



## FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO LOW PARTICIPATION IN BIBLE STUDY MINISTRY AT KENYA ASSEMBLIES OF GOD NEW VALLEY CHURCH IN KAJIADO COUNTY, KENYA

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### **Abstract:**

Adult education is a core component of spiritual development in Christian congregations. However, many churches face challenges sustaining active participation in Bible study programs. This qualitative case study sought to uncover factors leading to low participation in Bible study ministry at Kenya Assemblies of God New Valley Church in Kajiado County. Data was gathered through interviews with 16 church members who were selected purposively, 8 females, and 8 males. Results revealed situational barriers like work and family responsibilities, dispositional barriers like ignorance and lack of commitment, and institutional barriers like inconsistent timing and topics. Regarding teaching, both skilled and unskilled teachers led Bible study, using predominantly lecture-based methods versus interactive techniques. Recommendations include revising the Bible study program structure, training teachers, addressing participation barriers, and utilizing more learner-centred teaching methods to boost engagement. The study concludes that resolving logistical issues and employing participatory methods could increase member involvement and achieve the Bible study program's spiritual development objectives. This research sheds light on practical ways to improve adult religious education participation through responsive programming and engaging instruction.

**Keywords:** Bible study, spiritual, education, ministry, Kenya Assemblies of God New Valley Church

### **1. Introduction**

The Kenya Assemblies of God (KAG) New Valley Church adult Bible study is important in the life of a Christian in helping the believers to grow into spiritual maturity and

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develop a closer relationship with God. Several ministries of the church of Christ are aimed at developing the spiritual growth of the believer. One of the ministries is teaching, which involves the explaining of the Word of God. Other church ministries include fellowship, Sunday school, evangelism, worship and prayer, counselling, and services to the community. Teaching takes a central place in all the above church ministries. The context of teaching is the Word of God also referred to as the 'Truth'. The Truth is what is expected to be integrated and applied into the life of the Christian for transformational development, character formation, integrity, and demonstration of Christ-like character in one's life.

The Bible serves as a vital source of guidance and motivation for Christians in cultivating faith. Legg (2002, p. 404) argues that the "*Bible can inform us, shape us, judge us, inspire us, motivate us, and energize us to be a people of faith*". According to Houle (1961), adults engage in Bible study for varying internal motivations. First, goal-oriented learners seek practical outcomes like resolving family issues or improving professional skills. Second, activity-oriented learners may participate to alleviate loneliness or boredom. Finally, learning-oriented learners are driven by a genuine desire for spiritual knowledge and personal growth. For these intrinsically motivated learners, Bible study is a lifelong journey of understanding and transformation. Their engagement stems from a consistent eagerness to deepen their biblical wisdom and relationship with God. By delineating these diverse motivations, Cross (1981) provides insight into why adults may or may not participate actively in opportunities to study scripture. Ultimately, the Bible remains a rich resource for nourishing faith across these different motivations.

The adult Bible study program at KAG New Valley Church follows a structured six-month curriculum developed by the Assemblies of God Literature Centre (AGLC) (Biri, 2020). Each lesson focuses on illuminating a central Biblical truth or topic, highlighted by a key memory verse. Lessons also contain relevant scriptural passages and discussion questions to prompt reflection on real-world applications. Over the course of six months, learners work through a series of fourteen study books spanning the entire Biblical narrative from Genesis to Revelation. This long-term scope and sequence allow for an in-depth, comprehensive engagement with the complete Biblical canon. The consistent curriculum equips adult learners with substantive scriptural knowledge and opportunities to integrate Biblical wisdom into their daily lives.

Schwarz's (1990) second category of Bible study programs involves an in-depth, multi-year survey approach. The adult Bible study curriculum at KAG New Valley Church closely aligns with this model. The program establishes learners firmly in the biblical text through deep, well-researched lessons. Each six-month study booklet contains 26 topical lessons to take students deeper into scriptural understanding. By exploring one passage or theme each week, participants engage with texts more comprehensively. Over 7 years, the full 14-book sequence covers the entire biblical narrative from Genesis to Revelation. This intentional scope and sequence enable an immersive study of the rich interconnection of truths across all books and genres. The

multi-year structure cultivates enduring biblical literacy and a lifelong habit of scriptural engagement.

The objectives of introducing Bible study in KAG New Valley Church, according to the KAG Church constitution, are:

- 1) To teach the Word of God “Truth” to church members and as such to fulfil the ministry of the church.
- 2) To create and improve fellowship among members, which is also another ministry of the church.
- 3) To encourage spiritual growth among members.

## **2. Problem Statement**

Participation in teaching ministry programs at KAG New Valley Church appears low, with few church members involved as either teachers or students. The reasons behind this lack of engagement remain unclear. However, the teaching methods used in Bible study may play a role, as different techniques can elicit varