plan of action should be developed. Here, the focus is on how the church through children's ministry develops and raises morally formed children. Also, this looks at how the church through the children's ministry provides necessary assistance for effective moral formation in children where there are family problems for example in child-headed families.

## **1.8 Conclusion**

Morality challenges on children and youth as well as moral degeneration within our communities and challenges within some families which hinder moral formation in children call for the church's intervention and response in a proactive manner. The church is therefore tasked with the responsibility of assisting society to raise a morally formed generation. Though a qualitative

approach was used in this study to discover how the church can minimise immorality and instil morals in children through children's ministry. This enabled us to discover and realise the importance of moral formation in children. This chapter is based on the descriptive task of Osmer's methodology to answer the descriptive answer of 'what is going on?' Background of the study problem, research problem (there is moral decay and moral unconsciousness in children and youth within society due to lack and decline of moral formation in some families) and research question provided information and answer to what is going on in our community regarding behaviour and actions of children that reflects the level of morality in the community.

## **CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 Introduction.**

The process of moral formation requires joint efforts from different people such as parents, guardians, and any members of the community and different institutions such as family and church. This important process needs to be directed to children and youth, and the mentioned parties and institutions have a role to play in ensuring that moral formation is achieved in children. Where challenges hinder families and communities from providing moral formation in children, the church should assist by making moral formation in children part of their programme and impart moral lessons in children through its ministries such as children's ministry or Sunday school. The roles of different people and institutions providing moral formation in children are discussed in detail in this chapter. Since well this study used Osmer's methodology, this chapter is based on the interpretive task of the methodology. According to Smith 2010:104, "The interpretive task seeks reasons for the phenomena that were observed during the descriptive task, the key question now becomes, what is it going on? The interpretive must identify the issues embedded within the episodes, situation and the contexts he has observed". The interpretive task is a continuation of the descriptive task. In applying the interpretive task to this chapter literature was consulted to answer the question posed by the interpretive question 'what is going on'? in our community? What is the state/level of morality in our community? The interpretive tasks require the researcher to look at and study various aspects of the problem/topic. Issues and subjects embedded within the situation and challenges of morality on children include; the necessity of morality, developing the character of children, the role of family on the morality of children as well as the role of church and children ministry on the moral formation of children.

### **2.2 Theoretical and practicality of morality and moral formation.**

Theoretically, it is evident that there is sufficient debate on morality and moral formation, however, there is a need to focus on the practicality of these two concepts because their importance in the lives of the people is seen when they are put into practice. The theoretical and practicality of these concepts are discussed in detail below.

### **2.2.1 Morality.**

There are lots of actions and behaviours that are rejected and condemned by members of society for example theft and violence. Such actions and behaviours are rejected and condemned by society regardless of whether they are beneficial to or accepted by certain individuals. On the other hand, there are acceptable actions and behaviours within society, for example, passivity. These issues lead to a quest for further engagement in morality.

Kretzschmar, Bentley and Van Niekerk (2009:16) define morality as commonly accepted behaviour within a society. This includes accepted moral norms and values. The behaviour of an individual can either be acceptable or unacceptable. Although the behaviour of an individual reflects his/her personality, character, preferences, dislikes and other things, a society where individual lives have commonly expected acceptable behaviour from every individual member of the community. Society does not expect and cannot accept violence from children. Good conduct and behaviour from children (obedient, non-violent behaviour in children) are accepted by most/all communities. This shows how societies regard and evaluate the behaviour of every individual. Boutellier and Boutellier (2000:11) allude that morality changes from time to time and cultural aspects should also be considered when we talk about morality. It is important to be more practical when talking about morality in our current situations without compromising its value. People should guard against being more theoretical or being stuck in the past when it comes to issues of morality. Members of the community, particularly elders should be able to apply theoretical and experienced/observed understanding of morality to the postmodern way of living. As culture changes with time morality must not be compromised just because people adopt different ways of living. It shouldn't be difficult to live a moral life in a postmodern era. Morality must therefore change with time to accommodate the new way of living for the young generation to live a moral life in line with the postmodern way of living.

As articulated by Boutellier and Boutellier (2000) and Kretzschmar et al (2009) a strong distinction between acceptable and non-acceptable behaviour and actions should be precise with the practicality of morality. Society accepts behaviour and actions that promote, harmony, peace, protection of property, and law-abiding, within the community and rejects behaviour and actions that lead to theft, violence, lawlessness and violation of human rights. The practice of morality by members of society contributes to good relations, well-being, and dignity of society.

### **2.2.2 The necessity of Morality.**

Acceptable actions and behaviour should be beneficial to society. Morality focuses on actions and conduct which are acceptable to members of society, this makes it important to be taught and imitated by members of the community because it can create behavioural tolerance and harmony in the community when practised. Other matters of importance of morality are discussed below.

According to Kretzschmar and Hulley (2016:20), morality provides a life purpose for individuals and society. Morality can provide solutions to societal problems such as violence, theft, and others. Furthermore, it is important to consider morality in the present time if we want to minimise or prevent the said problems in the future.

In addition to providing meaning and purpose to life, morality does not only provide solutions, but it can also minimise or prevent some social problems mentioned by Kretzschmar and Hulley (2016), especially when imparted during childhood because children will grow up understanding basic aspects of morality and applying them to their lives as they grow. Impartation of morality during childhood is providing a good foundation for children. Morality is imparted at an early age (childhood) and can assist in minimising societal problems such as violence, and theft that might arise in future. It is, therefore, crucial to impart morality in childhood, however, this does not prevent the impartation of morals to youth and adults.

Boutellier and Boutellier (2000:4), similarly to Kretzschmar and Hulley (2016), link criminality with a lack of morality. Indicating that criminality is perpetuated by a lack of morals, and many cultures disapprove of elements of criminality. Thus, the absence of morality and moral unconsciousness can lead to a lot of social problems which include crime, violence et cetera. If crime is regarded as a moral problem, it is clear that in most cases crime can be committed by people who are either morally unconscious or who don't value morals. Based on this it is therefore important for society, families and the church to make an effort of making people aware of morals and the importance of morality in their lives. The level of crime, other social problems and responsibilities of the church and members of society towards those social moral problems (including moral crisis) indicate how the church and society value morality. Failure to respond to moral challenges and problems will lead to the deterioration or collapse of morality within the community. These challenge members of the community especially adults and the church to continue to transfer morals to children in the form of moral lessons and living an exemplary moral life.

Morality guides harmonious and peaceful relations among members of society as well as minimising illegal activities which might be committed by some members of society. It serves as a compass that directs those who have it, in a moral way and direction in the journey of life. This compass should be given to children so that it may guide them to a moral life as they grow. It has the power to create societal unity when put into practice because individual members of society will be acting and behaving in an acceptable manner which makes them acceptable in society.

### **2.2.3 Moral Formation.**

On his/her own an individual; especially a child cannot be aware of (some) acceptable norms and values. This serves as an indication that something must be done to teach people (children specifically in this case) about morality which leads to the process of moral formation.

Motlhabi (2007:99) places the character at the centre of moral formation. A well-formed character contributes to the formation of morality which stimulates living a moral life. Moral formation enables one to do good to others.

Moral formation, strictly speaking, refers to the formation of character for it to steer our moral life in a way that is considered befitting human beings. Good character is the core of our moral life, the driving force of our moral outlook and practice. As the core of our moral life, it corresponds more to our being than to our intellectual conviction or our deeds.

Moral formation includes educating people about morals and encouraging them to put what they have learned into practice. Moral formation creates moral consciousness which assists people to act and behave morally. Therefore, the focus must be placed on the character of a person for one to be morally formed and conscious. A good character can be regarded as the source of moral formation because when the character is formed or shaped to be good the process of moral formation can be easy and the person can depict morality through actions and behaviour.

Kretzschmar (2020:3) views moral formation as an act of self-respect which allows one to continue doing good, have self-control, and value and respect the right of other people. One of today's challenges is misunderstanding and the misuse of freedom. Some people use freedom to hurt and violate the rights and freedom of others. Other people are self-centred where they only look for their benefit and interest, even if they benefit at the cost of other people. The other problem experienced today, especially among children and youth is a lack of self-control. A person who lacks self-control is a danger to him/herself and society. This is where the necessity of moral formation in people's daily lives is realised. The process of moral formation amongst others teaches a person to control him/herself which is important for every person. Moral formation needs to be taught especially during childhood, this enables the parents/guardians, or whoever instructs on moral formation, to raise morally conscious children. The benefits of doing this in childhood can be seen during youth and adulthood. Amongst others, moral formation can break self-centeredness and selfishness by making an individual aware that the well-being of other people is also important and must be considered when one takes a particular decision or action.

When a good character is formed, it will enable and assist the person to grow in doing good, treating others with respect and striving for peaceful relations within and amongst members of society. Moral formation encourages the depiction of one's value and understanding of morality through his/her actions, behaviour, decisions and relation to other people. Acknowledging the view that morality changes give us a task to strive for continuous teaching, impartation and learning of morals and applying them in our context.

Helping a person to grow in doing good should be done with good intentions of grooming a good person not manipulating the person to be what you want him/her to be. The person must be trained/taught to distinguish between good and bad, right and wrong and be in a position to choose and pursue good and right willingly. Moral formation must teach a person to take moral actions and decisions independently.

Doing moral formation from a Christian perspective during childhood, children's ministry is the most relevant in the church. This will be discussed in detail later in this study.

#### **2.2.4 Character Development is part of moral formation.**

Moral formation is centred on character. Moral formation can be built on good character. Motlhabi (2007:97) views the character as the driving force of our actions. This means character determines our behaviour whether good or bad. Actions and behaviour are determined and influenced by character hence it is very important to look into character development when dealing with moral formation. This makes character development relevant to moral formation because it enables the process of moral formation to bear more positive results such as morally formed children and society especially when it's done during childhood.

Joe, Robert and Creech (2017:4) link character with ethics by stating that “Character is the basis of all ethical decisions”. Based on this statement, character is also important when it comes to decision-making. Although it is possible to develop or shape character at any age, if developed during childhood, the character can assist children to make ethical decisions, even beyond childhood. It is therefore important to make character development part of moral formation for children. (Motlhabi 2007:97) likens good character with a good tree that produces good fruits’ while contrary to this a bad character is like a ‘bad tree produces bad fruits’ arguing that good character leads to good actions and behaviour. Amongst others, character development shapes the behaviour of an individual which is what other people observe when they see or interact with the person.

If a good character is developed, whether during childhood or at any age, it will assist and motivate the person to live a moral life. The moral life is determined and directed by good character. Christ himself understood the importance of a good character which leads to a Godly moral life. As noted by Joe, Robert and Creech (2017:4), “Jesus stressed the truth in His teachings, especially in the sermon on the mount (Matt 5-7)”. The interpretation by these scholars is that ethical conduct and behaviour were at the centre of Christ's message.

Members of society need to pay attention to developing good characters for children for them (children) to live a moral life and become morally conscious. The moral formation is a process, which means it continues even beyond childhood. This is emphasised by Motlhabi (2007:99), by alluding that it is possible to develop the character to be better. This includes the process of ‘striving for perfection in behaviour, decisions, and actions in the process of human development. Character development is a process. It is possible that a child who was taught morals during childhood can become immoral and rebellious in youth or adulthood, hence it is important to keep on developing and nurturing the character of an individual (Child) to do good even beyond childhood. Crooke (2015:15) emphasises the importance of the combination of character development and morals by alluding that “To educate a man in mind and not in morals is to educate a menace to society”. In other words, children's development must include developing their

character, and ethical values to bear results such as ‘respect, responsibility, perseverance, honesty, fortitude, fairness and compassion’ which will generally have a positive impact on society. It is important to develop a character which is guided by moral principles. Religion, specifically Christianity in this regard, can assist in developing good character in children and the church as a Christian institution can play a significant role in developing and shaping good character in children. Crooke (2015) directs our goal and focus to adolescents when he talks about ‘developing character’. This is important because adolescence is critical for children, and it has an impact on society. Therefore, moral formation needs to be developed to save and try to rescue children from immoral activities such as violence and theft which might destroy their lives and future. Character development is inseparable from moral formation because when a character is shaped and groomed to be good it makes the process of moral formation bear good results which is a moral and principled person.

As much as the moral formation is not static, character development is also not static. The possibility of a character changing for good gives hope that moral formation can be developed at any stage of life by shaping the character of an individual. However, it is most appropriate and easier developed in childhood. On the other hand, the possibility of a character changing for good gives hope that even the immoral and morally unconscious can be taught morals and changed to good and be morally conscious. This possibility challenges society to continue with moral formation even beyond childhood as a way of developing morally conscious members of society and promoting a moral life in society.

### **2.2.5 Moral formation in children.**

Children are vulnerable members of society who need appropriate education and training which will enlighten them about acceptable and unacceptable actions and behaviour in society. Failure to provide such education and training (moral formation) will lead to having immoral children.

Kretzschmar (2020:4) alerts us to be careful in promoting moral formation in children, by arguing that,

Moral formation must avoid both indoctrination (excessive and rigid moral control) and relativism (insufficient loving guidance and support). Children and young people need to imbibe moral norms, such as being fair and caring towards others and be guided to develop sound attitudes and to act with honesty and respect.

Moral formation can be regarded as a process of educating people (children) about values, principles and norms. Parents need to provide this kind of education for their children. This is a way of raising a morally conscious generation of children. Moral formation in children should be carried out in a manner where children are taught and trained to make moral decisions independently. Moral formation must be a process of empowering people (particularly children) to consciously live moral lives and make moral decisions independently. Vest (2000:62) shares similar views with Kretzschmar (2020), by alluding that “Christians should not try to control or repress desire but to train desire so that they long for what is right and good”. This means, that doing good and living a moral life should be done willingly and voluntarily because one understands the importance of morality. Moral formation for children must not be an act of imposing beliefs and a lifestyle on children but a process of empowering a child to understand and be able to distinguish between good and bad, right and wrong and independently be in a position to make a moral decision or take moral action. Moral formation must create and revive a continuous willingness to do good and right in children. Parents and the Church must take responsibility for providing such education and training to children. Crooke (2015:14) brings the parental role in moral formation discussion by pointing out that “parents should take a leading role in moral formation by becoming primary ‘moral mentors’ of their children”. This is important because the relationship that parents form with their children affects the community. He further argues that although the emphasis is always placed on the link of morality to society this is seldom addressed in line with religion and spirituality. Family and religion play important roles in the moral formation of children. Parents are the first teachers of their children, especially in moral-related lessons. This makes the family an important and initial institution for learning and teaching the children. Challenges and problems in some families can hinder effective learning and moral impartation to children (this will be discussed in detail later). Learning and teaching morality to

children is not restricted to family, religious institutions such as churches can also play an important role in the moral formation of children.

Children learn quickly and they can learn anything, whether good or bad. It is therefore important for parents to take it upon themselves to teach their children to differentiate between what is good and bad, Godly and evil, and acceptable and unacceptable because the world might teach children wrong, immoral and noxious actions and behaviour. The church needs to take ownership of the moral formation and equip members, especially parents, with Biblical information to use during moral formation at home. Moral formation in children is part of empowering them to sieve moral from immoral, Godly from evil, and acceptable from unacceptable actions and behaviour from their peers, community, and media. Moral formation should not be done haphazardly. There must be goals and aims in moral formation, which include making the recipients aware of morality and raising morally conscious children.

### **2.3 Moral crisis and challenges.**

The absence of morality is a situation where some members of society do not consider aspects of morality in their actions and behaviour with others. Moral unconsciousness is a situation where some members of society especially children and youth are not aware of the importance of moral principles in their actions and behaviour. Moral degeneration can be regarded as a state where some members of society no longer consider the importance of morality in their actions and behaviour.

The absence of morality, moral unconsciousness and moral degeneration are among the indicators of moral crisis and challenges. What makes things worse is that these indicators and others can lead to other social problems such as violence and theft et cetera.

Nikolova (2018:7) views the cause of the moral crisis and challenges as God's response to human disobedience, by alluding that,

the causes for the current crisis and, more specifically for the current court of God has always been the same: the apostasy of mankind from God. Exactly the sin of this apostasy has created the crisis, and God allowed it, in order to make people come to their senses, to become more spiritual and return to Him. For modern sins bear contemporary moral and spiritual crises. God uses modern means to punish people today.

Nikolova's view can serve as a guideline to minimise moral crises and challenges. People should obey God, do his will, and act and behave in Godly moral manners. Although there are people who do not believe in God, this must not discourage those who believe in him to strive to live a moral life and transfer moral lessons to children. Nikolova views the moral crisis as God's punishment that calls for His people to repent, go back to Him and do what He instructs His people to do. Nikolova's view supports the fact that God is the initiator of morality and He expects His people to live a moral life. When God's people depart from His word and will they call punishment for themselves which results from immoral actions and behaviour.

Kretzschmar (2005:154) acknowledges moral crisis by stating that, Africa is closer to a situation where morality will be in turmoil. The chaotic state of morality can be regarded as a moral crisis. Amongst others, the high rate of crime, violence and corruption in our societies are some of the problems that can be associated with the deterioration of morality and moral unconsciousness within members of society. This calls for urgent attention and response to minimise them through the process of moral formation. Boutellier and Boutellier (2000:4) concur with Professor Kretzschmar by linking illegal and unacceptable actions such as crime with lack of morality by indicating that "The way criminality is viewed nowadays can grant us some insight into the morality of our times. The criminality question has come to serve as a spearhead in the debate on the morality of modern society". Criminal actions make one question the morality of those who commit a crime and other illegal activities. The morally conscious person can distinguish between good and bad, right and wrong, and possibly legal and illegal actions and opt to act good. Illegal activities, in general, raise concerns about the morality of the people who commit them and it is an indication of moral unconsciousness.

Failure to address moral challenges can lead to unrest within families and society. Kretzschmar (2005:153) further discusses moral challenges by stating that,

Elderly people lament daily they are meeting behaviour that shocks them: sexual immorality, affectless, (emotionless, uncaring) relationships, scepticism about religious matters, and many things which hasten the old to their graves. Middle-aged people lament about children they fail to control and the youth complain of a lack of example from the older members of society.

Moral crisis hits hard on parents who understand how it leads to other social problems such as violence, and crime. A good exemplary life plays an important role especially on issues of morality because even when youth and children are not taught matters of morality they can imitate and learn it from practical examples of those who are living a moral life. If elders do not teach youth and children morality society might experience a situation whereby children have no (or have only a few) good exemplary morally formed people in the future.

Masitah (2021:156) acknowledges the morality crisis and challenges facing our communities by alluding that “the number of immoral cases at this time confirms the fact that the cultivation of moral values is not good. So it is necessary to specifically examine what causes immoral behaviour to occur”. Masitah views moral crises and challenges from another view, in other words, immoral behaviour and other moral challenges and crisis prove that family, church and community are not doing enough to cultivate/instil morals in children (and youth) which lead to problems resulting from morality gaps and moral unconsciousness (for example theft, violence, bullying, et cetera). Fortunately, Masitah holds the view that we need to discover the cause of moral crises and challenges. This is in line with the Descriptive-empirical and Interpretive tasks of Osmer’s (2011:2) methodology of practical theology whereby, through Descriptive-empirical tasks the person collects information about moral crises and challenges within our communities, especially with children and youth. The Interpretive task is to discover the cause of immoral actions and incidents within the community and why are they happening (their causes).

These moral challenges and problems cannot be left unattended. This means family, church and community must create the means of preventing, solving or minimising the moral challenges and problems within society, especially for children.

It is not late to reduce the current level of immorality in our communities. Members of society and religious institutions such as the church should make efforts by continuously teaching morals and focusing more on moral formation for children as a way of minimising the increase of immorality in the future (of those children when they grow).

Moral formation can be used as a tool to promote the upholding of the law by members of society as they would refrain from illegal activities when they are morally unconscious. Moral formation can also be used as a tool for promoting peace within families and tolerance within communities because members would be acting and behaving acceptably.

#### **2.4 Role of the family on issues of morality.**

There are different types of families, this includes, nuclear, extended, reconstructed, single parent, and same-sex parent families.

For a group or pair of people to be regarded as a family, they don't necessarily have to be related biologically. Members of the family live together or closely (it might not be in the same house but in the same vicinity). Different generations and genders are part of the family, and regardless of the marital status of elders or adults; the family can still exist and function. Parents or guardians as principal members of the family and other elder members of the family have responsibilities over children.

##### **2.4.1 Role of the family regarding the morality of children.**

Everyone belongs to a family and family plays an important role in the lives of every member. The family has vital roles to play regarding children, this includes developing and imparting morals to children. Jenkins (2002:17) outlines some functions of the family by indicating that

Families exist for mutual support, companionship and the welfare of children. We all need close loving relationships. Stable relationships are important for the process of bringing up children. Families are important because they form the group in which most humans spend most of their time. Families prepare us for adult life and teach us from an early age, how

to live together. The family provides us with identity, a history, a name as well as many values and opinions.

Some needs must be met by other members of the family. How we live and relate with other members of the family is very important for the well-being of the family, especially for children. Good relationships among elders in the family serve as a good example to children. It is within the family where children are supposed to be groomed. The main and initial lessons that a family can provide to children are moral conduct and behaviour. It is therefore important for elder members of the family to be morally conscious so that they can transfer moral lessons to children. Morality and moral formation is therefore tied to the family and should be regarded as one of the responsibilities of the family.

In addition to what Jenkins has alluded to, Kretzschmar (2005:126) places the task of moral formation within the family by saying that,

People learn their morality (or immorality) from those closest to them, for example from their parents and families. Later they are influenced by the socialization effected by their education, experience, the influence of their peers and their life decisions.

Members of the family, particularly parents, can have either a negative or positive influence on the children. Amongst others, children learn through observation of the actions and behaviour of their closest family members. Therefore, immoral actions and behaviour of elder members of the family can send bad lessons to children while moral actions and behaviour can make moral formation automatically take place in children because possibilities for modelling morality in children are high as they observe moral actions and behaviour of their elders and other family members. Masitah (2021:156) emphasises that instilling morals in children is the role of the parents by explaining that, the “parenting style of parents makes a very big contribution in shaping the morals of children. One of the factors that influence moral development is a family that focuses on parenting”. Parents need to be careful about how they treat and raise their children. Moral formation is one of the fundamental responsibilities of parents to their children. Good parenting involves setting house rules which are aimed at shaping the behaviour of children and raising future responsible youth and adults.

Masitah (2021:156) also emphasises the importance of instilling morals during childhood by alluding that “Moral development is one aspect of development that must be developed at an early age. This is very important because it will relate to social development and personality in the future”. Instilling morals during childhood is preparing a responsible adult.

The family is the first institution where learning and teaching take place. Parents or guardians and other members of the family are responsible for all aspects of the development of the children, such as physical development, emotional development and moral formation. In a case where parents are unable to develop their children in any of the mentioned developments, they can refer their children to the relevant people (e.g. relatives) who will ensure the full development of the children. Responsibility is not limited to parents only; other members of the family can take responsibility for the children to ensure that the process of moral formation in children takes place.

#### **2.4.2 Problems and Challenges encountered by families**

Challenges experienced by families can have a negative impact on the upbringing of children. Such challenges can destroy children and hinder the process of moral formation in children.

The inevitable conflict between the new and traditional moral values enhanced the multiplication of demoralisation from one area to another; thus, it affected all areas of personal and social life: the decline of morality in the family leads to a moral deficit in the upbringing of children, to the emergence of amoral substitutes, to the neglect of Christian culture, etc. Alarming is the findings on the scope and depth of the demoralisation in the family life (Nikolova 2018:3).

If elder members of the family do not value morals, it can be difficult for them to transfer moral lessons to children through living a morally exemplary life and through teaching. As moral values are not static, people need to guard against a conflict that may rise when it comes to considering moral values in today’s way of living without compromising moral values. Adults cannot expect today’s children to live like the children of the 1970s or 1960s; therefore moral formation must be

contextual. Similarly, Kretzschmar (2020:3) further acknowledges the fact that families are facing problems and challenges by saying that,

No family is perfect, but healthy family life is a key means of spiritual and moral formation. Children learn from parental teaching and, better still, from the good behaviour of significant adults. Equally, the example of adults who are drunk, indifferent or violent can also be normative, but negative.

Parents need to be aware of the fact that their conduct and behaviour have an impact on their children because children observe most or every conduct and behaviour of the parent, as it is another way of learning for children. The other important thing that parents need to keep in mind is that a peaceful and healthy family is a treasure to children because such a family can give their children good moral education and other important lessons about life in general.

The separation of parents and single parenting cannot be ignored when one talks about challenges faced by families.

Everything indicates that divorce, family conflict and the high occurrence of absentee fathers have a particularly negative impact on children, including an increased rate of emotional problems, depression, low self-esteem, learning difficulties and poor academic performance, absenteeism at school, suicide, isolation, behavioural problems, problems in romantic relationships, early pregnancy, divorce and aggression among boys (Van Niekerk and Breed 2018:2).

Divorce can lead to partial involvement of fathers/mothers in the life of their children especially if children are not living with the father/mother after the divorce. Additionally, it can lead to an absent father/mother whereby the relationship between father/mother and child ends after divorce. Unresolved family conflicts, this includes domestic violence, affect children psychologically and make some children learn and imitate bad habits and behaviour from parents and other members of the family. Behavioural problems in children are often an indication of moral problems and they need to be attended to. Van Niekerk and Breed (2018) mentioned the consequences of some family

problems in children. Over and above what Van Niekerk and Breed indicated, all these and other family problems will possibly hinder the process of moral formation in children.

Families encounter a lot of problems and challenges such as domestic violence, unemployment, single parenting, et cetera. Such problems and challenges have the potential to destroy or unite the family depending on how members of the family respond to and handle them. It is important for members of the family, especially elders to always try to solve any problem that arises within the family so that it does not affect the moral development of the children. The importance of doing this is that family problems such as domestic violence and immoral activities within and amongst members of the family have a negative impact on children at a later stage during youth or adulthood. Where possible, families must do anything to prevent/minimise such problems.

## **2.5 Church and children ministry on moral formation of children.**

The church can play a significant role in issues of morality and assist families and communities in the moral formation of children. Theological sources must be consulted to give church guidelines on the moral formation of children and use the children's ministry as a tool to raise morally conscious children.

### **2.5.1 Church on issues of morality**

The topic of morality requires the church and leaders to consult and use relevant sources and interpret them accordingly to address or teach about morality. Church leaders need to use the bible and other relevant theological documents and sources when dealing with the morality and moral formation of children. The church needs to regard moral formation as an important process which must be carried out diligently.

Morality can be used as a tool to address and minimise problems such as crime that could arise because of its absence. De Villiers (2020:2) explains levels where morality can be applied and used by indicating that,

it is important to distinguish between two levels of moral guidance with regard to the solution of global problems the church could offer. The first is the intra-church level of moral guidance to denominations, congregations, Christian non-government organisations and individual Christians. The second is the extra-church level of the moral guidance to the public, companies, national and international agencies and governments.

Church leaders must not limit church activities to congregants and the church premises or boundaries. For a church to operate beyond its premises and have a more positive impact on other members of the community, church leaders and members can come to provide initiatives such as outreaches to schools, orphanage homes and other institutions of community where ministers and elders will teach members of the community including children about issues of morality. The church must focus on and strive to transform the society where it operates. This can happen when the church reaches the members of the community who might not be church members, however, this must start within the church amongst its members. Members of the church must be seen as the light that guides other members of the community to a Godly moral life. This type of life should also be seen in the behaviour and actions of the church members.

In concurrence with the view of De Villiers and adding her view Kretzschmar (2005:150) says “Individual moral formation does not occur in isolation. The development of an individual’s moral sense is intimately connected to the community within which that individual lives”. Family, members of society, and the church have a responsibility of participating in the moral formation of each individual especially children and youth. Various family situations such as child-headed families, domestic violence and other challenges that make it difficult for a family to accomplish moral formation with their children should be taken into consideration. Some members of society ignore issues of morality and moral formation while others do not see the necessity for it. The church as an institution can play a significant role in children and youth’s moral formation and this

will require the participation of members of the church. The church must find a way of doing moral formation in children even outside the church. This will be discussed in detail in the next section.

For the process of moral formation to be taken to other institutions such as schools, orphanage homes, NGOs et cetera it needs the joint effort of families and the church. The church as the community of believers has an important role to play in the community. The church must ensure that its efforts on moral formation are not limited to its members and premises. The church is therefore challenged to have missionary tasks and visits which are aimed at teaching morality to members of society. The community where the church is operating can benefit from the initiatives and teachings of the church. Moral formation should be performed continuously so that the church may assist society to groom a morally conscious generation of children.

The church has a big role to play in making the world and members of society aware of morality and the importance of living a moral life. “The church needs to set an example of genuine faith and moral integrity that can combat unrighteousness, corruption, religious scepticism, drunkenness and uncaring relationship” (Kretzschmar 2005:155). The church and its members can set good examples and live a morally exemplary life. Elder members of the church must be the living moral example to children and youth which will make the process of moral formation easy on children. De Villiers (2020:2) indicates that,

Should we recognize that moral considerations play an indispensable role in solving global problems, the Christian religion and other religions cannot be easily left out of the equation? After all, the Christian church has made a major contribution to our contemporary understanding of moral notions such as the equal dignity of all human beings, justice and moderation.

Although there are people who believe that religion is not important on issues of morality the important role played by the church and other religious institutions on issues of morality cannot be ignored. The church must not be silent when it comes to issues of morality because societal problems with morality can lead to other social problems such as crime. Morally unconscious

members of the community/church can easily violate other people's rights and commit crimes because they see nothing wrong with the violation of human rights or committing a crime.

Kretzschmar (2005:154) continues to acknowledge the use of the Bible and the fact that the church operates in Africa where members live in an African way by saying that,

The Gospel of Jesus Christ is about the greatest thing that ever happened in Africa. The African Church today is like the kinship system of yesterday. The church in Africa needs to gain its confidence in the one who called it into being. There is hope in what the church can do in calling Africans to maintain what is good in their culture for their moral integrity. The church in Africa cannot shy away from the responsibility of calling people to repentance to set an example in moral integrity and to teach people the message of God who understands frailty and is willing to heal wholly.

The church must not ignore the fact that it operated within African and South African communities. African cultural practices and customs such as poetry and music can be used to promote morality and moral formation from a Christian perspective as tools to teach children and other members of society about morals. The Church must however not compromise Christian values when accommodating African customs as a way of instilling and teaching its members and members of society about morality. Considering African customs that promote moral life shows that the role and impact of the church can go beyond its boundaries or premises.

The impact of the church does not end within and amongst its member, because these members are also members of the community. The teaching from the church can encourage members to have a positive impact on their community and contribute towards making the world a better place. The church should not be seen only as a place of worship. It should also serve as an institution for shaping people's actions and behaviour to be good. Church leaders and elders need to create the church and congregation with the concept of a family where the needs of all ages, especially children, are catered to.

## **2.5.2 Children ministry and moral formation**

Churches have different ministries and those ministries are formed according to gender and age, for instance, men's ministry, women's ministry, youth ministry for youth regardless of their gender and children's ministry for children regardless of their gender. Children's ministry is the foundation of all ministries within the church. This is the ministry that contributes a lot to building the faith of children. This ministry can also contribute to the moral formation of children.

According to Snailum (2012:176), "Many churches have arrived at a place believing that separating generations is not only convenient but also educationally and developmentally the most appropriate". Having different ministries within the church allows members of each particular ministry to address spiritual and social issues affecting them. Youth within their ministry can deal with issues affecting them from a Christian perspective. Children are not able to form and lead their ministry, therefore parents and church leaders must provide necessary support and assistance in forming and leading children's ministry. Parents and church leaders must be in charge of this ministry. In addition to the view of Snailum, Weber and De Beer (2017:2) touch on theological issues of children by stating that,

it is crucial for theology and church to not only acknowledge but also embrace the realization that the relationship between a child and his or her context is reciprocal. Children can influence adults in their lives just as much as adults may influence children. However, for that to happen, inclusive, hospitable and just spaces should be created where children are invited to be equally present.

The focus of the church on issues of morality must not be on children only. The church needs to include parents and other family members on issues of morality. The importance of this is that if the church takes the initiative in the moral formation of children, parents need to support the church. Parents need to assist the church by living morally exemplary lives where children will be able to learn good things from the behaviour, actions, and conduct of their parents. Parents also need to avail their children of the children's ministry sessions e.g. attending Sunday school classes.

Ministries within the church play an important role in the lives of members of that particular ministry, that's why it is important to have children's ministry where children have church sessions under the guidance of capable children's ministry leaders/teachers. Those teachers must be able to interpret the bible and other sources/teaching material for children. Theology researchers and church leaders must be in a position of developing children's ministry study/teaching material from various theological sources.

Children's ministry within the church is the responsibility of the parents, church leaders, elders and deacons. For effective and fruitful children's ministry, parents need to avail their children at church while church leaders, elders and deacons as well as Sunday school teachers need to develop plans and strategies for children's ministry which are relevant to today's way of life without compromising Christian values. All parties need to acknowledge that moral formation is important and more relevant in childhood and must therefore be part of the Sunday school syllabus and lessons.

Children and youth in the Hebrew scriptures were socialized into the faith community. It was a communal, collective experience taking place as they journeyed. If the older generation seizes this practice or discipline of telling stories of God's care and faithfulness (Jdg 2:10), formation and discipleship in the household of faith will discontinue. Intergenerational models of ministry will invite the faith experiences of young and old, allowing for mutuality to develop and deepen in the household. (Weber and De Beer 2017:5).

During the Old Testament period, elders were responsible for transferring information to the young generations through teaching. This includes telling miracles and deeds of God and the most important teaching that elders were to pass on and teach their children was the law of God. This means children needed to be taught the word of God. This did not end with teaching, children were encouraged to live according to those teachings. From a Christian perspective, God is the initiator of morality. We can extort some morals from the law of the Lord and this can be part of Christian teaching. In transferring God's word and law to children, ministers, pastors and elders should teach

children morals. An appropriate platform for these lessons and teaching can be created at Church through children's ministry e.g. Sunday school. Focusing specifically on Sunday school, its function and a need to expand the functions of Sunday, Potts (2018:6) states that "Sunday school should not be just about learning but about being Disciples of Christ, to love and serve others. We should empower and encourage our children to do this work by first believing that they can". Sunday school as part of children's ministry is a ministry where children are taught and trained to live and practice a Godly life. This means Sunday school teachers need to be more practical when they teach and train children. Sunday school teachers need to make children aware that it is not impossible to live a Godly and moral life in an ungodly and immoral world and society.

Sunday school can be used as a ministry of moral empowerment to children. Amongst its focus, it should build confidence in children to believe in and stand firm in living a moral life. Building the confidence of children to boldly opt for a moral life is possible when character development is part of moral formation in children.

There is a need to minister specifically and only to children and Sunday school (children's ministry) is a ministry purposely formed for children. "To minister to children, we must understand them, their special needs and their abilities. We can learn about children in the bible. There are some passages in which children play a role and others where Jesus talks about children" (Keeley 2008:17). Children must not be overburdened with information and knowledge above their age, and level of understanding, but they must be given information and lessons which will groom and enable them to become morally conscious, during childhood, youth and possibly at adulthood. The Bible should be used as the main source of relevant information for grooming a morally conscious generation, however, Sunday school teachers must be careful not to misuse or misinterpret the bible to children. Ministers can provide guidance and guidelines to Sunday school teachers to ensure that issues of morality are interpreted correctly and applied relevantly to the level of children.

Maybe as a holdover from times past, our children's programme was still trying to deliver content to children. Our job was to keep children busy and entertained until

they were old enough to go to church or to stay home and watch themselves, and whatever curriculum we were using was not important or compelling to parents. The problem with this model is that we treat Sunday school like school, or merely a time for adults to teach children something they do not know. This model might work educationally speaking but not pastorally (Potts 2018:6).

As part of ministries in the church, Sunday school is a foundation of learning and training for children, this ministry serves as a secondary support structure to the family. This is the ministry that should make children feel and know that indeed they belong to the house of the Lord and wish that they belong there even beyond childhood. Some children leave the church or attend church occasionally after Sunday school or after confirmation and this is problematic because they might learn and accept immoral and ungodly lessons outside the church. One of the reasons why children leave the church after Sunday school or confirmation is that these classes and ministries are used for formality or to keep children busy during church services. The church must guard against this and create measures to eliminate it. Sunday school must provide important Christian education to children and give them a platform and opportunity to participate in church activities. Most importantly children must be taught and encouraged to live a Godly life even outside the church, this includes living a moral life. Making children have a sense of belonging in church enables them to learn about a Godly life continuously and strive to live that kind of life.

Children's ministry must be practical and address the needs of children. Having an effective children's ministry gives those who are responsible for this ministry to identify the needs and concerns of children and address them. Sunday school is not an entertainment centre for children or a ministry that keeps children busy during the service so that their parents can focus on church activities during Sunday service. Activities and other programmes for Sunday school should be educational for the children and most important help them to understand morality and be able to apply moral lessons to their lives.

Having a children's ministry also requires Sunday school teachers and ministers to set goals for the ministry and develop programmes for reaching those goals. This may include raising a morally

conscious generation who can make moral decisions and actions independently and this can be achieved through doing moral formation at Sunday school. This means that Sunday school teachers should make moral formation part of the Sunday school teaching programme.

Sunday school can be regarded as part of children's ministry. In some instances, these two terms are used interchangeably. For this study, it is important to briefly define Sunday school and elaborate on its linkage with the term 'children's ministry'.

“The Sunday school movement was started in England in 1769 by a Methodist woman, Hanna Ball, to provide, free general education to poor children. It was later developed by Robert Raikes, an Anglican layperson, to provide religious instructions to children on Sundays” (Kritzinger 2004:163). There was a need to establish Sunday school. A certain level of illiteracy or lack of information and education for children led to the establishment of this kind of school within the church. Initially, teaching provided to children at Sunday school was not only confined to religion or the Bible. The intention of establishing the Sunday school was to provide 'general education'. That was the information and education which can be used or applied to life in general, including life outside the church. This school was designed specifically for children. This means the kind of lessons provided there were focused on childhood. It is important to note that although Sunday school was established to 'provide free education to poor children' the sitting arrangement at church is not designed according to the status (employment or social status) of the parent. Children from poor and rich families sit in the same places in most churches (unless where church sitting arrangement allows congregants to sit in family groups). Sunday school lessons of a particular church are attended by all children, regardless of their family background or the status of their families/parents. This means children were receiving the same education and even today all children receive the same lessons at Sunday school regardless of their family background or status. Providing general education to children should include lessons on morality. Needs, challenges, or problems of society change with time and members of society as well as church leaders and members need to create measures to address the needs and try to solve, reduce or prevent them if possible.

The developments introduced by Robert Raikes on Sunday school focused on developing the faith of children. Most preachers put more focus and centre their message and sermon application on youth and elders. This means most preachers do not include children in their sermons and sermon application. This can make children feel like spectators in the house of the Lord. Sunday school becomes the most appropriate ministry and platform for children because this is where they are given attention, lessons, and sermons which are more relevant to them. It also provides space for children to interact with others and their teachers on issues of faith and the word of God unlike the monologue sermon given by the preacher which most of the time excludes children. Conversing with children is also beneficial to Sunday school teachers as they get to know children's needs, areas of interest and challenges experienced by children. Robert Rakes introduced changes in children's ministry by focusing on providing religious teaching for children, there is still a need for developments and changes in children's ministry. Christians also need to bring developments to Sunday school which is part of children's ministry. Such developments must aim at addressing today's challenges, problems, and needs within the community. In addition to the detailed background on the establishment of Sunday school and the developments that came after, there is a need for effective children's ministry and Sunday school for the church that wants to assist families and the community by providing moral lessons to children.

Keeley (2008:18) provides guidelines for effective children's ministry by stating that,

There are six principles that are important in ministry to children; 1. Children need to be nurtured in their faith by the whole community of faith, not just their parents, 2. Children need to be part of the whole life of the church, 3. Children need to know that God is mysterious, 4. Bible stories are the key to helping children know a God who is mysterious and who knows them for who they are, 5. Faith and moral development are both important but they are not the same thing, 6. Children should be part of congregational worship and they should also have opportunities to experience developmentally appropriate worship.

These principles show the value of children's ministry. These principles reveal the gaps and needs of children and ways in which the church through children's ministry can assist in closing those

gaps and attending to the identified needs. Church leaders, elders, parents, guardians and Sunday school teachers are role players in children's ministry. For an effective and fruitful children's ministry, these role players must do their part because a child is not raised and nurtured by his or her parents only. By availing their children at church, parents and guardians make the work of Sunday school teachers who are entrusted to build and lay a foundation of the faith of the children easy. The faith of children can be strengthened by making God known to them and this is one of the roles of Sunday school teachers.

The Bible as the word of God is the main source for teaching children and strengthening their faith. The Bible can be used to shape the behaviour of children and for the moral formation of children. Church leaders, elders and deacons must create an atmosphere which is convenient for children at church. Amongst the important things which are part of the principles is that Sunday school teachers and children's ministry leaders, should focus on building and developing the faith of children, including moral formation in childhood. Morals are transferred through teaching and developed as children grow. This shows that moral formation is one of the key and central aspects of children's ministry. It must be emphasised during Sunday school lessons.

Immorality is one of the problems experienced in communities. Children and youth are found at the centre of immorality and this calls for intervention to address this problem. The church should play a role in responding to today's social problem of a lack of morality in youth and children. For the church to address the problem of immorality in children and youth through children's ministry the focus, approach and development of Robert Raikes on Sunday school which was 'to provide religious instruction to children' should be extended. Providing religious instructions leaves children without a say or response but just to obey the 'religious instruction'. The problem of immorality among children and youth demonstrates a need for a paradigm shift in children's ministry today to address and minimise this problem. The model which can work in addressing the said problem is 'providing Christian education to children to raise morally conscious children'. Here the focus should be on shaping the life and behaviour of children in line with God's word and morals. This means moral formation should be part of children's ministry. Moral formation during childhood can assist to raise a morally conscious generation and the church through children's ministry remains the ideal platform.

## **2.6 Conclusion**

The current social problems such as violence, theft, and violation of human rights, as well as family problems and gaps such as child-headed families, single parenting domestic violence, et cetera which are linked to a lack of moral challenges, compel the church to use ministries such as children's ministries to address and minimise these problems.

A distinction must be made between children's ministry and Sunday school. Children's ministry in the church is a ministry where the spiritual and faith needs of children are catered to. Children's ministry includes structures within the church where the spiritual and religious needs of children are catered to. It is also a ministry that is concerned with the Christian development of children, this ministry includes; Sunday school, catechism and youth brigade. Sunday school is part of children's ministry where children are taught the word of God and nurtured spiritually. Moral formation should be part of all structures of children's ministry (Sunday school, catechism and youth brigade) and continue beyond childhood to ensure the continuous application of learned morals in the lives of the people from childhood to adulthood.

Children's ministry should be provided from a pastoral guiding perspective for the processes such as moral formation to be achieved thoroughly and diligently.

To answer the descriptive question of what is going on, due to morality challenges discovered and discussed in chapter one (1), the absence and low level of morality in the community shows that some members of the community do not consider morality in their actions, behaviour and relations to others, especially children. Moral unconsciousness and moral degeneration amongst children and youth show what is going on (happening) in our communities regarding morality. In the midst of what is happening in the community, the role of two institutions namely family and church through children's ministry on issues of morality is vital.

## **CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **3.1 Introduction**

A research study/project involves investigation which will lead to discovering new knowledge or making the existing knowledge to be known to those who were not aware of it. This can be achieved through the collection of data. The researchers choose a research methodology which will be used based on the aims of their research. There are different methods used by researchers to do sampling, collect data, and analyse the collected data from sources. This chapter discusses the research design which was used in this research study which includes a method of sampling, the method of collecting data, ethical considerations as well as the method of analysing the collected data.

This chapter also used the interpretive task of Osmer's methodology. "Theoretical interpretation denotes the ability to draw theories of the arts and sciences to understand and respond to particular episodes, situations and contexts" (Smith 2010:105). The chapter on research methodology allows the researcher to use the relevant research design to collect data which will enable him/her to understand the situations and challenges of morality in Mahikeng and discover or suggest how people should respond to such situations and challenges.

### **3.2 Research Design**

There are different types of research designs namely Quantitative, Qualitative and mixed (Quantitative and Qualitative). The researcher is at liberty to choose the research design he/she is going to use however the choice should be based on the nature, objectives and aims of the research study (Quantitative, Qualitative or mixed research). This research study requires detailed information to be collected, and Qualitative research can assist in enabling the researcher to collect such information.

#### **3.2.1 Qualitative Research**

Qualitative research assists researchers who aim to produce a detailed descriptive quality study to achieve the aim and objectives of their research, without using numbers. Qualitative research

mainly focuses on the meaning and details of the subject/phenomenon. “Qualitative researchers are interested in understanding the meaning people have constructed. That is, how people make sense of their world and the experiences they have in the world” (Merriam and Tisdell 2016:15). People can be regarded as one of the best sources if the researcher wants to discover meaning about a particular subject/topic. The reason for this view is that people can share their understanding and experience about the subject which gives the researcher the required information which was not known previously. To obtain data about people’s understanding and experience of morality, the practicality of morality, and the significance of children’s ministry on moral formation, a qualitative research design is the most relevant because it assists the researcher to obtain knowledge and experience of the participants on issues of morality, moral formation and children’s ministry.

“The principal function of qualitative research is to understand the subject meanings that individuals make of the situations in their lives, which the researcher is interested in learning” (Okeke and Van Wyk 2015:217). To understand the meaning of the subject, a definition must be provided for that subject and if there is no information to define the subject or if the information is insufficient to define the subject, research must be conducted on that particular subject. Qualitative research assists researchers to investigate and producing detailed meaningful research findings. As there is limited literature on children’s ministry, therefore, this research study contributes to discovering and producing new literature and information on this field of study.

Every research design (qualitative, quantitative or mixed research design) must produce results. Qualitative researchers like other researchers have aims and objectives to achieve in their research studies/projects.

The product of a qualitative inquiry is richly descriptive. Words and pictures rather than numbers are used to convey what the researcher has learned about a phenomenon. There are likely to be descriptions of the context, the participants involved, and the activities of interest (Merriam and Tisdell 2016:17).

For the researcher to achieve/produce descriptive research findings, the qualitative research design is the best and the most relevant to be used for such a research study. To gather detailed information and experience on the potential risks of ignoring moral formation during childhood, the role of the church and children's ministry on moral formation, and the possible impact of moral formation on children and youth, qualitative research is the most appropriate design and it was used in this research study.

Merriam and Tisdell (2016:2) further state that,

Qualitative inquiry focuses on meaning in context, requires a data collection instrument that is sensitive to underlying meaning when gathering and interpreting data. Humans are best suited for this task, especially because interviewing, observing and analysing are activities central to qualitative research.

Interviewing is one of the methods of collecting data in qualitative research. This means people are used as sources of data, where the researcher obtains the meaning of the research subject/s from the participants/interviewees. This also enables the researcher to ask questions and possibly obtain a historical background of the research subject from the participants. The benefit/s of using qualitative research is that the researcher can discover or formulate (new) meaning and information about the subject based on experience, understanding and the view of the participants.

### **3.2.2 Study Population**

Mensah and Oteng-Abayie (2017:1607) define a population as a group of people who have characteristics of interest. These are people who possess the information required for a particular research topic. This is a group of people from whom the researcher draws his/her sample. Furthermore, Mensah and Oteng-Abayie (2017:1608) allude that population is a requirement in qualitative and quantitative studies. Furthermore, targeting and an accessible population are also considered when we talk about population and often apply to both designs. The population for this research study is pastors, and Sunday school/children ministry teachers.

The population for this study are ministers, Catechism Teachers, and Sunday school/children's ministry teachers around Mahikeng. I consulted Statistics South Africa (North West Provincial Office) and Mahikeng Local Municipality to request statistics on all churches around Mahikeng, and unfortunately, they could not provide the number of churches.

### **3.2.3 Sampling**

When doing research, the researcher cannot consult every source of data e.g. the researcher cannot interview everyone or request everyone to complete questions as a way of collecting data. A certain number must be selected from the population/sources of data for the collection of data (interviews or questions). This is where the term sampling is considered and applied.

When dealing with people, a sample may be defined as a set of respondents or participants selected from a larger population to conduct a survey. The sample should be representative of the population to ensure that the findings can be generalised from the research sample to the population as a whole (Okeke and Van Wyk 2015:226).

The type, objectives, and aims of the research study, guide the researcher when it comes to sampling. In sampling, the researcher selects participants who represent the population. These are the people who should possess information relevant to the research study, and they should be able to provide such information during the collection of data (e.g. interview).

“Qualitative researchers seek out individuals, groups and settings where the specific processes being studied are most likely to occur” (De Vos, Strydom, Fouche and Delport 2009:328). The researcher must select participants who are likely to possess the information and knowledge required for the research study. People who possess the required knowledge for this research study include Sunday school teachers (the current or former Sunday school teachers), Catechism teachers and ministers of the word (pastors/ Church elders/deacons). These are parents and members of the community who have experienced and observed the level of morality of youth and children in the community of Mahikeng. Sunday school teachers, Catechism teachers and pastors/ Church elders

are also aware of the role of the church and children's ministry on Issues of morality and moral formation, hence they are considered relevant sources of information for this research study.

There are different types of sampling. The researcher should select the method of sampling which will assist him/her to reach participants who will be able to provide relevant and sufficient data/information. A combination of purposive sampling and non-probability sampling is used for this research study.

According to Terre-Blanche, Durrheim and Painter (2006:139),

non-probability sampling refers to any kind of sample where the selection of elements is not determined by the statistical principle or randomness. Researchers use purposive sampling which depends not only on availability and willingness to participate but that cases that are typical of the population are selected.

Non-probability sampling is not determined by numbers; therefore this makes it relevant for qualitative research. The number of sampled participants is not that important, the most important thing is the relevance and quality/value of data which will be obtained from the sampled participants regardless of their number. Each Sunday school teacher, Catechism teacher and pastor/ Church elder possess information about morality in the community where they live and the role of their churches and children's ministry on moral issues and moral formation. Purposive sampling takes into consideration the availability and willingness of participants which is another aspect of ethical consideration. Participants must not be forced to participate in the research (collection of data). Other sources of relevant data/information may be consulted if the interviewees refer the interviewer to such sources, e.g. Sunday school teaching material et cetera. For this research study, the researcher contacted Sunday school teachers, Catechism teachers and pastors. Interviews were only conducted with those who were willing to participate in this research study.

De Vos, Strydom, Fouche and Delport (2009:329) emphasise some of the important issues that need to be considered in purposive sampling by indicating that,

in purposive sampling, the researcher must first think critically about the parameters of the population and then choose sample case accordingly. Clear identification of criteria for the selection of respondents is, therefore of cardinal importance. The purposeful selections of participants represent a key decision point in a qualitative study. Researchers designing qualitative studies need clear criteria in mind and need to provide a rationale for their decisions.

Purposive sampling guides the researcher to choose relevant participants. Choosing the most relevant participants is important because the researcher becomes sure of getting relevant information from those participants. Once again the relevant participants for this study are Sunday school teachers, Catechism teachers and ministers of the word (pastors/ Church elders) because they have knowledge and experience of the level/status of the morality of children and youth in their communities as well as the role of the church and children ministry on moral formation. The sample for this study is 15 participants which include; Sunday school teachers, Catechism teachers and ministers of the word (pastors/Church elders) from different denominations in Mahikeng. This number enabled the researcher to obtain data on the morality of children (and youth) within the community of Mahikeng at large because these participants live in this area. They can respond to questions on the role of the church/children's ministry on issues of morality and moral formation. Each participant of the fifteen (15) sampled participants represents a denomination which may have more than 100 members. Each participant also represents the elders of the community because he/she is aware of the level of morality within the community and specifically among children. Sampling and interviewing fifteen (15) participants enabled the researcher to collect information which explains the morality of the children within the area and the role of the church on issues of morality. Permission to collect data was requested from church leaders and participants. The permission letter is attached as **Addendum C**.

### **3.3 Research Instrument Defined**

In qualitative research design, there are different ways of collecting data. The researcher should choose a method of collecting data which is in line with the type and aim of his/her research study as well as the one which will assist him/her to reach the objectives and aim of the research study. There are different methods of collecting data on qualitative research methodology; these include focus group discussion, interviews, participant observation et cetera.

Interviews are used as a method of collecting data for this research study. The researcher requires detailed information and elaboration on the role of the church and children's ministry for moral formation in children. The research participants should provide relevant detailed information, therefore the most suitable method enables the researcher to collect such information elaborated in the interview.

#### **3.3.1 Interviews**

This study was conducted during the Covid-19 pandemic. Initially, the researcher intended to conduct virtual or telephonic interviews due to strict lockdown rules. However, during the collection of the data, lockdown regulations were lifted hence physical interviews were conducted (not virtual as indicated in the chapter). Social distancing and all other protocols were observed during the interviews.

Interviewing is one of the methods used to collect data for research purposes. "An interview is a face-to-face conversational engagement between two people where questions are asked by the interviewer to elicit responses which can be analysed within qualitative research situations" (Okeke and Van Wyk 2015:297). Although some interviews can be conducted telephonically or virtually, the main aim of interviews is to obtain information/data from the interviewees. Again, interviews can include more than two people (group interview), however for this research study, one-on-one interviews (interviewer and interviewee session) were used to collect data from the participants. The responses of the participants were analysed after the collection of data.

Conducting an interview is a more natural form of interacting with people than making them fill out a questionnaire, do a test, or perform some experimental task, and therefore fits well within the interpretive research approach. It allows us to get to know people quite intimately so that we can understand how they think and feel (Terre-Blanche, Durrheim and Painter 2006:297).

Interviews assist and enable the researcher/interviewer to understand the views, knowledge and experience of the participants (interviewees) in detail. Other methods of collecting data may not assist the researcher to obtain the desired data/information hence the researcher opted for interviews as a method of collecting data.

The researcher/interviewer must be careful when it comes to the duration of the interview. The researcher/ interviewer must manage the interview time effectively, that's why Terre-Blanche, Durrheim and Painter (2006:300) emphasise time management when conducting interviews by stating that,

Interviews typically last from 20 minutes to an hour and a half people find it difficult to concentrate much beyond that! Do not be driven by time limits, but ensure that you do not get caught up in the details that are extraneous to the study so that you run out of time for important questions. Ask the person towards the end of the interview if there is anything more that they have to say. Be aware of what the person says after the recorder is switched off sometimes the most interesting understandings only emerge then.

Depending on the number of interview questions the interviewer needs to take the concentration level of the participants/interviewees into consideration. Interviews must not be too long, however, obtaining more relevant and important data must not be compromised because of time. This means the researcher must ask direct questions and simplify them for the interviewees; hence the researcher/interviewer needs to write down interview questions before the interview session. The questions need to be asked in sequence to allow the flow of facts or ideas.

There are different types of interviews that the researcher can use to collect data. This includes amongst others; structured, semi-structured and, unstructured interviews. A structured/personal type of interview was used in this study.

This is a face-to-face, two-way communication between the interviewer and the respondents. The personal interview is carried out in a planned manner and is also referred to as a structured interview. This type of interview requires a lot of preparation, rapport-building and sensitive probing. Respondents are encouraged to answer questions freely, completely and pertinently. Responses are recorded (Okeke and Van Wyk 2015:299).

Preparation before the interview is vital. This means interview questions must be aligned with the research questions, objectives and aim of the study. Preparation also assists the researcher/interviewer to cover all areas which need to be investigated through interview questions. This means interview questions must be drafted, reviewed, and finalised before the interview. This saves time (for both interviewer and interviewee) and assists the researcher/interviewer to know the approximate time of the interview and inform the interviewee how long the interview might take.

The rights and privacy of the interviewee must be respected. It is therefore important for the interviewer to make the interviewee aware of every aspect of the interview session including the use of a recording device (voice/video).

If possible and if permission is obtained from the participants, the researcher should record interviews on tape or video. A tape recorder allows for a much fuller record than notes taken during the interview. It also means that the interviewer can concentrate on how the interview is proceeding and where to go next. The participants may not feel happy being taped and may even withdraw. Tape recorders should therefore be placed inconspicuously so as not to unnerve the participant or novice the researcher (De Vos, Strydom, Fouche and Delpont 2009:298).

Although a voice/video recorder has more advantages in terms of ensuring that the researcher/interviewer captures/records every word of the interviewee, the researcher/interviewer must seek permission for using a voice/video recorder from the interviewee. If the interviewee is

not comfortable with being recorded with a voice recorder or video recorder, the interviewer must respect that and opt for another method of capturing data such as taking notes when the interviewee responds to the questions. For capturing responses during interviews in this study a voice recorder was used with the permission of the interviewee. Interviewees are always allowed to withdraw from the proceedings.

Although the study used structured interviews to ensure the standardisation of questions, the researcher also ensured probing to avoid rigidity in data collection. This was to ensure that to a larger extent, the process allows for a semi-structured interview where responses allow for diversion from existing questions. According to Newcomer, Hatray and Wholey (2015:493), this allowed for relevant additional data to be collected as the process allows for follow-up questions and open discussions.

### **3.3.2 The importance of interviews**

There are different methods of collecting data/information in qualitative research and each method has its advantage and disadvantages. Interviewing as a method of collecting data has its advantages and disadvantages.

Disadvantages of interviews include the following as discussed by Morris (2015:15) “A large amount of time and effort is required to set up interviews, potentially expensive, transcribing is costly. Transcribing is time-consuming”. Interviews require travelling to participants which is costly for the researcher (or travelling of interviewees to the interviewer which is also costly). The interview session might be longer depending on the number of questions and responses of the interviewees. Transcribing the responses of the interviewees requires extra effort which can be disadvantageous. The intentions of the researcher must include producing quality research with authentic findings. The disadvantages of the method of collecting data such as the interview should not discourage the interviewer because the negative impact of the disadvantages can be avoided. Data for this research study was collected in Mahikeng where the researcher resides; therefore, the

researcher did not travel a long distance to collect data. The researcher transcribed the data himself saving costs. Spending time transcribing cannot be a problem when the researcher wants to produce quality reliable research findings.

The advantages of interviews depict the importance of this method of collecting data. “The experience a person includes how the experience is interpreted. There is no ‘objective’ experience that stands outside its interpretation” (Merriam and Tisdell 2016:9). The best method of obtaining a person’s experience and understanding data is the interview. Interviews give the researcher/interviewer a chance to apply follow-up questions and interviewees to provide detailed response/s to the interview questions (or on the research subject). Experience, understanding, and views of the participants on morality, moral formation and children’s ministry were obtained through interviews.

Bailey (1994:174) states that “on interview, the respondent is unable to cheat by receiving prompting or answers from others, or by having others complete the entire questionnaire for him/her, as often happens in mailed studies”. The researcher must not send the interviewee questions before the interview to guard against the interviewee seeking answers from other people which might compromise the quality of the research findings.

“Interview is the predominant mode of data or information collection in qualitative research. Qualitative interview attempts to understand the world from the participant’s point of view, to unfold the meaning of people’s experiences, to uncover their lived world before scientific explanations” (De Vos, Strydom, Fouche and Delpont 2009:287). The interview allows the interviewer/researcher to understand the world of the interviewees concerning the research subject. It enables the interviewees to provide a detailed narrative about their understanding and experience of the research subject as they respond to interview questions and this enables the researcher to produce rich descriptive research findings.

Data were collected during the Covid-19 pandemic; however, this was done when strict regulations were lifted and social interaction was allowed. Face-to-face interviews were conducted with participants in this study. The interview was conducted at the venue preferred by the participant. One interview was conducted at the place of work, three were interviewed at work and eleven participants were interviewed at their homes. Social distancing was observed during the interview session. Interview questions are attached as **Addendum D**.

### **3.4 Analysis of data.**

The collected data is regarded as raw, therefore it must be analysed to make sense of it and for the researcher to produce meaningful findings of his/her research study. This is where methods of data analysis must be used to enable the researcher to make/unpack the meaning/s of the collected data. “Data analysis is also the process of bringing order, structure and meaning to the mass of collected data. Qualitative data analysis is a search for general statements about the relationship among categories of data” (De Vos, Strydom, Fouche and Delport 2009:333). Data analysis is mandatory for every research methodology (Quantitative, Qualitative or mixed methodology) and every research study. After data has been collected the researcher must ensure that it is analysed. This is the process of making meaning to compile research findings and report on the collected data.

After analysing data, researchers are expected to compile research findings and report. This includes recommendations.

In the quest to understand meanings, qualitative researchers are encouraged to adopt ways that enable them to represent the voices or actual words of the participants in their research reports. You should note that this approach of using the participants’ actual words in reporting research findings is what enables qualitative researchers to claim that their approach is ‘thick’ meaning deep and substantial and descriptive (Okeke and Van Wyk 2015:209).

To report and present the precise and rich research findings which explain the exact response of the participants the researcher is advised to use the definite words of the respondents/participants. This makes the researcher present the definite experience, knowledge and understanding of the

participants about the subject which resulted in rich and descriptive outcomes of the study. The actual words of the participants in response to interview questions were used in the data analysis of this study.

There are different methods of analysing data which are more relevant to analyse data collected through qualitative research. Data analysis methods include domain analysis, thematic analysis, componential analysis, constant comparison analysis, et cetera. Constant comparison analysis was used to analyse data collected in this research study. “The constant comparison analysis method or technique can be employed to ascertain themes obtainable through the data” (Leech and Onwuegbuzie 2007:559). Amongst its importance, constant comparison analysis confirms topics and ideas within and amongst the collected data, which gives correlation and rich meaning to the collected data. In explaining constant comparison analysis Okeke and Van Wyk (2015:462) state that,

Constant comparison analysis’s main tool is comparison. The researcher’s role is to read through the entire collected data, and then group them into manageable parts for comprehension. These parts of data are then put into similar categories using a low-inference analysis to describe them. The main aim is to bring together similarities and contrasts between these low inferences. Okeke and Van Wyk (2015:462) continue to elaborate analysis of data using constant comparison by indicating that,

When all the data has inferences, the inferences are grouped according to their similarities and contrasts and codes emerge. In summary, the researcher creates groups/categories, forms borders of such categories, allocates similar sentences or words to categories, summarises each group of sentences by giving it a category, and discovers sentences or phrases that contradict the grouped data, intending to discover patterns. Then, when patterns are discovered, such patterns bring out themes or a theme that must be supported by the groups.

Studying the collected data thoroughly can be regarded as the main aspect/requisite of the constant comparison analysis method because it assists the researcher to understand the collected data. This method is used to compare aspects of the collected data (Differences and similarities of the

collected data). This makes it easy for the researcher to create themes/topics based on similarities and differences of the data collected from different participants/sources. This also enables the researcher to deduce meaning from the collected classified/grouped data. The researcher can also validate data by rechecking the collected data as he/she does analysis. This will enable the researcher to produce accurate research findings which are extracted from the collected data.

### **3.5 Ethical Considerations**

The research study/project must not put anyone (the researcher and participants) at risk. The safety and lives of the participants must be considered and protected when one conducts research. The rights of participants must not be violated in the process of conducting research. This is where the concept of 'ethics' must be studied and applied in the research study.

Anderson and Corneli (2017:3) explain ethics and its application in the field of research by stating that "Ethics refers to the study of what ought to (or ought not to be done)". This shows that there are do's and don'ts in the field of research which requires the researchers to be more careful when doing research. Anderson and Corneli (2017:3) continue to give an illustration of the broad application of ethics by stating that, "The term also describes a collective body of guidance regarding questions of good or right action". The effectiveness of ethics is realised in its application, it is therefore mandatory for researchers to apply ethics in their research. Ethics can provide signs (warnings) to the researcher and it is therefore important for the researcher not to ignore those signs. Ethics in the field of research is mainly applied to protect the people, Miller, Mauthner, Birch and Jessop (2012:14) apply ethics to humans by emphasising that "Ethics concerns the morality of human conduct. Regarding social research, it refers to the moral deliberation, choice and accountability on the part of researchers throughout the research process". Both the researcher and participants need to consider the ethical aspects of research but the main person who must ensure adherence to research ethics is the researcher.

Ethics and its application have legal aspects as Anderson and Corneli (2017:3) explain that "Research ethics is a form of applied ethics: that is the study of and rules for what ought to be done

in the specific context of research”. Failure to apply research ethics can harm the researcher or participants and affect the quality of research negatively, it is therefore important for the researcher to follow and apply all ethical guidelines of the research to prevent harming participants and protecting their rights (not violating their rights).

For this research study, the researcher adhered to and applied ethics to ensure good quality of the study and protect the rights of ministers/pastors, Sunday school teachers, church elders/deacons and children ministry leaders who were participants in this research study. Ethical clearance was obtained from the university and it is attached as **Addendum A**.

### **3.5.1 Risk consideration in a research study.**

A research study may pose risk/s to the researcher and/or the participants. It is therefore important for the researcher to identify risks associated with his/her study or risks which may arise from the research study and try his/her level best to prevent them without compromising the quality of the research study.

Ensuring the safety and well-being of research participants is an important element of ethical research practice. While much qualitative research may pose only minimal risks to participants, it is important not to disregard the risks that can occur, particularly in research topics which are in some way sensitive because they focus on personal issues, taboo issues or issues which pose a threat for those participating in it (Wiles 2013:7).

Research participants must be protected and the person who has the responsibility to protect them is the researcher. The researcher must be careful when treating or dealing with sensitive issues/topics which might harm the participants. The researcher must put the safety and feelings of the participants at heart so that the participants must not regret or suffer for participating in the research study.

Adhering to ethics in research minimises or prevents risks associated with that particular research study. Anderson and Corneli (2017:15) said “When ethical standards are ignored, the potential consequences to participants and their communities, researchers, institutions and the scientific are

myriad” ethical standards must always be on the mind of the researcher and must always be applied. This calls for the carefulness of the researcher as he/she conducts the research. Wiles (2013:7), elaborates on this matter by indicating that “Assessment of risk should also focus on risk for researchers which may arise from lone working or the nature of the research”. The researcher must be able to assess the process of research and identify risks before they arise and prevent or minimise them.

Clark-Kazak (2017:13) also elaborate further on the risks of the research by stating that,

In some cases, the identification of research subjects can have serious consequences for their safety, wellbeing and/or eligibility for services. In these instances, the confidentiality of information is paramount. Researchers should take extra care to encrypt and securely store data and remove any characteristics that could identify research subjects, including by association.

The participants must not suffer the negative consequence of participating in a research study. The safety and lives of the participants are important and must be protected. Everything associated with the participants must be handled with care to protect them as a way of minimising/preventing the risks of their participation in the research study.

For this research study, the risk is minimal however the lives, well-being and safety of ministers/pastors, Sunday school teachers, church elders/deacons and children ministry leaders who were participants were protected. Interviews were conducted at a place where participants were comfortable and they were not forced to do or say anything that might put their lives, health or safety at risk.

### **3.5.2 Informed Consent.**

The researcher must respect the rights of the research participants (persons) and the policies of the organisations where he/she conducts the research or collect data.

The process of obtaining Consent consists of the following: consent should be given freely (voluntary), subjects should understand what is being asked of them, and involved persons must be competent to consent (2). This means, to participate in a research study, participants need to be adequately informed about the research, comprehend the information and have a power of freedom of choice to allow them to decide whether to participate or decline (Arifin 2018:30).

It is unethical and unlawful to force people to participate in a research study, therefore, participants must participate in the research study willingly. Clark-Kazak (2017:12) concurs with this view by stating that “All research respondents must voluntarily and formally consent to participate in research after having been informed of the potential risks and benefits of their participation. They must be able to withdraw from the research at any time”. Participants in this research study, the participants (ministers/pastors, Sunday school teachers, church elders/deacons and children ministry leaders) were requested to participate voluntarily. They were made aware that they have the right to withdraw from the study at anytime. Participants signed a consent form (attached as **Addendum B**) before the interview session.

### **3.5.3 Adhering to confidentiality**

Adherence to confidentiality in a research study confirms the safety and protection of participants. It is another important aspect of ethical consideration in a research study.

In the research context, the duty of confidentiality is taken to mean that identifiable information about individuals collected during the process of research will not be disclosed. Additionally, the duty of confidentiality may mean that specific information provided in the process of research will not be used at all if the participant requests this. Confidentiality is closely connected with anonymity (Wiles 2013:6).

Confidentiality in a research project includes protecting the names of the participants, their addresses, and any information that can make them known by another person except the researcher. Clark-Kazak (2017:13) adds anonymity to the concept of confidentiality by indicating that “Researchers have a duty to protect respondents’ personal information and not disclose any identifying characteristics that would compromise anonymity, especially if sample sizes are

small”. In a case where the sample is small, it can be easy for someone to guess and trace the participants, therefore the researcher must ensure that there is nothing that makes another person/s link certain individuals (participants) with the research study. To protect participants of this research study, the names of denominations where participants (ministers/pastors, Sunday school teachers, church elders/deacons and children ministry leaders) fellowship will not be revealed.

Analysis of data can compromise the confidentiality of the participants; therefore, confidentiality needs to be considered even during transcribing or analysis of data. Arifin (2018:31) emphasise the importance of being careful when transcribing data by indicating that,

Data transcribing must be conducted in a private room using earphones to avoid the possibility of recordings being heard by other people. The identities of the participants must be removed during data transcription, including their names or any significant aspect of identity. In presenting the findings of the study, the participants were referred to by their pseudonyms names in the verbatim quotes.

The researcher must do anything in his/her power to protect the identity of the participants. The researcher must protect the anonymity of his/her participants during the analysis of data or transcribing. Clark-Kazak (2017:13) mentions some of the measures that can be put in place to protect the participant and their anonymity by stating that “Interpreters, researchers, and others involved in the research process must sign a confidentiality agreement”. Some researchers outsource the service of analysis and interpretation of data after collection. This is where the confidentiality of the participants can be compromised. In addition to the signing of confidentiality forms by the person/s who analyse and interpret data, the researcher can erase the names of the participants especially if data was collected through questions.

The confidentiality of the participants in this research study was protected. The researcher is the one who transcribed and analysed data. The names of participants are not mentioned during the data presentation and research findings.

### **3.6 Conclusion**

The importance of research design is that it provides guidelines to the researcher from how to collect data (sampling, methods of collecting data, and research analysis methods) to the compilation of the research report/findings. Research reports and findings on the importance of the Children's ministry in Mahikeng was compiled after the collection and analysis of data.

Qualitative research is the most relevant methodology for this research study. For the researcher to gather detailed data which will enable him/her to discover and obtain rich detailed data, the qualitative research design is the most relevant method. A combination of purposive sampling and non-probability was used to sample fifteen (15) participants/interviewees (who are children ministry leaders/teachers, catechists, elders, deacons or ministers of the word) for this research study. The mentioned people possess information on children's ministry, morality, and moral formation of children; hence they were consulted/interviewed as sources of information. Interviews are used to collect data from the mentioned sources of data. Open-ended interviews were used to collect data for this research study.

Constant comparison was used as the most appropriate method to analyse data collected in this research study. This method enables the researcher to create/develop topics/subtopics as he/she analyses and interprets the collected data. The researcher adhered to ethical standards throughout the process of this research study ensuring that participants and their rights are protected.

Qualitative research was used in how this research study, with interviews as a method of collecting data. The method of collecting data enabled the researcher to collect data which explain the real situation of the morality of children based on experience, observation and knowledge of the participants, this enables the researcher to understand and respond to the interpretive question of what is going on.

The next chapter is the collection of data where interview sessions will be scheduled with participants to collect data on the research subject. Interview questions are compiled and attached as **Addendum D**. The next chapter also includes a presentation of the collected data.

## **CHAPTER 4: COLLECTION AND PRESENTATION OF DATA**

### **4.1 Introduction.**

This chapter is based on the presentation of the collected data. Interviews were used as a method of collecting data. The interviews were conducted around Mahikeng where the study was based, and fifteen participants were interviewed. Low-inference notes were organised per participant as part of a constant comparison analysis. Thus, analysis in this study involved classifying low-inference notes from each participant and categorising emerging themes according to their similarities. Similarly, contrasting themes were also categorised and merged with similar ones from each participant. Later both similar and contrasting themes were brought together, and this informed the main topics (themes) of data presented in this chapter.

This chapter on the collection and presentation of data uses the interpretive task of Osmer's methodology. The collected data assists in answering the interpretive question (what is going on?) as the researcher presents the collected data.

### **4.2 Functions of institutional support structures for children's ministry and the moral formation of children.**

Based on the collected data it was discovered that different institutions (home, church and government) play various important roles and contribute to the moral formation of children.

#### **4.2.1 The role of the church (leaders) in children's ministry.**

One of the objectives of this study was to discover the role of the church through children's ministry in grooming a morally formed generation. Amongst others, the church and church leaders play an important role in attracting children to church, ensuring that children's ministry exists and that teaching takes place for children to groom and raise a morally formed generation. This sub-theme presents the roles and responsibilities of the church members and leaders in the children's ministry.

Participant 1 said, *“The church takes care of every child. Church leaders organised and request Sunday school material”*.

Participant 2 said *“church elders reprimand children and assist with catering during Sunday school events”*

Participant 3 said *“church board determines people who will be responsible for children ministry. The Church board ensures that there are contributions toward children's ministry. There are leaders assigned to support children's ministry. Meetings are held monthly, quarterly and annually where leaders of the children's ministry provide feedback on the progress of the children's ministry. Church board facilitates and ensures availability of Sunday school teachers”*.

Participant 4 said *“the role of the church is to continue with teachings from where parents taught children. The church buys books for children's ministry. There were two Sundays when children were preaching and teaching through drama. Members of the congregation were learning a lot from drama/performance of children, church membership and attendance were growing”*

Participant 5 said *“church helps children to identify themselves and purpose of why God created them through teachings”*

Participant 6 said *“Church relies on Sunday teachers. Church elders encourage congregants to send their children to Sunday school. The church elders and minister came up with a rule that makes Sunday school a requirement before a child attends confirmation class. Sunday school teachers are the ones who recommend children who qualify go to confirmation class”*

Participant 7 said, *“church teaches children basic lessons such as; the love of God and how God want them to behave. Church bought study materials for children”*.

Participant 8 said *“There are leaders (deacons) who oversee children's ministry. They ensure that teaching takes place in line with the vision of the church and report to the pastor. Those leaders also provide advice to Sunday school teachers when necessary”*

Participant 9 said *“The church has designed topics according to the ages of children. Church leadership allows slots for children during church services. Church leaders ensure that there is Sunday service for Sunday school. The church should allow children to do activities within church premises”*

Participant 10 said *“Church leaders give children scriptures and allow them to have bible discussions. Church leaders organize trips and outings for children. Church leaders and ministers oversee children's ministry and participate in children's ministry activities. Deacons accompany children and teachers during Sunday school trips. Church leaders monitor Sunday school lessons to ensure that children are taught the word of God”*

Participant 11 said *“The church ensures that there are Sunday school conversions where children compete with other congregations on activities such as talent show, colouring, bible stories, poems, crossword searches, bible quizzes, and debate. Ensure that Sunday school exists at the local church level and that teaching takes place”*

Participant 12 said *“Different churches must work together (not compete) e.g. have joint children activities and programmes, share their children, ministry models”*

Participant 13 said *“The church moulds children to be better adults for tomorrow by ensuring that there is children's ministry”*

Participant 14 said *“We regard children's ministry as the fundamental aspect of our church. Many churches do not focus more on children's ministry and it hurts me. We exclude the children yet we claim that they are part of us, for example, we don't even hold services for children.*

*Previously in our church, we had a service where the preacher will prepare a sermon specifically for children based on how they should be part of us, their needs and their behaviour. Until we do this we fail these children”.*

Participant 15 said *“Children take trips to other congregations for competitions where they receive awards as a way of making them have a love for the church and make them feel that they are important to the church”*

#### **4.2.2 The role of the church in the moral formation of children.**

One of the objectives of this study was to discover the role of the church through children's ministry in grooming a morally formed generation. This sub-theme presents the efforts and actions of the church in contributing toward the moral formation of children.

Participant 2 said *“the church can visit juveniles (ex-convicts might change their behaviour. Inmates might change their behaviour after serving their sentences).*

*Do outreaches. Minister through music: encourage children to form Gospel music choirs.”*

Participant 4 said *“At Sunday school, we emphasise the Ten Commandments to children, for children to live according to the Ten Commandments. If the child has ears he/she will live by those commandments. As the church, it is where we are failing (to provide the necessary support to child-headed families' children and single parents) on moral formation of children”*

Participant 5 said, *“Church should have mentorship programmes for single parents and child-headed families. Church should provide emotional support to children from child-headed families”*.

Participant 6 said *“The church could have failed if moral formation is not done during childhood. It is therefore important for the church to play its role in ensuring the moral formation of children. Children will easily fall into traps and learn bad behaviour and activities such as drugs, rape and violence from outside. Children might be easily arrested if morals were not instilled”*.

*“The church should take responsibility for child-headed families.*

*Shepherding of children must be done irrespective of denominational affiliation.*

*Ministers and other church members should do house visits even to the people who are not church members”*

Participant 7 said *“The church should identify child-headed families and provide any type of assistance to children from those families.*

*The church should emphasise preaching about the love of God. Preaching and practice can improve the moral standards of our community.”*

Participant 8 said *“Everyone at church (parents and church leaders) is taking a role in the moral formation of children. Children are taught that every elder person is their parent”*

*“The church members play their role by assisting child-headed families for instance male and female parents can identify a child-headed family and adopt children from that family by visiting the family every week have devotion to children, supporting them, guiding them and instil morals. Through programmes such as Vocational Bible School, where children take responsibility for ensuring that there is order in other children bring hope that children can live in an organised and disciplined way on their own.”*

Participant 9 said *“Teachings of the church are based on upbringing of the child, discipline and behaviour, self-discipline, respect and caring for others”*

*“Have a topic discussion on what is happening in society to address what is happening from a Christian perspective. The church must not hide realities of life e.g. alcohol abuse, teenage pregnancy and gender-based violence. Integrate realities of life with church teachings”.*

Participant 11 said *“Try to shape and build the character of children to be better people in society. To build/raise future leaders  
To enhance discipline  
Strengthen the faith of children to believe in God.”*

Participant 12 said, *“The church focuses on the Bible by teaching children; how to behave based on the fruits of the spirit, encourage children to relate well with others, teach them to become witnesses of Christ, teach and empower them not to allow standards of the world to pressurise them, align their decision with the Word of God and how to respond to peer pressure.”*

*“Adoption of children: Christian families should adopt children who don’t have parents (formal or informal adoption), and give children from child-headed families food. Christians should father and mother children from child-headed families and become role models to those children by advising and providing guidance. Have single parent and child-headed family programmes for support.”*

Participant 13 said *“Adopt non-church members.  
Church members adopt children from child-headed families and single parents.  
Parents volunteer to take care of the child by providing everything to the child, food, clothes and even guide the child, instil moral and nurture child spiritually.”*

Participant 14 said *“The church focuses mainly on those under its guard. Teach children good behaviour, respect and be humbled in every aspect of their lives”*  
*“It’s not yet late to correct moral problems. The church must come up with programmes which are aimed at promoting and instilling morality”*

Participant 15 said, *“The church council encourages children to behave well. To attract them and make them develop love towards Christ”*.

*“The church should go back and see where it left direction.*

*The church should correct the approach to dealing with children.*

*The church should encourage families to teach their children morals.*

*Teach Gospel at homes and church, Christianity should continue everywhere”*

### **4.2.3 The role of the Church on moral formation in the community.**

This research amongst others intended to discover the role of the church through children’s ministry in grooming a morally formed generation. The church needs to bring change to the community where it operates. This sub-theme looks into the role of the church in assisting the community to raise morally formed children (the role of the church in moral formation in the community).

Participant 2 said, *“church can assist the society to raise morally formed children; by building morals of children at childhood, by building the character of children at church.”*

Participant 3 said *“The church is the conscience of society.*

*Thermostat: determines the temperature of the environment: the church should be the thermostat. The church must have an influential role in society. The church must have an impact on the members of society. The Bible must be taught as it says. We cannot afford to appease the people by not telling them the truth”*. *“What happens in society reflect institutions within the community and church is one of those institutions.”*

*“The church must reach out to the community with their programmes. The church must have joint activities and programmes with the community. Church must not be an island within the community”*.

*“The church must have effective programmes and children must be part of those programmes e.g. reaching out to communities by being the salt and the light of the world”*.

Participant 4 said *“The church partnered with local schools where it does outreaches. Prayer women ministry donates school uniforms and shares the word of God with children. As the church, it is where we are failing (to provide the necessary support to such families and children)”*.

Participant 5 said *“There is a basket of giving at church, where children are taught and encouraged to give to the needy. Children are the ones who donate non-perishable food stuff and visit orphanage homes for outreach programmes”*

Participant 6 said *“Women ministry do outreaches where they teach children about abuse; encourage children to obey their parents and behave well at home and in the community”*  
*“The church could have failed if moral formation is not done during childhood, it is, therefore, important for the church to play its role of ensuring the moral formation of children. Children will easily fall into traps and learn bad behaviour and activities such as drugs, rape and violence from outside. Children might be easily arrested if morals were not instilled. Make children part of community outreaches and prayer meetings.”*

Participant 7 said *“Visit the community to share the word of God and show them, love. Offer a helping hand Preach through actions”*

Participant 8 said *“Youth department is the driving force for community outreaches.*

*Utilise drum majorettes military march for outreaches in the community. Morals are taught through actions e.g. disciplined members.”*

Participant 11 said *“Church service should not be confined within the church itself only. The church must be taken to the community by having outreaches.*

*The church must be seen as a place of refuge for those who are in need (provide accommodation, clothes and food). We must have a charity plan.”*

Participant 12 said *“Different churches must work together (not compete) e.g. have joint children activities and programmes, share their children ministry models.*

*We should use the church building for; aftercare, children fellowship and to assist children with home (school) works.”*

Participant 13 said *“Church can adopt children from the community.*

*The church can do house visits to see challenges of community and assist members of the community.”*

Participant 14 said *“Unfortunately the role of the church has shifted whereby the focus is only on the members of the church, forgetting that the church should be concerned about the community”*

*“There is no community without church and there is no church without community. The church should be part of the community.*

*The church came up with a support group outreach programme which aimed at assisting Old Age Homes, Orphanage Homes and street kids. The programme is relevant to the needs of these groups.*

*The church also partnered with ‘Not in my name’ organisation and Community Police Forum where morals and good behaviour are instilled in children within the community.”*

*“The church has the role to play in developing communities e.g. outreach programmes.*

*Camps should be used to attract and convert other children of the community as children who are church members can invite those who are not church members to come to church.*

*The church should give children a chance to show their talents e.g. having beauty contests, drama etc. The church should use children's ministry not only to attract other children but to convert others to church as a way of impacting neighbours (children of neighbours would want to be like those who attend church and those who are part of children's ministry). Many children in one street can end up attending church. It is important to divide the responsibilities of raising a morally formed generation into the following categories; Family, Community and Church”*

Participant 15 said *“Church must preach to its members who are in authority.*

*Church delegates its members to do good everywhere they are.*

*Christians must represent the church everywhere.*

*“Visit other members of the community and share the word of God with them. “The church is part of the community because some of the community members are members of the church. Elders and teachers become ambassadors of the church amongst the community, they radiate light Matt 5:11 (they are the light of the world). When children see them they remember lessons about good behaviour, respect, humility, submission and obedience. During house visits, they make follow up on lessons taught in Sunday schools or catechism”.*

#### **4.2.4 The Role of the family in children’s ministry.**

There is a relationship between the family and the church. For the existence of an effective children’s ministry that contributes to the moral formation of children, the family must support the church and the children’s ministry. This sub-theme presents the role and support of the family toward the children’s ministry.

Participant 1 said *“Parents are very supportive. Even children who are not church members (whose parents are not members of our church) also attend our Sunday school. Children come in numbers”*

Participant 2 said *“Parents attend church with their children. Parents were committed to bringing their children to church before Covid19. During the Covid19 pandemic, some parents leave their children at home when they go to church.”*

Participant 3 said *“Some parents are supportive. Some parents do not have transport to take their children to Sunday school.”*

Participant 4 said *“We have very committed parents. Parents bring their children in numbers to Sunday school Saturday and church every Sunday. They ensure that their children grow up in the church. Our children attend every event of the circuit”*.

Participant 5 said *“Parents love children ministry because Sunday school teachers take care of children during church service. Children's ministry takes children away from the streets. There is positive feedback from parents on Sunday school”*

Participant 6 said *“Some parents prioritise other things rather than children ministry for their children which hider children to attend Sunday school activities.*

*Some parents do not trust Sunday school teachers with their children. Sunday school teachers encourage such parents to be part of the Sunday school events to see how teachers handle and take care of the children.*

*Other parents do not encourage their children to attend Sunday school (be part of children's ministry). Some parents want their children to be part of Sunday school but they (parents) do not support children in terms of participating in emphasizing Sunday school teachings at home”*

Participant 7 said *“Some parents are committed, others are not committed.*

*Parents who are committed to church activities want their children to be part of children's ministry and participate in children's activities.*

*Some parents do not see the importance of attending children's ministry.*

*Children of committed parents see the importance of Sunday school and avail their children of Sunday school classes.*

*Parents who do not avail their children for Sunday school feel bad when their children are not given chance to render items at church.”*

Participant 8 said *“There is commitment. Every parent wants his/her child to become a better citizen. Parents ensure that their children are part of children's ministry.”*

Participant 9 said *“Some parents are committed and they encourage their children to attend Sunday school. Some parents are not committed. The absence of youth at home makes it difficult for children to attend Sunday school because children cannot attend Sunday school on their own.”*

Participant 10 said *“Some parents are not committed. Only a few parents are committed when it comes to bringing and availing their children to Sunday school. Parents are not encouraging their children enough to attend Sunday school.”*

Participant 11 said *“There is an excellent commitment of parents. They always avail their children for every event. Parents support children's ministry.”*

Participant 12 said *“Parents avail their children of Sunday school. Even parents who are not members send their children to Sunday school.”*

Participant 13 said *“Other parents allow their children to attend children's ministry. Others bring their children just to be kept busy at children's ministry because they do not support the activities of this ministry. Other children come to children's ministry because there is no one at home. Other parents who do not attend church send their children to church and children's ministry because they admire what is done at children's ministry.”*

Participant 14 said *“Some parents do not show interest in sending their children to Sunday school. Some parents are not interested in the biblical teaching of their children. Back in the day many parents would come and bring their children early in the morning for Sunday school and later the parents would attend church service but after 1994 until now I don't know what went wrong parents are no longer showing interest in Sunday school education for their children. Some parents know that Sunday school starts at 09h00 but they come with their children at 10h00 for the main/normal church service. This shows that some parents of today no longer care about religious/Christian teachings/background for their children and this has affected children's ministry. About 40 out of 100 parents still encourage their children to be part of children's ministry.”*

Participant 15 said *“The commitment of parents in encouraging their children to be part of children ministry is not as before. Most children are not serious about Sunday school and catechism; they attend with less interest as if they are forced.”*

#### **4.2.5 The role of the family in the moral formation of children.**

The family has the responsibility of instilling morals in children. Regardless of the societal and family problems such as single parents, unemployment and others, the role of the family in the moral formation of children should not be overlooked. This sub-theme presents the role of the family in the moral formation of children. This also looks into the situation of child-headed families.

Participant 2 said *“Parents should have sessions with their children where they discuss issues affecting their children. Parents should have good relations with their children and allow children to share everything with them”*.

*“Parents can instil morals in children even when they are single”*.

*“Single parents should ask assistance from other parents when they experience a problem with the behaviour of their children (when a single mother is experiencing behavioural problem with her son, she can ask a male parent from church/relative/neighbour to talk/guide/reprimand to the son)”*.

Participant 3 said *“There is a Tswana proverb that says “Pinyana ha ere ping, yabo e utlwiletse di kgolo”*.

*“Children resemble what they see.*

*Parents should refrain from using strong language when talking to children and gossiping with and in the presence of children.*

*Parents must play their parental roles: e.g. monitor and strictly things such as TV programmes watched by children, for instance, age restriction of the TV programme.*

*Parents should not say ‘nobody will talk to my child except me.’”*

Participant 4 said *“Parents should talk to their children about issues of life.*

*Adolescents must be taught the word of God from home.*

*Preach the word of God at home and church”.*

*It’s taboo in some families to teach the word of God, this makes children hear the word of God for the first time at church.*

*Parents should live by the word of God (live by example).”*

Participant 5 said *“Parents need to be present in the lives of their children.*

*When parents have morals it is easy for them to instil morals in children.*

*Parents should not focus only on providing money to their children but also focus on guiding the behaviour of their children.*

*Parents should ensure that their children attend church services.”*

Participant 6 said *“Parents should teach their children morals irrespective of whether the parent is single. The upbringing of children is determined by parents on how to instil morals in children.*

*Parents must transfer moral knowledge to their children.*

*Parents must choose to raise their children ethically.”*

Participant 7 said *“We should start at home by teaching our children morals.*

*What family members learned at home must share with relatives, friends and members of the community.”*

Participant 9 said *“Parents should have consistent household rules.*

*Parents should not spoil children*

*Parents must instil discipline at home*

*There must be co-parenting after divorce.”*

Participant 10 said *“Parents must take responsibility for assisting the community by teaching children about good behaviour.*

*Form groups of children and come up with projects for children where morals will be instilled in those children.*

*Parents should have discussions with children from their neighbours where they discuss issues of morality and good conduct.”*

Participant 11 *“Visit single parents and child-headed families and check how they can be assisted. Group children from child-headed families and teach them morals. Arrange camps for children from child-headed families and teach them about morality.”*

Participant 12 said *“Adoption of children: Christian families should adopt children who don’t have parents (formal or informal adoption), give children from child-headed families’ food”.*

Participant 13 said, *“Parents volunteer to take care of the child by providing everything to the child, food, clothes and even guide the child, instil moral and nurture child spiritually.”*

Participant 14 said *“Parents should be good examples to children.*

*Parents should introduce some programmes within the family e.g. have bible study, pray 2/3 times a day, and have bible quizzes as a family to encourage children to read the bible.*

*Parents should have bible studies at home to teach their children the word of God and encourage children to read the Bible”.*

#### **4.2.6 The role and responsibility of the Government toward children.**

The government provides guidelines on issues regarding children, and how children should be treated and protected. This is done through laws (e.g. Children’s Act) and Government Departments such as the Department of Social Development, South African Police Service (SAPS) and others. This has an impact on children and their moral formation of children. This sub-theme presents the role and responsibility of the Government toward children.

Participant 6 said, *“Government failed us by facing out religious education. Government should reintroduce religious education and focus on grooming morals of children amongst others”*.

Participant 9 said *“Department of Social Development should intervene on the issue of child-headed families. Department of education should make awareness on child-headed families and guide children from child-headed families.”*

Participant 11 said *“Children from child-headed families and single parents should be referred to the Department of Social Development for assistance. Use child support grants to support those children”*.

Participant 13 said *“There are many rights; children do as they wish and it’s difficult to parent such a child. Rules are relaxed for children. There is a need for firm and strict rules.”*

Participant 14 said *“The church must partner with other stakeholders such as the Department of Social Development SAPS and Department of Health to address issues of morality. Partner with different stakeholders such as SAPS, Social Development and any organisation that can assist in promoting order and discipline”*.

### **4.3 The transfer of skills**

The central part of children’s ministry is teaching. The process of teaching is the transfer of knowledge from one person/s to another person/s. For teaching to take place in children’s ministry; this requires people who are capable of teaching and those who are willing to work with children. The capabilities of Sunday school teachers can be shaped and enhanced through training.

#### **4.3.1 Skills transfer to Sunday school teachers.**

Not every Sunday school teacher is a teacher by profession, therefore there is a need to provide training for Sunday school teachers. This sub-theme focuses on capacitating (training) Sunday school teachers and providing teaching and learning to children.

Participant 4 indicated that *“The church pays for workshops of Sunday school teachers on how to teach Sunday school. Sunday school teachers are empowered by church leaders”*.

Participant 5 indicated that the *“Church sends Sunday school teachers to training”*.

#### **4.3.2 Providing teaching and learning to children.**

There are different ways of doing moral formation in children. Amongst others, moral formation can be done through teaching and learning. One of the objectives of this study was to discover the significance of morality and ethics in children and youth. It is through teaching and learning that children will discover and understand the significance of morality. This sub-theme presents data on teaching and learning for children in children’s ministry.

Participant 1 indicated that *“we use pictures to narrate stories and teach them. They colour pictures as part of learning”*.

Participant 2 indicated that *“drawings are used to teach children under the age of five. Stories are narrated using drawings”*.

Participant 3 indicated that *“The books on simplified pictures are used to narrate stories to the children and ask them to colour pictures.*

*Books on the simplified bible are used to narrate biblical stories to children and teach them the word of God and instil morals in them.*

*Children are given books with lessons and activities (tests) upon completing those lessons and tests children are given the Bible.”*

Participant 4 indicated that *“Children below the age of five are taught through pictures/charts. Sometimes we call people from outside to talk to children about life issues/challenges in general”. There are books prescribed by the church. These books are used to teach different age categories of children;*

*Living together in Christ Book 1: from 5 to 7 years.*

*Living together in Christ Book 2: from 8 to 10 years.*

*Living together in Christ Book 3: from 10 to 13 years.*

*Living together in Christ Book 4: is for confirmation class”.*

Participant 5 indicated that *“there is a curriculum for children ministry. Children are taught bible stories in a form of memory verse”.*

Participant 6 indicated that *“there are books for children over the age of five. Children under the age of five are taught through pictures whereby they do colouring and teacher narrate Biblical story from the picture”.* We use Kopelo and the book called, *Living together in Christ*. These books are used to teach different age categories of children.

*A picture book for infants: 3-4 years.*

*Living together in Christ Book 1: from 5 to 7 years.*

*Living together in Christ Book 2: from 8 to 10 years.*

*Living together in Christ Book 3: from 10 to 13 years.*

*Living together in Christ Book 4: is for confirmation class.*

*Children under the age of 5 are taught through pictures, whereby they do colouring and teachers narrate biblical stories from the pictures”.*

Participant 7 indicated that *“we use pictures to teach children. We derive topics/themes from the pictures. We use practical examples to teach children e.g. how parents show each other love at home. Use Google printouts and picture books to teach children”*.

Participant 8 indicated that *“children are interactive, they learn by seeing or through action. We use drama, singing and discussions to instil morals and teach children. There are different curriculums designed for children's ministry;*

*0-3 years use case colours.*

*4-6 years use Adventist manual and eager beaver guide.*

*7-10 years use adventurers manual.*

*11-15 years use pathfinder manual.*

*We also use the book called the voice of prophecy and vocational bible study”*.

Participant 9 indicated that *“older children are taught through acting (drama), debate, topics and discussions, little ones are taught through acting”*.

Participant 10 indicated that *“we teach children the word of God through drama and colouring books, use practical examples”*.

Participant 11 indicated that *“children are taught through drama”*.

Participant 12 indicated that *“we have dialogues with children where we teach them to enjoy their childhood and youth in Christ. We Download books from the internet and use them to teach children about prayer points”*.

Participant 13 indicated that *“The church moulds children to be better adults for tomorrow by ensuring that there is children ministry. This ministry is categorised in the following way;*

*4-9 Adventures class.*

*10-15 Pathfinders.*

*15-18 Guide class.”*

Participant 14 indicated that *“we make a practical example when teaching children and instil discipline through teaching”*.

#### **4.4 The impact of entertainment and sports activities on child morality.**

Sports and entertainment activities are part of the daily lives of children. It is therefore important to use these activities to instil morals in children. One of the objectives of this study was to discover the significance of morality and ethics in children and youth. As this theme presents the impact of entertainment and sports activities on the morality of the child, using entertainment and sports activities to instil morals can assist children to understand the importance of morality. Another objective of this study was to discover the possible positive impact of moral formation in children and youth, applying morality in sport can assist children and other players to discover and understand the impact and importance of moral formation and morals in their lives.

Participant 2 said, *“parents should allow children to participate in sporting codes that promote morality, teamwork and discipline”*.

Participant 6 said, *“what we do as a circuit is that we come together as all parishes, have sports day, cultural day and rally. We hold our events on Saturday except rally which is held on Sunday”*.

Participant 4 said, *“there are sports activities where children participate. Children dramatise lessons from the prescribed books”*.

Participant 5 indicated that *“there are activities and games played by children, which amongst others they aim to instil morals in children”*.

Participant 8 indicated that *“We use drama, singing and discussions to instil morals and teach children”*.

Participant 10 said, *“We teach children the word of God Through drama”*.

Participant 11 indicated that *“we instil morals through drama where children act/dramatise practical life challenges such as alcohol and substance abuse”*.

Participant 12 indicated that *“there is enough space (at church) where children are allowed to play and they always come to church to use the space to play. This contributes to their good attendance at church. Parents should allow children to participate in sporting codes that promote morality, teamwork and discipline”*.

#### **4.5 The possible results for the lack of moral formation at childhood.**

This theme presents possible results for the lack of moral formation in childhood which is in line with one of the objectives of this study which was ‘to investigate the possible risks of ignoring the current ethical and moral challenges’.

Participant 1 said *“Children will be out of control, we will have a lot of street kids. Use of bad (strong) language by children (swearing), we are not going to have families. There won’t be families. There won’t be progress in our society. We will not have future leaders”*.

Participant 2 said *“High level of immorality and crime. Self-centeredness, Selfishness, Non-sharing children, Conscious will die.”*

Participant 3 said *“Doomed society. Ill-disciplined society, Irresponsible nation, Bitter adults/children, people who are not able to take care of themselves. Negligent society, Blameful nation, Bitter children”.*

Participant 4 said, *“We will be raising professional thugs and professional criminals. Children will have more time to research crime tactics and do criminal activities. They will have ample time to learn immoral things”.*

Participant 5 said *“Immoral government (children are future government leaders), Frustrated people. Thieves, Corruption, Crime, Violence, Elders will not be respected, Elders will be raped, Children will beat their parents, Substance abuse Housebreaking”.*

Participant 6 said *“Children will easily fall into traps, learn bad behaviour and activities such as drug, rape and violence from outside. Children might be easily arrested if morals were not instilled. Children will be easily influenced by friends to do bad and unlawful activities, unplanned or unwanted pregnancies and un-ruled children.”*

Participant 7 said *“we will have Suicidal children/parents. The following will be experienced; depression, swearing, revenge, peer pressure, failure to control anger, irresponsible community, violence, revenge will be encouraged and accepted by members of the community.”*

Participant 8 said, *“Children will not know what is right and wrong. We will have; delinquent parents, destroyed citizens, crime, no moral compass, nothing is going to happen with their life and theft”.*

Participant 9 said *“Lost children, Lack of identity, confidence, knowledge understanding and low self-esteem child and rotten nation.”*

Participant 10 said *“The will be a high level of lawlessness, alcohol and drug abuse, and crime among children. Most children will end up in jail. The immorality will get worse. The church will collapse. We will no longer have youth at church. The number of single parents will increase”*.

Participant 11 said *“Corrupt society, crime, criminal life, Drug abuse, Ill-disciplined people A high school dropout, unplanned pregnancies, high unemployment, Irresponsible person, Ill-disciplined children and dependent person”*.

Participant 12 said *“Uncontrollable children, crime, children in conflict with the law, stealing house breaks, murder, gangsters, parents will fear children, No proper roles at home, parents will not control their children, children will overrule their parents, Illiteracy, gender-based violence, high level of teenage pregnancy, unstable community, unsafe community, poverty, violence”*.

Participant 13 said *“Irresponsible adults, no future for next generation, no leaders, no professionals, destroyed economy, crime, fatherless children, teenage pregnancy, drug and alcohol abuse, overburdened community.”*

Participant 14 said *“Ignoring moral formation at the childhood stage will lead to broken families, violence, and a nation without direction and manners.*

*The reason why we have broken families is that we did not deal with the matter of morality at the right time. We need to start moral formation in childhood and family, school and the church has a role to play here for us to have a morally formed nation.*

*As parents, we need to be a good example to children in everything. Children live and talk about what they see. We are going to have an ill-mannered nation.”*

Participant 15 said *“Lawlessness children, abusive children, violent children, dead consciousness, crime, gangsters, school dropout, miserable adults and parents, the community will live in fear, lawless children. Children without future who become a burden to their parents, ignoring moral formation will lead children to create monsters, terrorism and no going areas.”*

#### **4.6 Interventions to moral challenges and crisis.**

The current moral challenges and crisis should not be ignored which is in line with one of the objectives of this study which was to discover ways of preventing or minimising unethical and immoral behaviour among the younger generation. This theme presents interventions taken by the church family, parents and other members of the community to address moral crises and challenges.

Participant 1 said *“We need to start teaching children at an early age.*

*When you teach your child he/she will remember what you taught him/her even when you are not there. The child is more likely not to be overpowered by peer pressure and bad influence.*

*Teachings last forever.*

*Teach children the word of God.*

*Teach, teach remind children about morality.*

*Teach your children the truth”.*

Participant 2 said *“Build morals of children by;*

*Teach, train and re-train children.*

*Preach to children.*

*Don't get tired of teaching, and training children*

*Increase children's participation at church”.*

Participant 3 said *“Is it biologically not correct to say that there is a child without a biological father?*

*Men must be encouraged to do their responsibilities (the fatherhood responsibilities).*

*Women must be supported in their motherhood responsibility.*

*Society must be assisted.”*

Participant 4 said *“Make Sunday school fashionable.*

*Have ways to attract children to Sunday school (church).*

*Choose Sunday school teachers who will lead by example.*

*Have Sunday school teachers who have an interest in Sunday school in their hearts.*

*Show children that they matter.*

*Have and discuss interesting topics such as pre-marital sex etc.*

*Ask children how they can minimise immorality.”*

Participant 5 said *“We should make it our responsibility to contribute to the moral formation of children in all spheres, church, schools and community.*

*Parents should not neglect their children.*

*Parents should not shift their responsibilities to teachers and nannies.”*

*“We should not wait until something bad happen before we take action. We must be proactive towards issues of morality.”*

Participant 6 said, *“Ministry of adults regarding children morality must be introduced.”*

Participant 7 said *“Go back to basics; love the society, encourage children to have morals.*

*Work together as a society to promote moral life.*

*Raise children as a community.*

*Parents should regard every child as his/hers.*

*Raise children according to the word of God not according to the standard of the world.”*

Participant 8 said *“Get positive role models*

*Role models should serve as a moral compass*

*Have support groups where children are allowed to be children (without responsibilities and be with other children).*

*Use social media to teach morals.”*

Participant 9 said *“Schools should bring back assemblies*

*Church leaders must visit schools*

*Children should attend school*

*Religious education must be re-introduced*

*Parents must be role models to their children.*

*Radio stations must have slots for children to promote morality.*

*The church should allow children to do activities within the church premises.”*

Participant 10 said, *“Have a group of young people, teach them about good behaviour and monitor them to ensure that they bear good fruits. Show children the consequences of bad behaviour”.*

*Have centres where children learn and participate in activities that promote good behaviour. Be as practical as possible when teaching children about morality.”*

*“Have a group of youth and children and give social tasks to deal with issues affecting morality in the society.”*

Participant 11 said *“Have well-organised families: to breed well off-springs.*

*Have more teachings/training about moral formation.*

*Have life orientation/skills subjects at the primary level.*

*Government should minimise child grants because they promote unplanned pregnancies because children are just going for the money, the grant makes children lose. Have moral awareness at schools and churches”.*

Participant 12 said *“Family must pray together.*

*Christians must start Christian schools.*

*Church leadership must invest in children's ministry and support it, have children's camps.”*

Participant 13 said *“Parents should make time for their children*

*Allow children to go to church*

*Use available institutions and services e.g. youth centres, schools and other departments such as*

*Social Development for counselling.”*

*“Reduce children's rights*

*Enforce responsibilities over rights*

*Parents are afraid of reprimanding their children because they are afraid of being arrested.*

*Balance education on both genders (both girls and boys), don't focus only on the girl child."*

Participant 14 said *"It's not yet late to correct moral problems. The church must come up with programmes which are aimed at promoting and instilling morality.*

*We should start where it starts, which is at a young age, in school.*

*The church must partner with other stakeholders such as the Department of Social Development SAPS and the Department of Health to address issues of morality.*

*The church and community must not wait until something bad happens before they can do something.*

*The church must have awareness campaigns to promote morality.*

*The church should come up with programmes that will address these issues/problems of morality.*

*We should not wait until things get out of hand. We should deal with these matters at the right time.*

*Partner with different stakeholders such as SAPS, Social Development and any organisation that can assist in promoting order and discipline.*

*Have awareness as a church.*

*Family church and community should not be reactionary but proactive (not wait for something to happen before we act)."*

Participant 15 said *"It starts from the church family and the community.*

*Go back to the drawing board.*

*The church must preach to its members who are in authority.*

*Church delegates its members to do good everywhere they are.*

*Christians must represent church everywhere."*

Over and above the objectives of this study, there are other themes which were discovered which relate to the research topic. This study was conducted during the Covid-19 Pandemic. The pandemic had an impact on children attending church and children's ministry.

#### **4.7 The effects of Covid-19 pandemic on Sunday school activities.**

This theme presents the impact of covid-19 on Sunday school (children's Ministry) activities including children's ministry and church attendance. A detailed analysis is explained in detail in the next chapter.

Participant 1 said *“Before covid-19 children were committed to children ministry activities. They were always punctual at church. They attend children's ministry (Sunday school on Saturdays). Due to covid19 attendance has declined.”*

Participant 2 said *“Attendance of children was good before Covid-19. During Covid19 lockdown attendance is moderate.”*

Participant 3 said *“Before Covid-19 attendance of children was good During Covid19 attendance has been affected because they come with their parents to church and some parents do not attend church regularly due to Covid-19. There are times when children were advised not to attend church services or Sunday School due to Covid19.”*

Participant 4 said, *“Before Covi19 pandemic, Sunday School (Children's ministry) attendance was regular.”*

Participant 5 said *“Attendance was good before Covid-19.”*

*Things were not normal during Covid19. There is online/virtual service for children during Covid19.”*

Participant 6 said *“Attendance of children was good before Covid-19. Due to Covid19, everything has stacked; children were no longer coming due to Covid-19.”*

Participant 7 said *“Attendance of children to children ministry/Sunday school is determined by church attendance of the parents. Children were not allowed to attend church during the lockdown. Children are categorised according to their age.”*

Participant 8 said *“Attendance is limited. During Covid-19 lockdown attendance dropped to zero because some parents were not comfortable with bringing their children to children's ministry.”*

Participant 9 said *“Before Covid19 attendance was 70%. During covid-19 attendance dropped to less than 40%.”*

Participant 10 said, *“Attendance of children is moderate”.*

Participant 11 said *“Before Covid19 attendance of children was good During Covid19 attendance was very poor.”*

Participant 12 said *“Attendance was balanced/good before Covid-19. Things were not normal during Covid19. There is online/virtual service for children during Covid19”.*

Participant 13 said *“Before Covid-19 attendance of children was constant*

*During Covid19 attendance is fluctuating, it's low.”*

Participant 14 said *“Attendance of children was good before Covid-19.*

*Children's ministry is divided according to age groups.*

*During the strict lockdown, children were not allowed to come to church.*

*Participant of children on children ministry was good before Covid-19.”*

Participant 15 said *“Before Covid-19 attendance of children was very good.*

*During Covid19 attendance has declined, and children were not attending.”*

#### **4.8 The effects of media and technology on the morality of children**

Media can have a negative or positive effect on the morality of children. Recently media and technology are used for various reasons such as learning, entertainment socialisation/communication et cetera. This theme presents the effects/impact of technology and media on the morality of children.

Participant 1 said, *“there is a need for a television channel where children are taught the word of God and morals are instilled in them”.*

Participant 3 indicated that *“some parents do not monitor TV programs watched by children e.g. age restrictions of the TV programme, drama or movie.”*

Participant 9 indicated that *“Radios must have slots for children to promote morality.”*

Participant 12 said *“Media expose children to bad activities. Children can copy crime tactics from media.”*

## 4.9 Conclusion

The following presented themes and sub-themes were formulated from the collected data;

- The Functions of institutional support structures for children's ministry and the moral formation of children,
- The role of the church (leaders) in children's ministry.
- The role of the church in the moral formation of children.
- The role of the Church in the moral formation in the community.
- Role of the family in children's ministry.
- The role of the family in the moral formation of children.
- The role and responsibility of the Government toward children.
- The transfer of skills.
- Skills transfer to Sunday school teachers.
- Providing teaching and learning to children.
- The impact of entertainment and sports activities on child mortality.
- The possible results for lack of moral formation in childhood.
- Interventions to moral challenges and crisis.
- The effects of the Covid-19 pandemic on Sunday school activities.
- The effects of media and technology on the morality of children.

The presented data were formulated from the collected data. The presented themes and sub-themes related to the objectives of the study. However, two themes (The effects of the Covid-19 pandemic on Sunday school activities and the effects of media and technology on the morality of children), although they do not relate to the objectives of the study, they relate to the research topic.

The presented data gives understanding and answers to the question 'what is going on? This paves a way for the next two tasks (normative and pragmatic). The presented data outlined the role of various institutions \*family, government and church through children's ministry) on the moral formation of children and mainly the contribution of the church community in raising a morally formed generation.

Data presented in this chapter is analysed in the next chapter.

## **CHAPTER 5: ANALYSIS OF DATA**

### **5.1 Introduction.**

This chapter is based on an analysis of the collected data. A qualitative approach was used in this research study and interviews were used as a method of collecting data. The interviews were conducted around Mahikeng where the study was based. Constant comparison analysis was used to analyse the collected data. As a way of analysing data using this method, low-inference notes were organised per participant. Thus, analysis in this study involved classifying low-inference notes from each participant and categorising emerging themes according to their similarities. Similarly, contrasting themes were also categorised and merged with similar ones from each participant. Later both similar and contrasting themes were brought together, and this informed the main topics (themes) of the discussion in this chapter.

The chapter on the analysis of the collected data is an extensive and detailed part of the interpretive task. This chapter also includes a normative task which aims at answering the question ‘what ought to be going on?’

### **5.2 Functions of institutional support structures for children’s ministry and the moral formation of children.**

The moral formation of children is the responsibility of various institutions such as the family, church and government departments. Research participants mentioned the roles and responsibilities of these institutions toward children and children’s morality. Members of these institutions have responsibilities in guiding children and the moral formation of children. The church and family have a responsibility in the ministry designed for children.

#### **5.2.1 The role of the church in children’s ministry.**

As overseers of the congregation, church leaders need to put more focus on the children’s ministry to ensure that this ministry operates effectively. Men and women in the church also have a role to play in ensuring the proper functioning of this fundamental ministry. When church leaders, parents

and youth join efforts in playing their role in the operation of the children's ministry, it is when the church can be regarded as taking full responsibility for this ministry.

Three (3) participants (1, 3 and 4) indicated that the role of the church in the children's ministry is to ensure that resources are available for this ministry. There are resources needed for the proper functioning of this ministry, this includes human resources (children's ministry teachers), stationery, study materials and a budget. Participant 3 indicated that the "church board ensures that there are contributions towards children ministry. The church board also facilitates and ensures the availability of Sunday school teachers." Participant 4 said, "the church buys books for children's ministry". This shows efforts taken by church leaders in ensuring that this ministry is provided with the necessary resources. The availability of resources and their utilisation makes it possible for this ministry to reach its goals which may include instilling morals in children. Church leaders and members must introduce programmes and activities which are aimed at attracting and retaining children at church. Church leaders should allow the church premises to be used by children for activities such as sports, drama, organising trips for children, talent search sessions, children's concerts and competitions. Availing and providing resources for children's ministry can be regarded as investing in the children's ministry and children as indicated by Muniappa (2018:43), "The church must invest its time and resources where it will see the biggest harvest. One of the biggest investments the church can make is in children's ministry for it will pay for itself many times over." Muniappa regards investment in children's ministry as the 'biggest' one and indeed it is the biggest investment. Church leaders and members need to understand that children's ministry must be provided with all the necessary resources because by doing so they are investing in the future of the church. Study material must be availed for children, human resources who will serve as teachers must be available to teach in the children's ministry, teaching material for children's ministry teachers must be availed, and parents must avail their children for children's ministry to exist. It is the responsibility of church leadership (minister, church elders and deacons) to ensure that resources are available and that they are utilised. Rainer (2001:13), in his research, explains the importance of Sunday school in the future of the church "among new converts, 55% of those surveyed remained active in the church due to the Sunday School. Such statistics denote the power of Sunday School and the influence that it wields in our time". If children's ministry leads to future active church members and raises the possibility of children remaining in the church beyond childhood, it is, therefore, worth the time for church leaders and congregants to invest in

this important ministry by providing it with the necessary resources. Muniappa (2018:45) further indicates negatively the failure to provide resources and to invest in children's ministry by stating that,

there is a lack of support by church leaders because they think that children's ministry is babysitting, believe that children cannot be born again or serve God. These leaders should think differently. If there is a lack of resources, it is due to financial crises and the interests of leaders of the church.

Failure to provide resources for children's ministry means the church does not invest in this ministry. Therefore, the church cannot expect to benefit a lot from such children when they (children) become adults. Failure to invest in the children's ministry church leaders means such leaders do not understand the importance of children's ministry and the future of the church. If the church does not invest in the children's ministry and overlooks this ministry, it means this ministry will not exist in the church or the ministry will not function effectively. This will make it difficult for the church to address the challenges faced by children. The church will not be able to use children's ministry as a tool to raise a morally formed generation.

One participant (14) indicated a problem and a perturbing factor that "many churches do not focus on children ministry". Failure to focus on the children's ministry will harm the church in the future. This means that the church is at risk of experiencing a decline in membership, and inactive members in the future because they were not used to attending church regularly and participated in church activities/ministry from childhood. Failure to focus on the children's ministry in the church includes not having this ministry. Failure to give children's ministry attention and necessary support will lead to a situation where children who are not taught the word of God and morals at home, may lack the moral fibre to become good citizens. If children and children's ministry are ignored by parents, church leaders and other congregants, it is befitting to consider the question asked by McCoy "Has the Sunday school failed us, or have we failed our Sunday school?" (McCoy 2010:3). Children depend mainly and mostly on the parents for things such as life and moral guidance. Therefore, the non-existence of a children's ministry and the malfunctioning of this ministry means the parents, congregants and church leaders have failed

Sunday school/ children's ministry and children. Such failure contributes to the failure of church leaders and parents to use children's ministry for the moral formation in children, guidance and Christian teachings.

Six (6) participants (4, 7, 9, 10, 11 and 15) indicated that 'teaching' is one of the roles of the church in children's ministry. The main aim of having children's ministry is to teach children the word of God. Moral formation in children is drawn from lessons on the word of God. As they ensure that teaching takes place in children's ministry, church leaders must ensure that resources for teaching are available and that those who are providing this task (teachers) are trained. Professor Michael Hand emphasises the task of teaching, by stating that "Children must be taught morality. They must be taught to recognise the authority of moral standards and to understand what makes them authoritative" (Hand 2018:11). Professor Hand specifically explains the importance of carrying the task of teaching with children. Since this is one of the responsibilities of the church, it is important for those who carry it to perform it to the best of their ability. Hand precisely talks about teaching morals. The church needs to teach children the Word of God and instil morals (moral formation). When they teach children, the teachers must be able to link their teachings to living a moral life.

To maximise the possibility of having an effective children's ministry, different denominations in the community need to work together. Participant 12 said, "Different churches must work together (not compete) e.g. have joint children activities and programmes, share their children ministry models". Sharing ideas on how to have an effective children's ministry is another good practice for the church. This can make it easy and possible for most if not all, denominations within the community to have moral formation models and activities for children within the community. Children's ministry can be used by church leaders to strengthen fraternal relationships with other denominations within the community. The role of children does not end within the church. McCoy (2010:4) explains some of the challenges and gaps in children's ministry at certain churches by stating that only a few churches utilise Sunday school effectively while others simply tolerate it. The reason for this is that some church leaders do not understand the importance and function of

Sunday school. When leaders of different churches interact, they can share best practices for Sunday school/children's ministry. Leaders of churches that do not have children's ministry will learn how to establish children's ministry from churches that already have this ministry. Church leaders who experience challenges in children's ministry at their churches learn how to handle such problems from other church leaders as they interact with leaders of other churches on issues of children's ministry. The role of the church leadership in ensuring that there are resources for children's ministry enables this ministry to effectively carry out its tasks which include instilling morals in children. When church leadership supports this ministry, the church will be playing its role in ensuring that children's ministry contributes towards grooming morally formed children, which is one of the objectives of this study.

### **5.2.2 The role of the church in the moral formation of children.**

The church has a role to play in moulding the behaviour of congregants and this can be done through moral formation. Although moral formation is a process which can be done at any stage and age, the church needs to put more effort into ensuring that morals are instilled during childhood. This means moral formation must be integrated into children's ministry.

According to six participants (4, 7, 9, 12, 14 and 15), teaching is one of the tools which the church can use to instil morals in children. One participant (4) said they *emphasise the Ten Commandments at Sunday school, for children to live according to Ten Commandments*. These commandments are the basis of Christian morals. Preachers and Sunday school teachers should be able to use the Bible to instil morals in children. Participant 9 outlined the relevance of teaching as a way of moral formation by indicating that "*Teachings of the church are based on upbringing of the child, discipline and behaviour, self-discipline, respect and caring for others*". These must be some of the focus areas of children's ministry to instil morals in children. Teaching must be as practical as possible for children to understand and apply what they have been taught. Simamora (2019:95) emphasises the necessity of practical teaching by stating that "Teaching not only provides information and theories about morality but also requires a child to do so". Teaching does not end in class or at church. Teaching is seen by its results where learners (children) are seen

putting what they have learned into practice. It is therefore important for teachers to make their lessons practical and encourage children to practice what they were taught. Using the Bible as the basis of morality and teaching and instilling morals using the Bible is in line with the theory and views of Augustine of Hippo who grounded ethics around God and enable people to live moral lives. Teaching children the word of God and instilling morals in them using the word of God makes children know and understand that it is God who can enable them to live a moral life and become a morally formed generation.

Another important role to be played by the church in making moral formation for children easy is by providing support. The church must be a supportive institution for the congregants and members of the community. Six (6) participants (4, 5, 6, 8, 12, and 15) viewed the church as a supportive institution that can enable other institutions such as families to participate in moral formation in children. Participants 5, 6, 8 and 12 indicated that the church should provide support to children from child-headed families/houses. Such support includes emotional support, spiritual support, moral guidance, and parental support which includes the basic needs of children e.g. food and clothes. This type of support eases pressure, stress, and other problems such as poverty experienced by children from child-headed families which may make it difficult for such children to understand morality and live a moral life. Support of the church for child-headed families can be coupled with the adoption of children from such families. Three participants (8, 12 and 13) mentioned the concept of adoption of children from child-headed families as one of the things which can be done by church members. Participant 8 said, *“The church members can identify child headed family and adopt children from that family by visiting the family every week have devotion with children, support them, guide them and instil morals”*. This means adoption cannot be done formally and legally only. This can be regarded as informal adoption whereby church members take responsibility for children from child-headed families without following the legal route and procedure of adoption. The main aim of this is to provide children from child-headed families with their needs and instil morals in them. Adoption of children from child-headed families should not be confined to children who are members of a particular denomination. This means church members can adopt children who are not members of their congregation. The church can also have support programmes

for child-headed families and single parents which focus on the moral formation of children from those families. Muniappa (2018:40) challenges, outlines and discusses the challenges and problems faced by children by indicating that;

Children's ministry is important for them because children face many challenges and risks in their social, relational, intellectual, spiritual, and physical lives and at different stages of their life. One should not underestimate what God can do in and through kids in society. Their major crises are extreme poverty, child labour, malnutrition and plagues, the sex trade, street children, child abuse, and crimes among children. More minor crises include child marriage and lack of education.

Challenges and problems experienced by families affect children directly and indirectly. The mentioned Challenges, problems, and others call for the church's intervention. When the church provides support and intervention to families (including child-headed families) it is possible to minimise and prevent challenges and problems experienced by children from those families.

One of the objectives of this study is to discover the role of the church through children's ministry in grooming a morally formed generation. By providing support to families, the church will be minimising obstacles within families and communities that have the potential to hinder moral formation in children. Support of the church to families makes it more possible and easier for moral formation to take place in children because the church can address problems and challenges that affect children.

For the church to effectively accomplish moral formation in children, teaching is the best tool to be used on instilling morals in children. However teaching alone is not sufficient because children are experiencing problems such as poverty, depression, et cetera that need intervention and support from the church. It is therefore important for the church and its members to reach out to families and children who need any form of assistance and support.

### 5.2.3 The role of the Church in moral formation in the community.

The church operates in the community. The church must have contact with the community where it operates. This requires church leaders and members to avail themselves to the community, provide necessary assistance to the community, and try to solve, prevent or minimise problems within the community. One of the problems experienced in the community is immorality and this calls for intervention from the church.

The church exists and operates in a community. Church members must be seen as the light and the salt of the world by other members of the community. Being the light and the salt of the world includes reaching communities and providing any kind of assistance to members of the community. The role of the church includes providing assistance and support to the community.

Eight (8) participants (3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 11, 13, 14 and 15) indicated that the church must reach out to the community to instil morals in children and other members of the community.

Participant 3 said, “*the church must reach out to the community with programmes and have joint activities with the community*”. Participant 4 said, “*the church partnered with schools where it does outreaches*”. The church must reach out to the community in the following ways;

- Partner with orphanage homes; visit them to share the word of God to instil morals and do charity work.
- Partner with schools to share the word of God with learners to instil morals in learners.
- Establish community groups for children where children will be kept busy through sports and taught morals.
- Establish a community religious fraternity where children of different denominations come together to participate in, debates, Bible studies, and sporting codes that promote discipline and teach children morals.

Teaching and preaching can be regarded as some of the primary roles of the church. Church outreach to the community can be coupled with teaching and preaching. Three participants (6, 14 and 15) mentioned teaching as one of the ways of instilling morals in children and other members

of the community. Participant 6 said, “*Women ministry do outreaches where they teach children; encourage children to obey their parents and behave well at home and in the community*”. The church must reach out to communities to teach members the word of God. Participant 15 indicated that “*Christians must represent church everywhere*”. This means Christians preach through actions, they represent Christ everywhere by living a moral and Christian life. This will make other members of the community learn and copy a moral life from those Christians. Muniappa (2018:42) explains the power of children in the community/world by stating that “Children who understand God’s moral law and how to love their neighbours will make the world a better place. Surely, children’s ministry benefits public schools and industry and is good for their future employers and spouses”. Muniappa explains the necessity of educating children and the power of morally formed children. When the church realises that morally formed children have the power and ability to share the morals they have learned at church with other children and members of the community, it will ensure that the process of teaching children and moral formation does not cease because the efforts of teaching also benefit members of the community and not church members only. The church can provide outreach to teach members of the community about morality; teach its members, especially children about morals and encourage them to transfer moral lessons to their friends, neighbours and other members of the community. Calvin provides a theoretical framework that depicts the necessity of education if the intention is to raise a morally formed generation in the community. Grobbelaar and Breed (2016:211) state that,

Calvin’s fixation on education was not only informed by his practical ideal to reshape the moral foundations of Reformed societies but also by his theological beliefs. Because creation is a mirror of God’s works and since God manifests Godself in the whole structure of the universe, humans are bound to learn about God.

Calvin outlines the role and impact of education on morality and behaviour. Based on the views of Calvin, moral formation through education can shape behaviour and instil morals. It is through educating children about morality that their behaviour can be shaped to represent a morally formed generation in the community.

The theoretical framework and view of John Calvin further explain the role of church leaders to children/youth. According to Grobbelaar and Breed (2016:209) “Calvin regarded the church as ‘the pillar and ground of truth’ by which God diffuses God’s truth. He thus assigned a special role to pastors and ministers, as appointees of God, to instruct the young”. Church leaders are also teachers and parents who should guide children, youth and other members of the community as well as encourage people to live a moral life. As elders who know God’s truth on issues of morality, church leaders are responsible for transferring such knowledge to children. The church must be a pillar of truth and a compass of the moral life for members of the community.

The other roles to be played by the church in instilling morals in children is providing the necessary and relevant ‘support’ where it’s needed. Three participants (11, 12 and 14) define the church as a support institution for the community. Participant 11 said, “*Church must be seen as a place of refuge for those who are in need (provide accommodation, clothes and food)*”. Challenges and needs of the community such as poverty and unemployment can hurt the morality of those who are affected. The church needs to provide assistance and support to families affected by poverty and unemployment, particularly children from those families. Children from such families can be provided with school uniforms, sanitary pads, food and other basic needs, to avoid situations such as children who date older people because those older people (sugar mama and sugar daddy) give children from poor families money and other basic needs. The church can avail its premises for children’s activities such as studying, educational assistance where children are assisted with their homework, aftercare and sports activities. This is another way of keeping children away from the streets where they are easily tempted to commit a crime and other immoral activities.

One of the objectives of this study is to discover the role of the church through the children’s ministry in grooming a morally formed generation. The church can make a huge impact in minimising immorality and encouraging ethical behaviour if it reaches out to the community and other institutions, such as schools, to teach children about morality. The doors of the church as a place of refuge must be open for every member of the community who needs guidance and support on issues of morality. Every parent in the community must feel free to consult and ask the minister to visit the family and guide his/her children on issues of morality.

#### **5.2.4 The role of the family in children's ministry.**

The church depends on families to fully operate an effective children's ministry. Families have to avail themselves and bring their children to church and encourage children to attend children's ministry. Failure of families to bring their children to church and failure to encourage and avail them for children's ministry means it will not exist or there won't be a fully functioning children's ministry at church.

Availing and bringing children to children's ministry is very important. Children's church attendance and their commitment to children's ministry determine the existence of children's ministry. There are negative and positive aspects in terms of church attendance and attendance in children's ministry. Participant 2 said, "*some parents leave their children at home when they go to church*". Participant 7 said, "*Some parents are not committed, and they do not see the importance of attending children's ministry*". The responses of these two (2) participants indicate a threat to children's ministry and the future of the church because when parents leave their children at home and do not encourage children to attend church, those children grow up not seeing the necessity of attending the church which may hinder the process of moral formation in those children if parents do not provide moral formation in children at home. When parents leave their children at home when they go to church, this can harm future membership and attendance of the church because when these children grow up they will be used to staying at home and not see the necessity of attending church. When children who grew up not attending church and children's ministry they might not see the need of sending their children to church or children's ministry when they become parents because they were not attending children's ministry during their childhood. This brings the possibility of the situation where the church might end up not having a children's ministry. When parents do not see the necessity of their children attending children's ministry, this poses a threat to the spiritual and religious/Christian life of those children because such children are not encouraged and taken to children's ministry where Christian teachings for children are provided.

Muniappa (2018:36) explains the impact of church attendance on children,

The May 2001 Barna research also showed that church attendance by children has a lifelong impact. The majority (61%) of adults who attended church as children still attend regularly, while only 22% of those who were not churchgoers as children attend church today. Early churchgoing also has an impact on whether parents bring their children to church.

Muniapa discusses important factors which need to be known by parents. An effective children's ministry depends on parents bringing their children to church and children's ministry. Parents should understand that availing their children to children's ministry and encouraging children to attend children's ministry will have a positive impact on the church and children in the future, whereby children are more likely to be committed and active church members beyond childhood and their behaviour and conduct will be shaped through sermons and teachings. If parents do not bring their children to church some of the participants indicated that "*some parents leave their children at home when they go to church*", children's ministry will not exist. Having an effective children's ministry where children participate in church activities and church services gives children a sense of belonging to the church. This will encourage children to realise the necessity of attending church and continue to attend church regularly even beyond childhood. This can happen when parents bring their children to church and when there is an effective children's ministry. There are positive aspects in terms of attendance at children's ministry. Two (2) participants indicated positive aspects of children attending church and children's ministry. Participant 2 said, "*Parents attend church with their children*". Participant 12 said, "*Parents avail their children for Sunday school. Even parents who are not members send their children to Sunday school*". Availing and encouraging children to attend children's ministry is beneficial to children because this is where they are taught the word of God and where the process of moral formation from a Christian perspective is done.

Church attendance by children and being part of children's ministry contribute towards the moral formation of children because at church and children's ministry morals are instilled in children through teaching them the word of God.

Eight (8) participants (2, 3, 4, 7, 8, 9, 11 & 13) indicated parental support for children’s ministry. Participant 1 indicated that *“Parents are very supportive”*. Participant 7 said, *“Parents who are committed to church activities want their children to be part of children's ministry and participate in children's activities”*. Participant 8 said, *“There is commitment. Every parent wants his/her child to become a better citizen. Parents ensure that their children are part of children's ministry”*. Participant 9 said, *“Some parents are committed and they encourage their children to attend Sunday school”*. Participant 11 said, *“There is the excellent commitment of parents. They always avail their children for every event. Parents support children ministry”*. Participant 12 said, *“Parents avail their children for Sunday school. Even parents who are not members send their children to Sunday school”*. Parental support for children’s ministry is very important and required for its existence and proper functioning. Parents must not just bring and avail their children to this ministry. Parents need to support the activities of the ministry. Parents can contribute funds for children’s ministry activities. Parental support for this ministry shows that they see the need for and the importance of this ministry. They believe that the ministry can shape the behaviour of their children through the process of moral formation that takes place at children’s ministry. Parents who do not attend church but send their children to church and children’s ministry show that such parents recognise the importance of this ministry for children. Muniappa (2018:42) indicates the connection between the church and the family by stating that *“Children’s ministry is a major method for getting families involved in ministry”*. Relationships between families and the church must not be undermined and overlooked. This is one of the things which church leaders need to pay attention to and address problems if there are any. Good relationships between the church and families create trust between these two institutions. This makes it easy for parents to avail their children of the children’s ministry and church activities. This also makes it easy for parents to support the children’s ministry with resources which are required by this ministry and sponsor some events for the ministry. Through these actions, families/parents become role players in this ministry and contribute to its success.

Seven (7) participants (3, 6, 7, 9, 10, 14 & 15) outlined different challenges facing children’s ministry. Amongst others, these participants mentioned the following challenges;

- *“Some parents don’t have transport to take their children to Sunday school.*

- *Some parents prioritise other things rather than children's ministry.*
- *Some parents do not trust Sunday school teachers with their children.*
- *Other parents do not encourage their children to attend Sunday school (be part of children's ministry).*
- *Some parents are not committed to their children's ministry.*
- *The absence of youth at home makes it difficult for children to attend Sunday school because children cannot attend Sunday school on their own.*
- *Some parents do not show interest in sending their children to Sunday school.*
- *Most children are not serious about Sunday school and catechism; they attend with less interest as if they are forced”.*

Both parents and church leaders must address the challenges experienced in this ministry. If parents “do not trust Sunday school teachers with their children” this will affect the attendance of children negatively. These call for church leaders to intervene and try to win the trust of the parents toward leaders and teachers of children’s ministry. One of the interventions and measures which can be put in place is to conduct vetting of all children’s ministry teachers. Church leaders can also assign overseers for the children’s ministry who will ensure the safety of children and that children are not abused in this ministry. Church leaders must have meetings with parents who do not encourage or send their children to attend the children’s ministry and those who leave their children at home when they go to church, to find out why those parents do not avail their children to attend children’s ministry. Church leaders must show and explain the importance of children’s ministry and attendance of children to the parents who do not avail their children of children’s ministry. Children’s ministry teachers must come up with strategies for attracting and retaining children in this ministry to address the challenges of children who show less interest in children’s ministry and those who are not interested to become members of this ministry e.g. organising and holding sports activities, fun day, career day, talent search, movie day et cetera. The mentioned challenges lead to the situation outlined by McCoy (2010:3) that “to be sure, many Christian churches, regardless of denomination, are experiencing a downturn in the attendance of Sunday school students”. The above-mentioned challenges show a negative view of the family/parents towards the church and children’s ministry. If they are not addressed these challenges may lead to the non-

existence of the children's ministry, yet parents have children which can form the children's ministry. Muniappa (2018:30) indicated what can serve as a solution to the above-mentioned challenges, "the minister and elders carry the great responsibility of creating a proper image of the church in the mind of the child". Creating a good realistic image of the church for the children is a way of attracting and retaining children within the church. Children get permission to do a lot of things from their parents. This challenges church leaders to reach parents for parents to bring their children to church and Sunday school. Church leaders must also create a good image of the children's ministry for the parents to feel free to avail themselves and bring their children to this ministry.

Children's ministry receives both negative and positive responses from families, where some parents leave their children at home when they go to church, while others take their children to church and allow those children to be part of the children's ministry. Since the church depends on parents to avail their children for this ministry to exist and operate effectively, church leaders must address any challenge and problem that hinders the effective existence of the children's ministry. Negative views of some parents towards children's ministry (e.g. parents who do not allow their children to go to church and children's ministry) must be addressed through meetings with such parents. One of the objectives of this study is to discover the possible risk of ignoring ethical and moral challenges. If parents do not teach their children morals at home and leave children at home this can be regarded as overlooking the process of moral formation in children, which is a risk of raising children who are not morally conscious. This can lead to immoral behaviour during childhood, youth, and even in adulthood.

#### **5.2.5 The role of the family in the moral formation of children.**

The family as the primary institution play an important role in the moral formation of their children, however, there are challenges experienced by some families which hinder the process of moral formation of children. The challenges experienced by children from child-headed families and single parents require more attention. Church members and community members can provide

appropriate interventions. Relatives also have a role to play and intervene with problems encountered by single parents and child-headed families.

Five (5) participants (2, 4, 6, 7 & 14) mentioned teaching as one of the tools that can be used by families for moral formation in their children. Participant 2 said, *“Parents should have sessions with their children where they discuss issues affecting their children”*. Participant 4 said, *“Adolescents must be taught the word of God from home”*. Participant 6 said, *“Parents should teach their children morals irrespective of whether the parent is single. Upbringing of children is determined by parents on how to instil morals in children”*. Participant 7 said, *“We should start at home by teaching our children morals”*. Participant 14 said *“Parents should introduce some programmes within the family e.g. have bible study, pray 2/3 times a day, have bible quizzes as a family to encourage children to read the bible. Parents should have bible studies at home to teach their children the word of God and encourage children to read the Bible”*. Simamora (2019:94) regards teaching as part of the parental role,

Parents must educate children, which is educating with the Word of God. Because the word of God is useful for teaching, stating mistakes, correcting behaviour and educating in truth. Parents must educate children with the correct teaching following the word and purpose of God, besides that parents must be an example for children in getting used to reading, pondering, and doing God's Word in real life. Parents are responsible for setting an example to children, educating children in the love and teachings of God, and accepting all circumstances of children.

The word of God can be used to shape the behaviour of children. Teaching children the word of God forms part of moral formation. As parents teach their children the word of God, they can do that in a form of discussion or bible study where children also participate.

Francis and Casson (2019:5) share the same views as Simamora' and the participants on teaching parental responsibility, *“The role of parents in the education and evangelisation of their child is ‘original and irreplaceable. It assumes the characteristics typical of family life itself, which should*

be interwoven with love, simplicity, practicality and daily witness”. Parents need to know that taking responsibility for educating their children is like planting a seed which they will reap its fruit at a later stage. Based on this, it is therefore important to diligently do this task of teaching children, because the moral formation of children can be done through teaching.

Every institution has rules/laws. Home as the primary and important institution should have rules. Another way of instilling morals in children is through household rules, it is, therefore, important for the family to have rules. Participant 3 said, “*Parents must play their parental roles: e.g. monitor and strictly things such as TV programmes watched by children, for instance, age restriction of the TV programme*”. Participant 9 said, “*Parents should have consistent household rules*”. The parents need to have rules for their homes. Every member of the family must be aware of the house rules and comply with them. Parents and elder brothers/sisters should adhere to the household rules as a way of setting a good example to children that rules must be obeyed. The importance of having rules and teaching children to obey them is another way of instilling discipline in children, bringing order in the family and instilling morals in the children.

Children learn by observing. They learn from what they see their elders/parents doing. Another way of instilling moral formation is through good actions. Children can learn morals from the good actions of their parents and other members of the community. This means good parental conduct and a good exemplary life of the parents are important for the process of moral formation in children.

Participant 3 said, “*Parents should refrain from using strong language when talking to children and gossip with and in the presence of children*”. Participant 4 said, “*Parents should live by the word of God (live by example)*”. Participant 5 said, “*When parents have morals it is easy for them to instil morals in children*”. Participant 14 said, “*Parents should be good examples to children*”. As an example to the children, parents must be careful about their language and actions in the presence of their children, because children are good at copying the words and actions of their parents. If they want to be good examples to their children, parents must avoid using strong language when they talk to their children and avoid using strong language amongst them in the presence of the children. When parents conduct themselves well, children can copy such conduct

and become disciplined and moral children. Simamora (2019:94) explains the importance of a good exemplary life by emphasising that,

Parents must be able to lead their families into good Christian families and set an example in their lives. In addition, the family is also responsible for setting an example for children, educating them in God's love and teachings (Ephesians 6: 4), and accepting all the conditions of children.

Living a good exemplary life is education to those who see such a kind of life. Since children learn through observation, they can learn and copy morals and good behaviour from parents who live a good exemplary life. The most important thing about parents who live a good exemplary life is that even children of their neighbours and community can learn good behaviour from such parents. Khaidir and Suud (2020:59) touch on the aspect of speech and language of parents by indicating that “The formation of character is an effort done by parents to influence the child’s character. Parents help to shape the character of children by giving examples, ways of speaking or conveying tolerance, and other related matters”. Khaidir and Suud resonate with the participant who indicated the danger of using strong language in the presence of the children. Parents should therefore refrain from using strong language in the presence of children because children can learn bad/immoral language from such parents.

Although the family plays a primary and important role in instilling morals in children some challenges hinder some families from performing moral formation in children. Participant 2 said *“Parents can instil morals in children even when they are single. “Single parents should ask assistance from other parents when they experience a problem with the behaviour of their children (when a single mother is experiencing behavioural problem with her son, she can ask a male parent from church/relative/neighbour to talk/guide/reprimand to the son)”*. It becomes a challenge for moral formation to take place in children from single-parent families, divorce parents and child-headed families, however despite any challenges experienced in these families, it doesn’t mean moral formation cannot take place. Muniappa (2018:4) outlines some of the causes of single parenting, “Some parents abandon their children simply because they have no means of providing for their needs. Their situations are devastating, and the need is dire, which I had experienced and seen in the mission fields among the tribes”. Challenges such as poverty and unemployment lead

to a situation where some people leave their partners with children, which leads to single parenting and this can affect or hinder the process of moral formation in children of such parents. The church and neighbours can provide necessary assistance such as co-parenting or parental guardianship to children of single parents, where a particular elder extends their parental responsibilities to children of another parent (including assisting children from child-headed homes).

Despite challenges experienced by different families, the process of moral formation in children must not cease. Challenges that hinder the process of moral formation in children must be addressed or minimised so that children can be taught morals.

Participant 5 said, *“Parents need to be present in the lives of their children. Parents should not focus only on providing money to their children but also focus on guiding the behaviour of their children”*.

Participant 12 said *“Adoption of children: Christian families should adopt children who don’t have parents (formal or informal adoption), give children from child-headed families food”*. Participant 9 said, *“Parents must do co-parenting after divorce”*. Participant 11 said *“church members can visit single parents and child-headed families and check how they can be assisted. Group children from child-headed families and teach them morals. Arrange camps for children from child-headed families and teach them about morality”*. Participant 10 said, *“Parents should have discussions with children from their neighbours where they discuss issues of morality and good conduct”*.

Parental support, financially, emotionally and morally - for children is very important because such kind of support is another good example to the children, where children learn positive and ethical behaviour through the actions and responsibilities of their parents. Absent parent/s cause gaps in the life of a child where a child grows up without relating to a father/mother figure. This requires parents must be present in the life of their children. The presence of the parent allows him/her to guide children through each step of their lives and instil morals in the children. In the situation of children from child-headed families, relatives, neighbours, or church members can adopt children from such families and provide parental guidance, moral formation, financial support, academic support and spiritual support to children from such families. Djohari and Hernawati (2018:12) emphasise the importance of the presence of both parents in the life of a child, *“The duration of father’s education affects the behaviour of child aggression. Therefore, both mother and father need a good education and understanding of parenting. Both parents must*

play an important role in supervising the child's behaviour, educate and instil moral children from an early age and care for children with love." Parental presence in the life of children means that support and guidance will be provided to children, however, things such as divorce and death which lead to single parenting cannot be ignored. Parents need to understand that their presence in the lives of their children is important; therefore divorce should not lead to a situation where children do not spend time with both parents.

One of the objectives of this study is to discover ways of preventing or minimising unethical and immoral behaviour in children. Family plays an important role in the moral formation of children. It is this institution (family) that should contribute toward preventing or minimising unethical and immoral behaviour in children. The family has a big task to perform in raising children. In ensuring that it raises morally formed children, the family must ensure that teaching takes place. This includes teaching children the word of God and moral formation. Parents must teach children through words and actions by living a good and exemplary life. Parental presence contributes positively to the process of moral formation because parents can provide the necessary support and teachings to the child. Challenges such as single parenting affect or hinder the process of moral formation in children. This and other challenges that hinder the process of moral formation must be addressed or minimised, through co-parenting after divorce, neighbourhood assistance and church intervention/assistance.

#### **5.2.6 The role and responsibility of Government for children.**

The Government plays an important role in matters of children because this is where policies and acts are formulated. These acts and policies determine and guide how children should be treated and protected.

In response to the role of government on issues of child mortality, participants indicated how the government can assist in making the process of moral formation easy and possible for children. Two participants (9 and 11) mentioned some of the interventions and assistance that government

can provide to ease challenges that can affect the morality of the children. Both participants 9 and 11 mentioned the role of the Department of Social Development in child-headed families. Social grants from the Department of Social Development can assist children from child-headed families. Intervention is not limited to the Department of Social Development, Participant 9 further indicated that the “*Department of education should make awareness on child-headed families and provide guidance to children from child-headed families*”. Education, support and guidance should be provided to children from child-headed families. The Department of Education can have a support programme for such children where they are allocated a mentor or guardian who will monitor the overall well-being of those children, guide them, instil morals and contact relevant people and departments if children have other special needs. One of the objectives of this study is to discover the ways of preventing or minimising unethical and immoral behaviour amongst the young generation, and the Government through its departments such as the Department of Education can contribute towards minimising unethical and immoral behaviour in raising a morally formed generation by making moral lessons part of the daily or weekly lessons for learners.

Participant 14 indicated that the “*church should partner with Government Departments to address issues of morality*”. This shows that the church cannot operate in isolation when dealing with issues of morality. This call for joint efforts and programmes between the church, Government, communities and families which are directed towards grooming and raising morally conscious children. The government should provide services and support to families (e.g. social support to orphans and child-headed families). The Government should also provide education for children that includes moral formation (moral education). The moral formation can be made part of the school curriculum or syllabus. Mampane and Ross (2017:107) explain the role of government in protecting children, “In South Africa, the foster care system, which is a form of familial care and a major component of the child protection system, is the state’s response to child abuse and maltreatment and the orphan crisis”. The role of government for children through its departments must go beyond protecting children. The Government must work with different institutions to ensure that children are provided with an education that promotes morality and living a moral and ethical life. Educating children and members of the community can reduce cases of child abuse

and promote a harmonious and moral life. Mampane and Ross echo the same views with the participants that the Government can use (foster) grants to assist child-headed families with their basic needs. This form of assistance can reduce the chances of crime committed by children from child-headed families and children from poor families.

Participant (6) mentioned the negative effects of some of the decisions of the government, which is *“facing out religious education at schools”*. Although one of the reasons for phasing religious education out at schools was based on the freedom of religion and not forcing children who are not Christians or those who do not belong to any religion to do religious education, the negative impact of phasing religious education out of school made it difficult for teachers to instil morals in children through religious education.

Participant (13), indicated other negative effects which resulted from laws introduced by the government *“There are many rights; children do as they wish and it’s difficult to parent such child”*. Although most people talk about rights and responsibility, most children fail to use their rights responsibly which makes it difficult for elders to parent children who abuse their rights. This means children’s rights and their applications need to be reviewed. Smith (2015:348) indicates some of the disadvantages of freedom, *“Undisciplined youth emboldened by their newfound democratic freedoms were responsible for the country’s crime problem”*. According to Smith abuse of freedom is the cause of ill-discipline. However, there is nothing wrong with freedom, but when it comes to children, freedom and rights should not supersede responsibility which means children must be taught responsibility first.

Moral formation is another way of grooming a person to be independent. Government should work together with different institutions such as churches and families to promote and encourage living a moral life and moral formation in children. Religion and religious institutions play an important role in shaping the behaviour of their members. Therefore, government laws should not make it difficult for religion, religious leaders and religious institutions to access institutions

such as schools and child and youth care centres to teach the child about morality and ensure that the process of moral formation takes place.

### **5.3 The transfer of skills**

The central part of children's ministry is teaching. The process of teaching is the transfer of knowledge from one person/s to another person/s. For teaching to take place in children's ministry; this requires people who are capable of teaching and those who are willing to work with children. The capabilities of Sunday school teachers can be shaped and enhanced through training.

#### **5.3.1 Skills transfer to Sunday school teachers.**

Not every Sunday school teacher is a teacher by profession, therefore there is a need to provide training for Sunday school teachers.

Two of the fifteen participants (participants 4 and 5) indicated that there is training provided for Sunday school teachers. Participant 4 indicated that "*the church pays for workshops of Sunday school teachers on how to teach Sunday school*". Participant 5 said, "*Sunday school teachers are trained. There is a training centre where teachers are sent for training, it is where teaching manuals for Sunday school are developed*".

Taking Sunday school teachers to workshops and paying for them shows that church leaders value Sunday school. Taking teachers to training institutions where they are trained specifically for children's ministry is a way of empowering those who are responsible for developing children within the church. It shows how some denominations are committed to having quality children's ministry by ensuring that their teachers are trained for Sunday school/children's ministry. This is another form of investing in people who will groom the morals and behaviour of future leaders (children) through training.

It's not everyone can teach. Training provides teachers with different teaching techniques, and problem-solving skills for teaching, and provides effective and relevant teaching for Sunday school. How Sunday school was taught more than 20 years ago cannot be the same as teaching it today due to changes in times and challenges (e.g. issues such as drug abuse, and teenage pregnancy were not the main problems/challenges more than 20 years ago but today they are among top social problems and today's teachings need to include challenges/problems such as these). Training of Sunday school teachers empowers them to interpret Sunday school teaching material (e.g. manuals and books) and make the process of teaching easy for children to understand. To provide effective teaching for children's ministry Sunday school teachers or children's ministry leaders need to be trained. Training of children's ministry leaders enables church leaders to determine how teaching in children's ministry should be done. It also gives the church the task of developing training manuals for their teachers and a Sunday school curriculum which is in line with the doctrine of the church. McCoy (2010:10) explains the necessity of developing and training Sunday school teachers by stating that there is

An underlying need for trained Sunday School staff; especially those that are volunteering and have no formal training as educators. Volunteer instructors need to have more than a base knowledge of scripture; they need to have a thorough understanding of how to impart such knowledge in a way that is palatable for the students in their class, which in return will provide fodder for spiritual growth. Ultimately, growth in knowledge is what education is all about, and the church should not consider itself exempt from such a fundamental definition.

Children's ministry teachers need to know how to engage with children, the best practices for teaching children, how to interpret the bible for children in a simplified way, how to discipline children without abusing them, how to attract and retain children in children's ministry and within the church even beyond childhood. McCoy regards the training of children's ministry teachers as a necessity. It is good that some church leaders realise the necessity of training children's ministry teachers and take responsibility for sending teachers for training as well as providing workshops for children's ministry teachers.

One of the objectives of this study is to discover the role of the church through children's ministry in grooming a morally formed generation. For a church to have an effective children's ministry, there must be teachers who are capable of teaching. By training teachers, the church makes it easy for children's ministry teachers to be able to provide quality education to children and ensure that morals are instilled in children using the word of God.

Another objective of this study is 'to discover the significance of morality and ethics in children and youth'. Capacitating children's ministry teachers to provide relevant lessons to children enable teachers to effectively carry out the task of teaching children. These tasks (training children's ministry teachers and teaching) make it possible for parents, children and church leaders to understand the significance of morality in the lives of children and the well-being and good behaviour of members of the community.

### **5.3.2 Providing teaching and learning to children.**

Four participants (4, 6, 8 and 13) indicated that children are categorised according to their ages for Sunday school classes. Participants 4 and 6 said they categorise children in the following categories; ages "3-4, 5-7, 8-9 and 10-13", participants 8 and 13 said they have the following categories according to the ages of the children; "0-3, 4-6, 7-10, 11-15 and 16-18". Categorising children according to their age at Sunday school brings order and makes it easy for teaching and learning to take place because children are taught according to the level/category of their age. Children who do not know how to write can be taught through colouring and singing, and those who know how to read and write can be given activities, projects or assignments as a method of teaching and assessment.

The thinking and understanding capacity of children is limited, therefore the bible cannot be the only book used for teaching children ministry. There are different books which are used by different denominations for teaching Sunday school. Four participants (4, 6, 8 and 13) who said they categorise children according to age indicated that each age group has its book. Five

participants (2, 4, 6, 8 and 13) indicated that children under the age of five are taught through colouring pictures, narrating the story based on the picture and teaching a practical lesson from that particular picture. Two participants (7 and 12) indicated that they print lessons for Sunday school from the internet (Google) while two participants (2 and 15) indicated that they use the Bible as the main book, there are no other books used for teaching Sunday school. Using the bible to teach Sunday school and instil morals in children can be linked to the ethical theory of Karl Barth.

Living a moral life is living a life of obedience to that which God commands. One cannot be a Christian in isolation, nor can one be moral while being completely detached from one's environment or other people. Through Jesus, God shows us what is to be a godly human being. Through Jesus, individuals respond to God's grace and start living a life that is characterised by moral behaviour (Kretzschmar, Bentley and Van Niekerk 2009:75).

Children form part of the faith community. They cannot be Christians in isolation. They must be part of the church. Parents must therefore bring their children to church. For children to live in obedience to God's commands, they must be taught the word of God's using the Bible so that they can respond in obedience to God's command/word and depict moral behaviour in their everyday life. It, therefore, is important and relevant to use the Bible in teaching children at Sunday school/children's ministry. Eleven participants (1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11, 13 and 14) indicated that *"there are books prescribed and used for teaching Sunday school"*, the majority of the participants in the study show that it is important to use other books in addition to the Bible for teaching in children's ministry. Having study or teaching material for children's ministry is important because such material includes books and charts or pictures which are simplified for easy and better understanding for children. This requires church leaders to ensure that teaching material for Sunday school is available.

Ten participants (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 10, 12 and 13) indicated that they use additional teaching material from the Bible, and two participants indicated that they use the Bible as the main book for teaching children ministry and five participants indicated that they use pictures to teach children. The important fact is that the task of teaching must be effective by transferring knowledge

to children and shaping their behaviour. Different relevant Christian sources/materials can be used to perform this task of teaching to achieve its goal of teaching children the word of God and instilling morals. The importance of having extra teaching material for children's ministry is supported by Oliver (2006:12) stating that "The church thought that it was finally getting to grips with the demands of modern-day worship when it 'partially' replaced or supplemented the Bible with modern textbooks, creative multimedia aids and new ideas for the Sunday school to teach children about God". Oliver supports the fact that it is important to couple the Bible with other study and teaching materials when teaching in children's ministry. However, the teaching material used in addition to the Bible must contain Christian teachings. It is important to use teaching material with lessons which are extracted from the Bible and material with lessons which are in line with the teachings of the Bible.

It is the responsibility of Sunday school teachers to ensure that teaching takes place continuously. On the other hand, parents must ensure that their children attend Sunday school accordingly.

Five participants (1, 2, 4, 6, and 8) indicated that teaching should be provided to children who are below the age of five. What makes this part exceptional is that it is the core foundation of teaching. These are children who are at pre-school and they should not be excluded when it comes to teaching in children's ministry. Children are taught the word of God at a very early age, and this can be coupled with moral formation lessons at the level of children under the age of five. One participant said, "*Children are interactive, they learn by seeing or through action*". This makes it important and mandatory for teaching to be provided to children who are below the age of five in children's ministry. According to three participants, (9, 10 and 11), active participation methods for teaching children include "*drama and singing*". The drama involves acting, this is where children do practical lessons and those who are watching and those who are acting can understand the message conveyed through drama, hence teaching is also done through drama. Muniappa (2018:43) emphasises the fact that indeed children are willing to learn and relate well with their teachers during lessons, "Children are open to Learning and to Trusting God. There is a season, sometime between the ages of four and fourteen, when people are most moldable than they will

ever be in their lifetime. It is when people are forming their understanding of the world, relationships, life, and God. It is a season when people are impressionable". It is important to start teaching at a tender/early age because this is where learning takes place easily. For children, learning does not end in class or at church. Children are eager to learn and put into practice what they have learned. This can make teaching for children's ministry teachers easy because learners are ready and willing to learn. Instilling knowledge and morals through teaching moulds the behaviour of children for their present and future when they become adults. Teaching children should not be too theoretical or theoretical only. It is important to be as practical as possible when teaching children. This will enable children to understand what has been taught and apply those lessons in their daily lives. Dialogues and discussions with children enable the teachers to know the level of understanding of children and simplify learning for children. Teaching was the primary task of Sunday school as outlined by Oliver (2006:3), "First Sunday school was established and conducted by people outside the church and it was designed to teach basic reading and writing skills. Any religious value was incidental; the purpose was moral and educational". According to Oliver, the initial task of Sunday school was to teach children. Even today, teaching is the principal role and the centre of children's ministry. This is where teaching is provided to children at their pace and according to their level and age category. Teaching should be the main activity of children's ministry, this activity/task must be carried out diligently to produce positive results. The interesting part is that moral education was part of the initial teachings of Sunday school. This important task of 'teaching' must never cease, especially with children. Professor Michael Hand states some of the important things that people must guard against by stating that "We should neither assume that children will learn morality unaided nor presume to impose on them the moral code we happen to favour: our job as educators is to cultivate moral autonomy by enabling children to make their independent judgments on the content and justification of morality" (Hand 2018:11). Teaching must empower children to be in a position to make moral decisions on their own based on what they have learned and what they were taught. Teaching must be the centre and an important task of children's ministry. This is more in line with the reformed doctrine where teaching/preaching of the word is the centre of their church service.

One of the objectives of this study is to discover the role of the church through children's ministry in grooming morally formed children. Teaching is one of the best tools that the church can use in children's ministry to instil morals in children. Having a structured teaching strategy for children's ministry such as grouping children according to their age, training children's ministry teachers and providing teaching and learning material for children and teachers can make the process of moral formation in children easy and possible at church.

#### **5.4 The impact of entertainment and sports activities on child morality.**

Sport can be regarded as one of the favourite activities of children. Having sports activities at church seems to be one of the things that attract children to church. It is therefore important for the church leadership and Sunday school teachers to consider the issue of making it a part of the children's ministry programme. One participant (6) indicated that "*what we do as the circuit is that we come together as all parishes, have sports day, cultural day*". This shows that at the circuit level of the church/congregation, sports are part of their Sunday school programme. Children from different parishes compete in different sporting codes. This promotes unity amongst children from different parishes which will lead to united members of the circuit as these children grow up. Although sport takes place at church, teachers and sports organisers need to be careful and observe the spirit of children who participate in different sporting codes, Atiq and Yunitaningrum (2020:57) discuss an important factor which might have a negative impact if overlooked and a positive impact when it is considered,

Children need to be encouraged to commit to sports as moral practices, which means that they will play as they should be played, not in immoral ways or with negative characters. When the formation of this character has been done consistently and successfully, we will be able to see changes in the child. The hope is that these children will not only show positive behaviour during football games, but they will also show positive behaviour in daily life, as well as show that they are capable of upholding the values of society in society.

Atiq and Yunitaningrum concur with the view that sports unite children, however, this can happen if children 'put morals into practice as they play. This will lead to fair and controllable play amongst children regardless of which team or parish they belong to. This means coaches and

teachers must teach children to have healthy competition when they play. This will teach children to view members of another team as human beings who deserve to be treated with respect and fairness. Teachers and coaches must teach children to apply those lessons in their daily lives. Failure to teach children healthy and have fair competition and failure to encourage children to 'commit to moral practice' will lead to a situation where children see members of another team as opponents who can be treated in any manner (bad or unfair) without considering the wellbeing of another player/person.

One participant (12) indicated how sport can be used to instil discipline in children, "*parents should allow children to participate in sporting codes that promote morality, teamwork and discipline*". Sporting codes such as Karate are where children are taught self-defence and not to provoke other children. This sporting code somehow instils discipline and promotes peaceful and harmonious relations among those who play. In addition to discipline, morals can also be instilled through sports. Atiq and Yunitaningrum (2020:57) discuss other sporting codes that can assist in instilling morals in children,

Physical activity in moral formation for athletes is very important to be carried out because it is a demand for ongoing life together, orderly and orderly for progress and changes towards a better direction. Physical activity is one of the factors that can help in the formation of morals and become a trigger in improving good habits.

Atiq and Yunitaningrum acknowledge the view that sports contribute toward moral formation in participants/players (children). Participation of children in different sporting codes assists children to show discipline, and team spirit (working together), as they play. This is another practicality of moral formation. People can assess the morality of children based on how they behave when they play with others and how they relate with others.

Four participants (4, 8, 10 and 11) indicated that they use drama to instil morals and teach children the word of God. It is important to couple Sunday school theoretical lessons with drama where children dramatise what they have been taught. This will enable children to easily apply what they

have learned at Sunday school to their daily lives. The drama goes beyond teaching children the word of God and instils morals, the talent of children can be discovered as they perform e.g. future actors or presenters. Drama can be regarded as one of the entertainment activities. Ritterfelt and Weber (2006:408) show the importance of entertainment activities in teaching and empowerment,

Children whose attitudes toward learning tend to become negatively formed will eventually develop a distinction between enjoyable entertainment activities and unattractive learning activities. These children should profit most from an entertainment-education strategy. Entertainment education intends to adopt the unified approach of early gameplay for older children who are less motivated to learn, but also for adolescents and even adults.

Ritterfelt and Weber show the power of entertainment activity in transferring knowledge and skills to children. If a child missed something during the theoretical lesson or if the children did not understand something during the class lesson, that child can understand that thing when it's taught through drama. This means entertainment activities such as drama make it easy for children to understand what was taught in class. Drama can close barriers to learning for children because it makes it easy for them to understand and apply what was taught.

Entertainment and sports activities are inseparable for children. One of the objectives of this study is to discover ways of preventing or minimising immoral and unethical behaviour among the younger generation. Children spend most of their time playing, therefore sports and activities must be used for the good purpose of teaching them and instilling morals. Sports activities and entertainment can be used as a tool to attract and retain children at church. Sports activities and entertainment that promote and instil morals in children can also be used as ways of minimising immoral behaviour in children.

## **5.5 The possible results for a lack of moral formation in childhood.**

Although moral formation can take place at any stage and age, failure to do it during childhood has negative consequences. Therefore, it is more important that moral formation occurs during

childhood. A failure to instil moral formation hurts at the personal level of the individual, in the community/society and the future of children and youth.

This study discovered that the possible results of ignoring moral formation during childhood at a personal level include the following;

- Uncontrollable child.
- Violent child.
- Lawlessness child.
- Dependent person.
- Failure to control anger.

One of the objectives of this study is to investigate the possible risks of ignoring ethical and moral challenges, these also include the risks of failing to instil moral formation and ignoring it during childhood. Failure to instil moral formation harms an individual. Moral formation involves teaching children self-control and how to manage anger. Failure to do this can make a child not know how to control his/her anger and end up being violent, committing a crime and being uncontrollable. The other lessons which are part of moral formation include teaching children the laws which aim at raising law-abiding children. Failure to instil moral formation during childhood can lead to 'lawlessness children' which can land a child in jail.

Moral formation is another way of grooming a person to be independent. Doing it during childhood can help the child to know how to make ethical decisions, how to behave well, and how to relate well with other people, which the child can practice beyond childhood. This means moral formation during childhood can assist in raising a morally formed generation. Aggressive and other bad behaviour of children is an indication of ignoring moral formation or delaying to instil morals in children. Djohari and Hernawati (2018:10) explain the results of delaying moral formation in children, "the moral stages of the child increase according to the child's age, but if the child exhibits poor moral behaviour, it indicates that the child has not completed the previous moral stages. The

act of aggression done by a person is a sign that the individual has a bad moral level". What Djohari and Hernawati said proves and support the view that moral formation is the process that should take place through the developmental stages of a child. If there is a delay in the moral formation of children, it can cause 'poor moral behaviour'. Failure to do it totally during childhood can lead to behavioural problems such as "uncontrollable, violent child, and lawlessness children as well as failure to control anger" as indicated by participants. In his Theoretical framework and view, John Calvin was realistic about behavioural problems experienced in children as they grow, "Calvin states that, as soon as children start forming their thoughts, 'they have radical corruption of mind'. If they display rebelliousness, parents should discipline their children with love and patience without losing their temper" (Grobbelaar and Breed 2016:202). Based on the high possibility of these behavioural challenges in children, moral formation and parental guidance are needed. Failure of moral formation during childhood can lead to challenges mentioned by Calvin as well as many other challenges. Behavioural challenges resulting from a failure of moral formation during childhood mentioned by participants are in line with the views of Calvin because He indicates that children 'have radical corruption of mind' which affects their behaviour, hence there is the necessity for moral formation during childhood. A failure to do it, the family will be raising a corrupt, violent and uncontrollable child.

The theoretical analysis of Calvin regarding children and morality is relevant to this study. Grobbelaar and Breed (2016:202) explain their views of Calvin on the development, moral formation and behaviour of children,

The second period stretches from about 6 to 14. During this stage, the child's reason develops a capacity for intellectual, spiritual and moral formation although children of this age also display arrogance, haughtiness, rashness, immoderateness and a lack of self-control.

The development of a child is accompanied by both negative and positive exposure and influences. This makes the process of moral formation necessary because failure to do it can cause negative and immoral behaviour in a child.

The failure of moral formation damages the future of the family and people in general. A negative impact of ignoring moral formation during childhood can affect the future of the people/society in the following way;

- Irresponsible adults.
- Destroyed economy.
- Fatherless children.
- The number of single parents will increase.
- The church will collapse.
- No longer youth at church.
- The immorality will get worse.
- Children will be out of control.
- Weakened future leaders.

The moral formation is the process of grooming children for the future. This makes these groomed children responsible adults. It should be noted that moral formation does not only happen during childhood, it can also be done during adulthood. However, in situations where moral formation in children was overlooked, this can have negative results in adulthood whereby some individuals, society, and institutions such as the family will be affected negatively. Turning a blind eye to the moral formation during childhood can make it difficult for parents to control children because of bad child behaviour. Morality could be lost when children grow up not attending church regularly. Possible challenges associated with this include failure to link moral formation with the church as a religious institution and church attendance. Failure of moral formation during childhood can produce irresponsible adults and a dysfunctional society. Having irresponsible adults can increase the number of single parents as most irresponsible men and women will neglect their children. Moral formation during childhood can also be used to groom future leaders with integrity. Failure of moral formation during childhood will make it difficult to have future leaders who understand morality, and who are also able to show morality as leaders. Muniappa (2018:58) emphasises the importance of contact with children, indicating that

Reaching children is reaching future generations, and it is now a global need. Failing to reach them now means they become unreachable in the future and ultimately will be lost to Christianity. Furthermore, if this is not solved in the present generation in India, then it will become even more difficult in the future. It matters to God and so should be a priority in the ministry. Today church planting and reaching children is still practical but will become more difficult in the long term, yet it is still discouraged and disregarded now.

Children must be reached through education and guidance. Teachers, church leaders, community leaders and members have the responsibility to provide moral guidance to these children and this can happen when these people reach children. A failure to reach them during childhood with moral lessons will lead to problems such as ‘irresponsible adults, immorality, uncontrollable children, fatherless children and weakened future leaders’ as indicated by participants, and this emanates from a failure of moral formation in children.

Another objective of this study is to discover the possible risk of ignoring the current ethical and moral challenges. Most of the above-mentioned and discussed challenges are already happening, therefore, failure to do moral formation during childhood means that parents and the church are ignoring the current ethical and moral challenges which suggests immorality challenges will get worse if there is no intervention. One of the objectives of this study was to discover the importance of morality and ethics for children. Based on the possible results of not having moral formation during childhood, it is clear that morality is important for the current and future lives of children. Morality and living a moral life help children and youth to thwart being involved in violence and criminal activities. Understanding morality and living a moral life as a child helps and groom a child to be a future leader and parent of good integrity.

The negative impact of ignoring moral formation during childhood can affect the community/society in the following way, amongst others;

- Corrupt society
- High level of Crime.

- Ill-disciplined people.
- Ill-disciplined children.
- Frustrated people.
- Rotten nation.
- Irresponsible community.
- Revenge will be encouraged and accepted by members of the community.

The morality of an individual has an impact on the people he/she lives with and interacts with. Failure to instil moral formation during childhood can negatively impact the community. When members of the community lack morality, they become ill-disciplined which may lead to committing criminal offences. Failure of moral formation opens a gap for immoral activities among the people who are not morally formed and creates corrupt and irresponsible people. Morally unconscious people can see revenge as a normal thing and a way of life regardless of whether it promotes illegal activities or not and this, and results from a failure of moral formation during childhood and other stages of life. Hand (2018:11) explains the effects of morality during childhood,

the fact that infants do not yet subscribe to moral prohibitions on violence, deception and theft is harmless enough, given their incapacity to cause many injuries to those around them; but children of school age who do not subscribe to these prohibitions pose rather more of a threat to their communities. For reasons of public safety, it seems, we can ill afford an approach to moral education that permits children to remain amoral until they can autonomously endorse a moral code.

Although infants understand nothing about morality, children who are at the age of going to pre-school (Grade R) need to be taught about morality. This means the process of moral formation should start in early childhood.

The possible results of failure of moral formation during childhood show the necessity of moral formation during childhood. These results show the risk of ignoring moral formation during

childhood. Djohari and Hernawati (2018:4) emphasise this by stating that “Moral children who are not formed well at an early age will affect the next stage of development”. One of the objectives of this study is to discover the possible risks of ignoring moral formation during childhood. Failure of moral formation during childhood affects the behaviour of a child negatively. As such, when a child interacts with other children and members of the community, this negatively affects the life of an individual, family, members of the community and their future. Failure of moral formation during childhood and ignoring it in youth means families and communities will have immoral adults in the future.

### **5.6 Interventions to moral challenges and crisis.**

Moral crises and problems challenge leaders, parents and different institutions such as the church to intervene in a way of addressing and minimising such moral problems. Relevant intervention measures must be taken in time to minimise a moral crisis and encourage people to live ethical lives. Different participants believe that it is not too late to address the current moral challenges.

Teaching is a process of instilling skills and knowledge in people. Seven participants (1, 2, 4, 8,9,10 and 11) emphasised the importance of education and its use as the appropriate intervention to moral crises and challenges. According to these participants teaching morals in childhood is the most appropriate intervention to moral crises and challenges. Teaching children the word of God is another way of instilling morals in children. This means these participants regard the word of God as the basis of morality. Participant 1 indicated that “*we must teach and remind children about morality*”. Moral formation is a process. Parents and other members of the community must not cease to instil, teach and remind children about morals. Children during early childhood, middle childhood, teenagers, youth and even adults should be taught morals from time to time. In teaching children morals, it is important to be practical because morality will make it easy for children to understand and apply what was taught. Hand (2018:11) emphasises the fact that parents and other members of the community must not think children will learn morals on their own,

we educate children about morality rather than in it. In this view, we should make children aware of a broad range of moral codes and justificatory arguments, encourage them to subject those codes and arguments to critical scrutiny, and invite them to subscribe to whichever code they take to enjoy the strongest argumentative support.

Education is the best tool that capacitates children with the ability to understand various moral codes as well as differentiate good from bad, right and wrong as well as the ability to make positive and right decisions that are informed by their moral standards. Hand (2018:9) further emphasises the importance of teaching morals in childhood, “Morality and language are rule-governed social practices into which infant human beings must be initiated. Morality is acquired rather than innate and must be taught as well as caught; so giving up on moral education is no solution to the problem of reasonable disagreement about morality”. Hand regards morality as a practice and the participants indicated that it is important for teachers to be practical when they teach children. The practicality of morality must be taught to children. The practicality of morality must also be modelled for children through observing parents who live a good and exemplary life, which means children learn good behaviour from their parents. The necessity and importance of teaching children morals are supported by reformed theology as well as the views and theory of John Calvin as stated by Grobbelaar and Breed (2016:193) that “the Reformers and Calvin in particular, borrowed the ideal of the moral shaping of societies. Conscientious parenting was seen as important for both the public good and the well-being of the individual”. Reformed theology is centred on the word of God (teaching/preaching the word of God is one of the fundamental aspects of reformers). It is, therefore, more appropriate for the reformers to put emphasis on teaching children morals and this can take place by teaching children the word of God.

Children should feel welcome in church. Church leaders and members must make the church a place where children are regarded and treated as active church members. Participant 2 indicated that “*Participation of children at church should be increased*”. Children cannot have an interest in going to a place where their interests and needs are not catered to. Participant 4 said, “*the church must have ways to attract children to Sunday school*”. Participant 9 said “*Church should allow children to do activities within the church premises*” children ministry teachers must therefore focus more on activities and sporting codes that teach and enhance teamwork, discipline, and

morality in children. The more children are allowed to participate in church activities the more they enjoy attending church. Participant 4 said the church must “*make Sunday school fashionable*”, this may include having modern activities, and sports for Sunday school children as a way of retaining them within the church, however, this must be done without compromising Christian values. Church leadership must provide sufficient support to the children’s ministry and invest in this ministry. Challenges experienced in this ministry must be attended to and solved as soon as possible. Church leaders and children’s ministry teachers must have come up with activities and programmes that keep children busy and encourage a moral life.

On the other hand, the family must play its role in intervention for moral challenges and crises. The best thing is to be proactive on issues of morality. This means both family and church must not wait until the morality of the children gets out of hand, however, we cannot ignore the fact that it is difficult to always prevent moral challenges. This requires all institutions (church and family) to come up with interventions for moral challenges and crises. Muniappa (2018:34) supports the view of creating space and slots for children at church and in church activities, “In this current world, children and youth have to be a focused priority for the local church and outside. They are not only the church of the future but the present church too”. For the church to attract and retain children, the church must prioritise the needs of children and invest in children. Church leaders must make children realise that they are part of the church and that their presence at church is important. This means church leaders must ensure continually an effective and operating children’s ministry.

The family cannot be ignored when it comes to intervention in a moral crisis. Participant 13 said “*Parents should make time for their children*” having time with children enables parents to have informative discussions with their children, identify aspects of ill-discipline in children and address them immediately. As they spend enough time with their children, parents will be able to teach and instil morals in their children by applying them in their daily lives. A strong and supportive family structure where both men and women (fathers and mothers) take responsibility for raising children by guiding children, reprimanding and disciplining immoral and wrong behaviour, such a family contributes towards raising morally formed children. Grobbelaar and Breed (2016:215) outline the importance of parental care, by stating that “obviously, for the child, a sense of self-

worth is of paramount importance. When children experience love, acceptance and self-worth, they are less likely to engage in destructive behaviour”. Parental care includes parental presence. This can prevent and minimise the chances of raising immoral and ill-disciplined children because the presence of responsible parents takes into consideration the responsibilities such as loving children, instilling morals in children, providing basic needs for children, disciplining and acting as role models for the children.

Participant 6 said, “*Parents should regard every child as his/hers*”. In a case where there are broken families and child-headed families, members of the community, neighbours and the church must provide intervention to moral crises and challenges of children from such families. Kretzschmar (2005:126) states that “People learn their morality (or immorality) from those closest to them, for example from their parents and families”. Family members are the first and closest people to everyone (including children). This means parents and other members of the family (e.g. elder brothers and sisters) as the first closest family members have a responsibility of teaching children morals.

Simamora (2019:93) shares a similar view to Kretzschmar by stating that “Parents must also be able to fulfil their obligations and must also be able to provide education, teachings, and advice that comes from God and maintain attitudes, actions, and words towards children with the aim that children do not become a rebel against both parents and God”. Parents are responsible for teaching their children the Word of God and morals, however, challenges such as child-headed families cannot be overlooked. Abebe (2014:3) shares the same view with participant 6 in a case where children do not have parents, “In traditional South African societies, as was the case with other sub-Saharan societies, the extended family system was the prominent and predominant social safety net for the care and protection of orphaned and vulnerable and other categories of at-risk children”. In addition to the church, relatives and neighbours should take responsibility for raising, guiding, and moral formation of orphans.

The following tasks must be considered for effective moral formation in children;

- Teaching is the best tool for the moral formation of children (Use the bible for moral formation in children).

- Moral formation must be done continuously (even beyond childhood).
- Two institutions, church and family must take full responsibility for teaching.
- Create a conducive environment for children at church.
- Create a conducive environment for children at home.
- Create a conducive neighbourhood for children.

In line with the pragmatic task of Osmer's methodology, these tasks outline what ought to be happening/done.

### **5.7 The effects of the Covid-19 pandemic on Sunday school activities.**

Although the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic was not part of the aim and objectives of this study, during the interview sessions it became obvious that the pandemic harmed the attendance and operation of children's ministry. Three of fifteen participants (participants 5, 7, and 14) indicated that during the Covid-19 strict lockdown, children were not allowed to go to church and attend Sunday school. However, one of the three indicate that they had online/virtual Sunday school service during the lockdown. Another two participants (participants 6 and 8) indicated that although people were allowed to attend church services during light lockdown attendance of children at church and Sunday school was zero. Ten (10) of the fifteen participants (Participants 1, 3,4,9,10,11,12,13 and 15) indicated that attendance of children at Sunday school (and children's ministry in general) was poor (declined) during Covid19 pandemic.

The Covid-19 pandemic harmed the operation and attendance of Sunday school. Although one participant indicated that virtual Sunday school sessions were arranged during hard lockdowns when children were not allowed to go to church, this had both negative and positive effects. First, it's not all children have televisions or smartphones to enable them to attend virtual Sunday school sessions. This means those who do not have televisions or smartphones were not able to attend the session. Social contact and interaction with other children which is part of the learning was not possible. Children were not able to interact with the teacher during virtual sessions which meant they could not ask questions regarding what they did not understand.

The church is one of the institutions that assist in the process of moral formation of children. As one of the objectives of this study is to investigate the possible risk of ignoring the current ethical and moral challenges, the closure of churches during the lockdown hindered the church to focus on the moral formation of children through children's ministry. If the family didn't have bible studies and instil morals in children suggests during lockdown the process of moral formation of children was affected or didn't take place, which placed families and communities at risk of having children who missed moral lessons. This can lead to the immoral behaviour of children and such behaviour can continue even beyond childhood if the church through children's ministry and family does not consider doing moral formation now and beyond the Covid-19 pandemic. Hence, another objective of this study is to discover ways of preventing or minimising unethical and immoral behaviour amongst children and youth.

### **5.8 The effects of media and technology on the morality of children**

Another issue that was not part of the aims and objectives of the study which emerged from the interviews is the impact of media and the internet on issues of the morality of children. The Covid-19 pandemic proved the necessity of the use of media, the internet, and technology because during the lockdown church services were held virtually.

Media and technological devices can be used for good or bad purposes. Participant 1 and 9 shows how television and radio can be used for the good purpose of instilling morals in children. Technological gadgets can be used for watching lessons and empowering children on issues of morality. Gunter and McAleer (1997:4) outline and explain some of the negative aspects of media on children by stating that;

We are told, for instance, that children watch too much television and stay up late to watch programmes that are unsuitable for them. Another common belief is that children increasingly are exposed to heavy diets of violence-laden programming which can teach

them examples of antisocial conduct or condition in them a callous attitude toward violence and its victims in real life.

Technological gadgets including television can be harmful to children. Gunter and McAleer have a similar view with two participants of this research study on the negative use of Technological gadgets including television on children. Muniappa (2018:44) emphasised the high usage of technological gadgets by children recently by indicating that;

Today's children and their older siblings are often called the Internet Generation because the internet is their primary influencer. Moreover, they use Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, and WhatsApp, and they don't think twice before sharing their opinions online with strangers whom they call friends. This technology is a powerful vehicle for change, but it is also a powerful poison that can bring destruction.

Muniappa acknowledges the fact that technological gadgets and the internet can be used for teaching and learning for good purposes. However, their negative usage cannot be ignored because it's destructive to children. Negative usage of the internet and technological gadgets can hinder the process of moral formation in children. Negative/bad usage of technological gadgets, the internet, and television calls for parental intervention and guidance for children.

Participant 3 referred to parental responsibility for television programmes watched by children. One of the things which most parents ignore is the failure to protect children from watching programmes that might damage the minds of the children and impact negatively on their moral standards e.g. failure to monitor what children watch on television can make it easy for them to watch pornographic movies/drama which they may want to experiment with what they saw on television. Although there are positive uses of media, Participant 12 acknowledged the fact that there are negative effects of media on the morality of children. It is in the media where children can learn 'crime tactics', bad language, and other negative things. Ritterfelt and Weber (2005:404) outline some of the realities of today on the parental role in managing the use of technological gadgets,

most interestingly, parents are somehow negligent in controlling their children's video playing. In a study by Gentile et al. (2004), 43% of adolescents who play video games said their parents did not control their video game usage at all. Also, children who reported that their parents set limits for video game playing performed better in school than children who experienced no control. However, available studies on the association between the times invested in videogame play and the differential impact of various games report only short-term effects.

Parental negligence in what children watch, and games played by children is a serious problem because it poses moral threats to children whose parents do not control what children watch and children who interact with such children. After all, children can learn immoral and violent actions through watching age-restricted programmes and playing games that promote violence. Those who watch adult/pornographic videos and other age-restricted shows/videos and games can teach those who do not watch such things. Watching age-restricted videos, television shows, and games does not only harm the morality of children. According to Ritterfelt and Weber, such videos and games also negatively affect the performance of children who watch them. One of the objectives of this study is to discover ways of preventing or minimising unethical and immoral behaviour amongst the young generation. As a way of minimising negative exposure of children to harmful games and television programmes which might teach them immoral activities, parents must be careful and take responsibility when it comes to programmes watched by their children and the games they play. Parents must monitor children's games and programmes.

Although media and the internet are intended for a positive effect to advance Sunday school teaching, parents and teachers do not have control over which sites children can access. Cyberbullying might be experienced through the use of media and the internet, and this can influence moral standards and endanger the lives of children. Today's bad/negative usage of technological gadgets, television and the internet calls for a process of moral formation in children with close adults monitoring what children watch, and the games they play.

## 5.9 Conclusion

Although this study focuses on the role of the church in raising a morally formed generation through children's ministry, it is important to look at the role of other institutions and their relationship in raising children. The Church, family/home and government institutions (e.g. schools and other Government Departments) play important roles in bringing up children. These institutions must play their role in guiding children and instilling morals in children.

**The role of the church in children's ministry:** church leaders and other older church members are responsible for children's ministry in their respective congregations. These are the people who have the responsibility of ensuring that a children's ministry exists and functions effectively in the church. The church must have this ministry because it is a ministry that gives children 100% attention as members of the church. This study discovered that church leaders need to avail resources such as teachers, stationery, teaching material and a budget for this ministry and provide any form of support. Church leaders must monitor and oversee the operation of the children's ministry, by ensuring that teaching which is in line with the word of God takes place. The study also discovered that different denominations need to work together when it comes to children's ministry by sharing the best and most effective practices for children's ministry, as well as assisting each other to solve problems and challenges experienced in and by this ministry.

**The role of the church in the moral formation of children:** the church plays an important role in the moral formation of children. The main tool for instilling morals in children is through 'teaching'. This means teaching must take place with the intention of raising a morally formed generation. There are challenges such as poverty and child-headed families and others that can hinder the process of moral formation. The church must address such challenges by adopting children from child-headed families and assisting children from poverty-stricken families for the process of moral formation to easily take place.

**The role of the Church in moral formation in the community:** this study discovered that the role of the Church in moral formation should not end within members of the church only. The church should reach out to members of the community where it operates to make an impact on members of the community. The church should partner with institutions such as schools and orphanage homes where church leaders and members will visit those institutions to share the word of God with them and encourage their children to live a moral life. Different denominations need to work together and develop activities that will instil discipline and morals in children. Church leaders must avail themselves to assist and provide guidance to children within the community regardless of the denominational affiliation of the child.

**The role of the family in children's ministry:** the family plays an important role in children's ministry. The family is the one that should avail their children to the church for children's ministry to exist and operate. However, this study has discovered that there are challenges experienced by churches that emanate from some families, such challenges include; parents who leave their children at home when they go to church, parents who do not show interest in their children attending children's ministry and other challenges. Poor attendance or non-attendance of children at church means the children's ministry might not exist which poses a threat to the future of the church, because church membership is likely to decline in the future when those children grow up. Poor attendance or non-attendance of children at church might affect the morality of those children if their parents do not instil morals at home. This study also discovered that there are parents who are very supportive of children's ministry. Some parents encourage their children to attend children's ministry, they ensure that their children attend every event of the children's ministry; others sponsor activities/events of children's ministry.

**The role of the family in the moral formation of children:** the family as a primary institution is responsible for the moral formation of their children among others. Teaching is still the best tool to be used by families to instil morals in their children. Families should have bible studies where they share the word of God and encourage children to live according to the word of God. Parents must set house rules and encourage children to adhere to those rules. Parents must live a moral and

exemplary life so that children can copy good behaviour from those parents. Parents must be present in the lives of their children so that they may provide parental guidance to their children. Children of single parents and those who are from child-headed families must be assisted through adoption and parental guardianship so that moral formation can be done with those children.

**The role and responsibility of Government to children:** the government, through its laws and institutions, has a responsibility toward children. The government through its different departments needs to work together with the church and families to create a situation that makes it easy for parents and the church to instil morals in children.

Regardless of the challenges experienced by families and the community, the church must remain steadfast in its role of teaching and ensuring that children's ministry exists and operate effectively to raise a morally formed generation.

**The possible results for the lack of moral formation during childhood:** this study discovered that there are many negative results of ignoring or failing to instil moral formation in childhood. Failure of moral formation during childhood leads to raising morally unconscious and immoral children. This leads to a situation whereby families and the community end up having immoral, uncontrollable, and violent children. These challenges continue beyond childhood which means in the future, families and the community is going to have corrupt, irresponsible adults. This poses a threat to future leaders because it means the family and the community are unable to raise moral leaders of integrity.

**Interventions to moral challenges and crisis:** challenges that arise from ignoring moral formation during childhood and the current moral challenges call for immediate intervention. This study discovered that 'teaching' is still the best tool for instilling morals in children. Teaching children morals is the responsibility of the family and the church through children's ministry. Both

family members and children's ministry teachers must not cease to impart moral lessons to children. Church leaders and children's ministry must create a conducive environment for children at church to attract and retain children within the church even beyond childhood. This will make it easy and possible for children to stay at the institution that continues to mould their behaviour and instil morals in them. Parents must ensure that they are part of the lives of their children (parental presence). This makes it easy for them to guide their children from an early age.

Parents need to avail their children to attend church, and the church must take good care of children by providing Christian education that will produce morally formed and conscious children who will pride themselves on good moral behaviour that depicts Christianity in the communities where they live.

Sport is part of the daily activities of children, except for schooling they spend most of their time playing. Children also do various activities for entertainment; for example, play stations, watching movies and these things have an impact on their morality. This study has discovered that sport can be used to shape the morality of children and create unity and team spirit within children. The church must make sport part of children's ministry activities. The church must avail sports equipment for children and make sporting codes that promote discipline while instilling morals in children (e.g. drama soccer and karate) part of children's ministry activities.

The main focus of children's ministry should be teaching. It is therefore important for this task to be carried out by capable people and this calls for the training of children's ministry teachers. Teaching must be provided to all children, this means children must be categorised according to age for teaching to be carried out effectively. Church leaders must ensure the availability of teaching and study material for children's ministry.

Covid-19 had and still shows a negative impact on the operation and functioning of the church as a whole. Children's ministry as part of the church suffered a strong blow because most children were not able to attend church and children's ministry classes during the lockdown even when churches were allowed to accommodate a certain number of people. Some church leaders had to halt church and children's ministry attendance for children to curb the spread of the virus and protect children from being infected with the virus. Fortunately, some churches managed to organise virtual children's ministry classes that children were able to attend online. This made teaching and learning continue amid the pandemic, and the process of moral formation by the church through children's ministry possible. Declined number of children who were attending children's ministry can hurt the morals of children now and in the future, if parents were not teaching moral formation to their children during the period of lockdown. This means the Covid-19 pandemic made it difficult for a church to participate in the moral formation of children through children's ministry.

Recently, media and technology are part of the daily life of children. They use media and technology for communication, socialising, and other purposes. In the process of using media (e.g. social media) and technology children get exposed to both good and bad, things such as pornographic sites and violent videos which have an impact on their morality. Since children have access to media and technology which can cause harm to their behaviour, parents must monitor the technological devices used by their children, e.g. monitor the cell phones of their children and set rules for television shows.

The analyzed data supported by literature from different authors and scholars on children's ministry and other disciplines provide a better understanding of the issue of morality and the role of the church in the moral formation of children through children's ministry. This also provides answers to the question of what ought to be going on (which is the question of normative task). Moral formation should be done in childhood, church leaders should ensure that children's ministry is functional at their respective denominations. Parents should support the church and children's ministry by encouraging their children to go to church and bringing their children to church.

## **CHAPTER: 6 SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION.**

### **6.1 Introduction**

This chapter presents the summary of the research findings of this study, recommendations for the research problems and research findings as well as the conclusion. The research study intended to regard the moral formation of the children and youth and how the church, through children's ministry, can assist in minimising this problem in Mahikeng. The necessity of looking into how children's ministry can assist in and contribute towards raising morally conscious children came because of the reality and problem that, there is moral decay and moral unconsciousness of children and youth within the society due to the lack and decline of moral formation in families. Family problems and challenges such as single parenting, child-headed families and others make it difficult for most families to effectively assist in moral formation with their children during childhood, hence the church through children's ministry can assist families to carry the task of moral formation in children. For the church to effectively carry out this task it depends on the family to avail their children to church, hence the role of the family in children's ministry was also discussed.

Recommendations on this study are guided by the pragmatic/strategic task of Osmer's methodology. This task requires the researcher to answer the question of how we might respond. How church and family should respond to moral unconsciousness and moral degeneration/decay in children and youth within the community.

To deal with issues of morality and moral formation it is important to consult different theories and for this study theories of ethics from different theologians were consulted, Augustine, Luther and Calvin. Augustine and Luther's theories of ethics link morality with God and His word (The Bible) because these theologians believe that a person on their own cannot be ethical, it is God who enables people to live a moral life. Calvin's theory of ethics provides the most relevant

guideline for children and moral formation. According to Calvin, it is important for moral formation during childhood, hence Calvin's view provides the most relevant guideline for this study. A qualitative research design was used, and interviews were used as a way of collecting data whereby fifteen participants were interviewed. The participants were selected through purposive sampling, these are Sunday school/children's ministry teachers/leaders and pastors/ministers, and thematic analysis was used to analyse the collected data.

For moral formation to take place teaching and an exemplary life can be used as ways of instilling morals in children. The church through children's ministry can use teaching, sports activities, and drama to instil morals in children. The church and its members have a role to reach out to the community to positively impact the community as a way of influencing a moral life. By doing this the church can effectively use children's ministry to assist in raising morally formed children.

## **6.2 Revisiting the research problem**

This research study focused on the predicament that there is moral decay and moral unconsciousness of children and youth within society due to the lack and decline of moral formation in families. Based on the said problem this study aimed to regard the moral formation of the children and youth and how the church, through children's ministry, can assist in minimising this problem. Although the family has a role in instilling morals in children, challenges within the family make it difficult for some families to carry out this important task. Therefore, this study investigated how the church through the children's ministry can assist families and society in raising morally formed children. Failure to instil morals in childhood has the potential to result in other problems such as children in conflict with the law, child violence, and crime. These and other problems can be experienced during childhood, and beyond which means failure to instil morals during childhood means society is raising morally unconscious children and morally unconscious future parents and leaders. This study discovered that the church through children's ministry can play an important role in minimising child immorality by instilling and making moral formation part of children's ministry and reaching out to society through support programmes.

### 6.3 Revisiting the research question

The main research question that this study intended to answer is; what is the significance of moral formation in children? To answer this question the following additional research questions were asked;

- What is the significance of morality and ethics on youth and children?
- What are the potential risks of ignoring the current ethical and moral challenges?
- What is the role of the church through children's ministry in grooming a morally formed generation?
- How to minimise or prevent unethical and immoral behaviour in children and youth?
- What is the possible impact of moral formation on children and the young generation?

This study discovered that moral formation is important for children, and it is important to be started in childhood because of the following;

- Ignoring moral formation in childhood can result into having uncontrollable, violence, lawlessness and children who are unable to control their anger, irresponsible (future) parents, deterioration of morality in society, high level of crime, ill-disciplined people, ill-disciplined children, and an irresponsible community

Based on this it is important for moral formation during childhood because by doing so children are taught morals, discipline, and controlling anger which will minimise violence, crime and other societal problems. Instilling morals in children helps in raising, responsible and disciplined children who have a high possibility of becoming responsible parents and good leaders in future. Therefore, the main research question of this study is answered, moral formation is important for children.

#### **6.4 Summary of the research findings**

This research study was looking at the problem that there is moral decay and moral unconsciousness of children and youth within society due to the lack and decline of moral formation in families. In response to this problem statement, the findings of this research study are summaries as follows;

It was discovered that the media expose children to anti-social behaviour where children can copy immoral activities from the media. Media and technological devices can be used for good or bad purposes. TV and radio can be used for good purposes of instilling morals in children. Technological gadgets can be used for watching lessons and empowering children on issues of morality.

Training of Sunday school teachers is important. The church needs to establish or identify training centres where children's ministry teachers can be trained. Teaching manuals for teaching Sunday school should be developed for the teachers. As part of teaching, it is important to categorise children according to their ages for Sunday school classes. The Bible should not be the only book used for teaching in children's ministry. Church leaders and children's ministry leaders should consider additional study and teaching material for teaching and learning in children's ministry.

Children who are in pre-school should not be excluded from children's ministry. They must be part of the children's ministry and teaching must be conducted at the level of their age e.g., using music, and pictures to teach them.

Sports and other art activities such as drama must be part of children's ministry activities. Church leaders and children's ministry teachers/leaders must select sporting codes and sports activities that instil discipline and morals in children.

Parents should allow children to participate in sporting codes that promote morality, teamwork and discipline.

Three institutions contribute to the moral formation of children, these are; family, church and government. In line with the pragmatic task of Osmer's methodology, the role and contribution of these institutions show how we ought/should respond to the problems and challenges of morality in children.

Church leaders and children's ministry leaders/teachers must devise programmes and activities which are aimed at attracting and retaining children at church where moral formation will be provided from a Christian perspective. Many churches overlook children's ministry and this harms the future of the church.

Teaching must be the centre and main role of the church and children's ministry because it is through teaching that morals are imparted to children.

Different denominations need to work together (not compete) when it comes to children's ministry and the moral formation of children e.g., have joint children's activities and programmes and share their children's ministry models.

The church must be a support institution to the congregants and members of the community and provide assistance and support to families affected by poverty and unemployment particularly children from those families (child-headed families). The church as a support institution can make it easy for other institutions such as families and schools to teach moral formation to children.

The church should provide support to children from child-headed families/houses. Such support includes emotional support, spiritual support, moral guidance, and parental support which includes the basic needs of children e.g., food and clothes. The church must reach out to the community to instil morals in children.

Parental support for children's ministry is important because it determines the existence and operation of this ministry. When parents avail and encourage their children to attend children's ministry it means this ministry will exist and function. Failure of parents to avail and encourage their children to attend children's ministry means this ministry will not exist.

This study discovered that some parents leave their children at home when they go to church. Some parents are not committed to church activities, and they do not see the importance of their children attending children's ministry.

In addition to the negative responses by some parents towards the children's ministry, there are also positive responses from other parents towards this ministry. This study discovered that some parents attend church with their children and encourage their children to participate in their children's ministry. Even parents who are not church members send their children to Sunday school.

The ministry that can be useful for the moral formation of children is facing challenges such as;

- Parents who prioritise other things rather than church and children's ministry for children.
- Some parents do not trust some Sunday school teachers with their children.
- Other parents do not encourage their children to attend Sunday school (be part of children's ministry).
- The absence of youth at home makes it difficult for children to attend Sunday school because children cannot attend Sunday school on their own.

- Most children are not serious about Sunday school and catechism; they attend with less interest as if they are forced.

Family, as the primary institution, has responsibility over children and a task of moral formation of children. This study has discovered that teaching should start at home and parents are responsible for the task of teaching their children morals. This must happen regardless of whether the parent is single or not. The upbringing of children is determined by parents on how they instil morals in their children.

Parents must play their parental roles in ensuring that there are rules at home and that children adhere to such rules e.g., monitoring TV programmes watched by children such as age restriction of the TV programme. Parents should have consistent household rules.

Parents should be good examples to children in the usage of their language and actions in the presence of their children because children are good at copying the words and actions of their parents. When parents have morals, it is easy for them to instil morals in children and for children to copy good conduct from the parents.

Adoption can serve as an intervention for children from child-headed families. Adoption can be done by church members, relatives, or neighbours. Christian families can adopt children who don't have parents (formal or informal adoption) and provide life and moral guidance to children from such families.

Parental presence is important for the continuous guidance and moral formation of children. Parents must co-parent after the divorce, unmarried parents must also co-parent.

The church can also arrange camps for children from child-headed families and teach them about morality.

The government, through its different departments and laws, can assist in the moral formation of children. The Department of Social Development can provide assistance and support to child-headed families. Social grants and counselling from the Department of Social Development can assist children from child-headed families. The Department of Education should make awareness of child-headed families and guide children from child-headed families. Education, support, and guidance should be provided to children from child-headed families. The Department of Education can have a support programme for such children where they are allocated a mentor and a *loco-parentis* who will monitor the overall well-being of those children, guide them, instil morals and contact relevant people and departments if children have other special needs.

The other negative effect which resulted from laws introduced by the government is that children do not understand their rights. Children misuse their rights and do as they wish which makes it difficult to parent such children. Although some people talk about rights and responsibility it is difficult for children to use rights responsibly which makes it difficult for elders to parent children who abuse their rights.

Although moral formation can be provided at any age, failure to do it or ignoring it during childhood has a lot of negative consequences. The results of ignoring moral formation during childhood affect the individual child, the future of the children, and the community at large. This study discovered that the results of failing in moral formation during childhood are negative.

At the personal individual level results include an uncontrollable, violent, and lawless child who is unable to control his/her anger.

Failure to instil moral formation during childhood hurts the future of the child, family, and people in general. This includes irresponsible adults, fatherless children (single parents), a decline in church members and attendance, weak and immoral future leaders, and an absence of youth at church.

Ignoring moral formation during childhood harms the community/society in general. Such negative impacts or results include having, a corrupt society, crime, an ill-disciplined society, ill-disciplined children, an irresponsible community, and violence.

The negative results of the failure to instil moral formation during childhood and the current moral challenges call for an intervention in problems associated with morals. This study discovered that teaching is the most appropriate tool to be used to address problems of morality. The task of teaching must be carried out by the family, church, and government. The church must develop measures of attracting and retaining children in the church where they will be safe and be taught morals.

Parents must be present and be part of the life of their children so that they can provide moral guidance to their children.

### **6.5 Recommendations.**

This study aimed to investigate the moral formation of the children and youth and how the church, through children's ministry, can assist in minimising this problem in Mahikeng. This part of the study answers Osmer's methodology, of 'what must be done'? Based on the findings of this study, a lot needs to be done by the family, church, and government to raise a morally formed generation. The following are recommendations in response to the problem of the study, the literature consulted as well and the findings of the study.

These recommendations provide answers to Osmer's pragmatic task question of how we ought to respond. How the church should respond to the immorality of children and youth through children's ministry.

### **6.5.1 Operational and effectiveness of children's ministry**

The church as an institution can make it possible for society to have morally conscious children/generation, however for the church to achieve this it depends on families to bring and avail their children to church and children's ministry. This means families, particularly parents/guardians, must avail their children of children's ministry, encourage children to attend church and children's ministry, and support children's ministry and its activities.

For parents to understand the importance of raising a child in church and for the child to continuously attend the church, the church should develop a 'church parenting model guideline' where parents are taught about the importance of taking the journey of faith with their children. Church leaders need to have pre-baptismal lessons or pre-dedication classes for parents. During these classes and lessons, the minister explains the importance of baptism or dedication of the child, the development stages of a child, challenges associated with such stages of development and the necessity of bringing the child to church as well as keeping the child in the church throughout childhood and beyond.

Since some parents leave their children at home when they go to church, the church should develop a 'church parenting model guideline' where parents are taught about the importance of taking the journey of faith with their children. For churches that practice infant baptism, church leaders should have pre-baptismal sessions/classes where this model is presented to parents together with the importance and meaning of infant baptism.

The church must be a safe and good place for children. The effective operating children's ministry can retain children within the church, instil morals in them and contribute towards raising morally

conscious children for the community. Church leaders must create a platform for children at church, especially during church services where children participate to feel, see and know that they indeed belong to the church.

### **6.5.2 The role and contribution of the church to families and society in the moral formation of the children.**

Due to broken families, single parenting, and child-headed families, the church should take responsibility for children within the community where it operates. The church can have monthly or quarterly gatherings or services for children regardless of their denomination affiliation, where the children's minister/pastor will listen to challenges encountered by children and try to assist children where possible and share moral lessons with them. The church (leaders) can adopt or partner with schools, orphanages, and child and youth care centres where church leaders and preachers can visit these institutions to share the word of God and moral lessons with children residing/accommodated at these institutions.

### **6.5.3 The role of parents/families in children's ministry.**

Parents must engage church leaders who overlook children's ministry to prioritise this ministry at church. Parents must take charge of this ministry and own it for the sake of the spiritual life of their children, the moral formation of children, and the future of the church. Parents must encourage each other to bring their children to church and ensure that their children participate in the activities of this ministry.

### **6.5.4 Responsibility of the church over children and children's ministry.**

Church leaders should incorporate pastoral care in children's ministry, where the needs, problems, and challenges encountered by children which might hinder the process of moral formation on children are addressed.

The church must develop a children's ministry model which outlines the long and short-term goals of this ministry as well as the activities. Short-term goals should be based on attracting and retaining children within the church during and beyond childhood. The long-term goals should be based on and include retaining and continuing with teachings taught during childhood through children's ministry.

Church leaders can identify and request public figures/leaders and other professionals (e.g., teachers, doctors, lawyers/attorneys, social workers) within their congregations who will serve as mentors to children (especially children from child-headed families and single parents).

#### **6.5.5 Implementation of moral formation for children.**

Moral formation is important therefore it must not be overlooked, especially in children. Every institution, family, church and government Department that works and interacts with children should consider ways of instilling morals in children. Institutions such as schools and churches should consider making moral formation mandatory for children. Moral formation should be included in one of the subjects taught in schools, and part of the children's ministry syllabus and activities.

#### **6.5.6 Theoretical and practical review of Sunday school (Children Ministry).**

From its inception, it was called Sunday school. We cannot overlook the fact that there are churches that fellowship on Saturday and their children's sessions are held on the same day. Other churches have Sunday school classes during the week (mid-week). Since it is not held on Sundays only, therefore it is important to review the term/name children's ministry. The term/name Sunday school can be replaced with 'children's ministry. This is because the term 'children's ministry' is not confined to a day of the week but is broad and includes every child who is below the age of eighteen (18) including those who are part of the confirmation class.

## **6.6 Concluding Remarks.**

This study aimed to investigate the moral formation of the children and youth and how the church, through children's ministry, can assist in minimising this problem in Mahikeng.

The problem statement of this research study is that there is moral decay and moral unconsciousness in children and youth within society due to the lack and decline of moral formation in families. This is caused by social challenges such as child-headed families, divorce, family conflicts, and death or absence of parents which make the family lose the capacity for moral formation.

Based on the literature consulted and the findings of this research study, the following conclusions were drawn;

There is a serious need for moral formation during childhood. Although it might not be too late for moral formation during youth or adulthood, it can be more productive for individual persons, families and society's morals when done in childhood. Based on the findings of this research study, moral formation during childhood can curb and or reduce problems and challenges associated with and resulting from immorality such as lawless children, uncontrollable children, violent children, and children who cannot control their anger. This research study also discovered that moral formation during childhood can curb and or reduce problems and challenges associated with and resulting from immorality beyond childhood (in youth and adulthood) ill-disciplined youth/adults, irresponsible community, crime, and other problems.

Since this research study focused on the role of the church in raising and grooming a morally conscious and formed generation (children), children's ministry can be instrumental in carrying the task of transferring and instilling morals in children. The church needs to invest in this ministry to achieve the goal of raising and grooming a morally conscious and formed generation (children).

This means children must be given attention and provided with the necessary resources to operate effectively. This study discovered that church leaders should avail and provide resources (such as material and teachers) for this ministry. Church leaders should ensure that teachers and leaders of this ministry are provided with the necessary skills by providing training to children's ministry teachers and leaders or sending them to relevant institutions for training. Congregants should also avail themselves to assist and serve this ministry.

**Children's ministry and moral formation:** Children's ministry is the most relevant ministry to be used by the church for moral formation in children. This study discovered that teaching is the best tool for transferring and instilling morals in children. Teaching must be done consistently. Children's ministry teachers are at liberty to use an appropriate method of teaching, such as teaching through drama and music. Teaching must be provided to all children. It is possible to provide teaching to children under the age of five through music and storytelling through pictures. For children above the age of five, there must be lesson plans and activities which are in line with the age of the child aiming at instilling moral lessons and developing a morally conscious child. This study also discovered that children's ministry teachers should incorporate activities and sporting codes that promote morals and team spirit in children. This is because children learn through interaction. This means children must be allowed to participate in different sports activities at church (e.g., different branches of the church, at the circuit, region/diocese level). Church leaders and parents must support and sponsor activities of children's ministry.

The church should be an institution of change for members of the community where it operates. This study discovered that the church should reach out to members of the community (regardless of their denomination affiliation) through outreaches and other programmes to teach members of the community especially children about the necessity of living a moral life. Different churches have community outreaches and programmes; therefore church leaders can make slots for sharing moral lessons with different people (especially children) during their outreaches and programmes. Reaching out to the community includes providing any form of assistance to members of the community (including children and child-headed families) to avoid anything that may hinder the

process of moral formation in children e.g., adopting child headed-families, providing basic needs such as food, clothes, and toiletries to children from child-headed families.

Although the focus of this study is based on the role of children's ministry in raising morally formed children, which is a ministry found in the church. The other institution that could not be overlooked in this regard is 'the family'. Family as the primary institution has the responsibility over children and children's ministry. Members of the family, particularly parents, have the responsibility for the moral formation of children. However, there are challenges within the families and community that hinder the process of moral formation in children, e.g., single parenting, child-headed families, broken families, and domestic violence hence the church needs to assist families and communities in raising morally formed and conscious children. Church intervention in the moral crisis in the community and families is not limited to children from the mentioned families but it applies and is offered to all children regardless of their home/family background and situation. The family, particularly parents are responsible for transferring and instilling morals in their children. Teaching starts at home and is still a relevant tool to be used by parents to transfer morals to their children. This study discovered that since children learn through observation, parents should be good examples to their children by behaving well and refraining from using strong language in the presence of the children. The church should serve as a support system for families that are experiencing challenges that hinder the moral formation of children.

Osmer's methodology was used for this research study. Osmer's practical theology methodology guides the researcher to analyse the situation to do the following; to understand what is happening? Why certain things are happening (in this case why there is a high level of immorality and moral unconsciousness)? Which guided the researcher to investigate the cause of the situation/problem? What should (or what suppose to) happen which provides guidelines to find solutions to the problem. And the last guide to finding the solution and response to the situation and the problem, by indicating how we might/should respond to the situation/problem.

Although several ethical theories were consulted, Luther's ethical theory was selected as a relevant 'theoretical framework' for this research study and this is because Luther explains the morality of childhood in detail and explicates the necessity of providing moral formation in childhood.

**Based on the objectives of this study, the following were investigated and discovered;**

- **To discover the significance of morality and ethics on children and youth:** the research study discovered morality is important in children, hence moral formation needs to be done in children. The importance of morality for children includes; reducing crime emanating from immoral behaviour, reducing violence in children (this can reduce bullying cases committed by children in schools),
- **To investigate the possible risks of ignoring the current ethical and moral challenges:** This research study discovered the possible risks of ignoring the current moral challenges and failures of moral formation in childhood. Ignoring the current moral challenges and failures of moral formation in childhood affects the personal life of an individual, members of the community and the future of the people. The risks of ignoring the current moral challenges and failures of moral formation in childhood include the following; having uncontrollable and violent children, lawless children, and children who are unable to control their anger (children with bad character). Other risks include having irresponsible adults who were not taught morals during childhood, a high number of single parents in the future who were not taught morals in childhood, weak/bad (future) leaders who are morally unconscious, and low/less church membership in the future, high level of immoral behaviour and actions, irresponsible community, frustrated and violent society.
- **To discover the role of the church through children's ministry in grooming a morally formed generation:** This research study discovered that the church has a role beyond its boundaries and members to groom and assist in raising a morally formed generation. This can take place when the church reaches out to the community for campaigns and programmes that include and promote living a moral life. The church has responsibilities toward the community where it operates. These responsibilities include being an institution

of changing lives and making members of the community, especially children, conscious of morality and the importance of living a moral life. Church members, especially children, should live and act as agents of change and influence society positively by living a moral life for other children and members of the community to witness a good and exemplary moral life. Church members and children should be living sermons of a moral life to other people. In ensuring that it grooms morally formed and conscious children, this study discovered that the church and children's ministry must provide 'teaching' continuously. Children must also be allowed to participate in sporting codes and activities that promote morals and instil discipline in children. Sport must be part of children's ministry activities/programmes.

- **To discover ways of preventing or minimising unethical and immoral behaviour among the younger generation:** this research study discovered ways of minimising or preventing immoral behaviour amongst the younger generation (children). The church through children's ministry can play a vital role in minimising immoral behaviour in children through the following steps and actions; attract and retain children within the church, teach children the word of God and encourage them to apply it in their daily lives, have sports activities that instil morals and promote good behaviour for children at church. The family, particularly parents, have a role to play in minimising or preventing immoral behaviour in and amongst the younger generation (children), their roles include the following; continuously teach and instil morals in children, set household rules which must be obeyed by everyone, be present (or part of) in the life of their children regardless of their marital status, live a good and exemplary life for their children to learn and copy morals and good behaviour from parents.
- **To discover the possible positive impact of moral formation for children and youth:** this research study discovered that moral formation in childhood has a positive impact on the personal life of an individual, the future of a person, and the community. Providing moral formation in childhood enables parents to raise morally conscious children who are less or not violent, law-abiding children, future responsible parents and leaders, future

leaders with integrity, fewer or no bullying cases in schools because children are morally conscious, less or no child crime in the community because children live a moral life, as well as respectful children and youth who are morally conscious.

In addition to the findings based on the objectives of this research study, the following findings were discovered;

- Media and technology can have either negative or positive impacts on the morality and behaviour of children; therefore, parents need to monitor the technological gadgets of their children including television programmes watched by children.
- Media and technology can be used for the moral formation of children.

Although some churches were having online/virtual church and children's ministry services during the lockdown, Covid-19 harmed church attendance and operation of children's ministry because some churches did not have online/virtual children's ministry/Sunday school. This can affect a negative impact on the effective operation of children's ministry if church leaders, parents, and children's ministry teachers fail to re-group children, encourage and avail children to attend children's ministry, to ensure the effective operation of children's ministry now (during the mild/low stage of the pandemic) and beyond.

This research study discovered a strong necessity for moral formation for children. It is therefore important for different institutions (family, government and church) to play their role in the lives of children in assisting society to raise morally formed children. The church as the body of Christ must encourage and support other institutions (such as families, non-profit organisations, and government Departments e.g., schools) in its efforts to instil morals in children and contribute towards raising morally formed children.

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## **ADDENDUMS**

### **Addendum A: Ethical Clearance**

COLLEGE OF HUMAN SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS REVIEW COMMITTEE

23 March 2021

Dear Mr O. V. Mogale

**Decision:**  
Ethics Approval from 23 March  
2021 to 23 March 2024

NHREC Registration # :  
Rec-240816-052  
CREC Reference # :  
56016395\_CREC\_CHS\_2021

Principal Researcher: Mr O.V. Mogale

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Supervisor: Dr G. Aziz

[\(azizg@unisa.ac.za\)](mailto:azizg@unisa.ac.za)

**Title: *The role of the children's ministry on the moral formation of children in Mahikeng***

Degree Purpose: Masters

Thank you for the application for research ethics clearance by the Unisa College of Human Science Ethics Committee. Ethics approval is granted for three years.

*The Low risk application was reviewed on the 23 March 2021* by College of Human Sciences Research Ethics Committee, in compliance with the Unisa Policy on Research Ethics and the Standard Operating Procedure on Research Ethics Risk Assessment.

The proposed research may now commence with the provisions that:

1. The researcher(s) will ensure that the research project adheres to the values and principles expressed in the UNISA Policy on Research Ethics.
2. Any adverse circumstance arising in the undertaking of the research project that is relevant to the ethicality of the study should be communicated in writing to the College Ethics Review Committee.
3. The researcher(s) will conduct the study according to the methods and procedures set out in the approved application.
4. Any changes that can affect the study-related risks for the research participants, particularly in terms of assurances made with regards to the protection of participants' privacy and the



confidentiality of the data, should be reported to the Committee in writing, accompanied by a progress report.

5. The researcher will ensure that the research project adheres to any applicable national legislation, professional codes of conduct, institutional guidelines and scientific standards relevant to the specific field of study. Adherence to the following South African legislation is important, if applicable: Protection of Personal Information Act, no 4 of 2013; Children's act no 38 of 2005 and the National Health Act, no 61 of 2003.
6. Only de-identified research data may be used for secondary research purposes in future on condition that the research objectives are similar to those of the original research. Secondary use of identifiable human research data require additional ethics clearance.
7. No fieldwork activities may continue after the expiry date (**23 March 2024**). Submission of a completed research ethics progress report will constitute an application for renewal of Ethics Research Committee approval.

Note:

*The reference number 56016395\_CREC\_CHS\_2021 should be clearly indicated on all forms of communication with the intended research participants, as well as with the Committee.*

Yours sincerely,

Signature : 

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CHS Ethics Chairperson  
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## Addendum B: Consent Form



### ADDENDUM B: CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY

I, \_\_\_\_\_ (participant name), confirm that the person asking my consent to take part in this research has told me about the nature, procedure, potential benefits and anticipated inconvenience of participation.

I have read (or had explained to me) and understood the study as explained in the information sheet.

I have had sufficient opportunity to ask questions and am prepared to participate in the study.

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without penalty (if applicable).

I am aware that the findings of this study will be processed into a research report, journal publications and/or conference proceedings, but that my participation will be kept confidential unless otherwise specified.

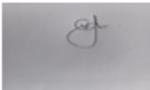
I agree to the recording of the Interview.

I have received a signed copy of the informed consent agreement.

Participant Name & Surname..... (Known by the Researcher)

Participant Signature.....Date.....

Researcher's Name & Surname: Olebogeng Victor Mogale

Researcher's signature: .....Date: Interview Date



## Addendum C: Permission Forms

### ADDENDUM C: PERMISSION LETTER

**Request for permission to conduct research at your Congregation.**

**Title of research: The role of children's ministry on the moral formation of children in Mahikeng**

01 April 2021.

Rev/Pastor

Physical Address of the Church.. (Known to the Researcher)

Telephone number of the Local Pastor/Reverend...(Known to the Researcher)

Dear Rev/Pastor,

I, Olebogeng Victor Mogale (Student No: 56016395), doing research with Aziz Garth, a Professor in the Department of Philosophy, Practical, & Systematic Theology at the University of South Africa.

We have funding from University of South Africa to conduct research study for Master of Practical Theology. We are inviting you to participate in a study entitled: the role of children's ministry on the moral formation of children in Mahikeng.

The aim of the study is to explore the moral formation of children and youth and how the church, through children's ministry, can assist in minimising this problem in Mahikeng, North West Province, South Africa.

Your Church/Denomination has been selected because it consists of members who are most likely to possess information requested for this research study.

The study will entail, conducting interviews with the Pastor/children ministry or Sunday school teachers and leaders

The benefits of this study includes; contributing towards body of literature in the field of Children Ministry, provide guidance to church on how to assist the society to raise morally formed generation.

Potential risks: Low.

Feedback procedure will entail organizing and hold workshop with children ministry teachers and church leaders and participants.



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PO Box 392 UNISA 0003 South Africa  
Telephone: +27 12 429 3111 Facsimile: +27 12 429 4150  
[www.unisa.ac.za](http://www.unisa.ac.za)

Yours sincerely

Signature of the researcher:

A small, square, grayscale image showing a handwritten signature in black ink on a light background. The signature is stylized and appears to be the name 'Olebogeng Victor Mogale'.

Olebogeng Victor Mogale: (Master's Student).



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**Addendum D: Interview Schedule (Questions)**

<b>ADDENDUM D: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS</b>		
<b>THEME/CATEGORY</b>	<b>QUESTIONS</b>	<b>ANSWERS</b>
Church and Children Ministry	1. What is the approximate/exact number of children in your congregation?	
	2. What is the role of the church regarding the morality and moral formation of children?	
	3. What teaching materials are you using for children's ministry teaching material except for the bible?	
	4. How do you (children ministry leaders/teachers) use such children's ministry teaching material to instil morals in children?	
	5. How do church and church leaders do community or school outreach to discuss or teach members of community/schools, particularly children about morality?	
	6. How often do the church or church leaders provide those outreaches?	
	7. What is your observation about the commitments of the parents in encouraging and availing their children to be part of the children's ministry e.g. Sunday school and catechism class?	
	8. How often does the church (church elders, deacons and ministers) include moral formation as part of children's ministry?	
Morality and moral formation on Youth and Children	9. Do crime and violence committed by children and youth result from failure of providing moral formation to children? Elaborate. <i>(NB read and explain the definition of moral formation before asking this question).</i>	

	<p>Moral formation: Impact of Moral formation on children youth and community at large.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• According to your observation and experience, what is the level of morality of children and youth in your community? Based on the level of morality, is the community heading towards a moral crisis, or we are already in a moral crisis?</li> </ul>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are other causes of immoral behaviour in children and youth?</li> <li>• According to your experience, observation and prediction, what are the possible consequences of ignoring moral formation at the childhood stage (not teaching children morals)? (The consequences for children, future, adults/parents and on community)</li> </ul>	
Possible Solution and Intervention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What should be done to minimise moral crisis in future?</li> <li>• How do we address the current moral challenges/crisis if there are any?</li> <li>• How can the church through Children's Ministry address issues/problems of immorality within society?</li> <li>• How can families/parents assist in reducing the high level of immorality in children and youth (the role of the parents/families in addressing moral problems in society)?</li> <li>• Taking into consideration the fact that there are single parents and child-headed families, how can children from such families be assisted in ensuring that morals are instilled in those children?</li> <li>• How can the church through children's ministry assist society to raise morally formed children?</li> </ul>	
Conclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is there any additional information not covered/said during the interview that you would like to share with me about the research topic (or children's ministry and morality)</li> </ul>	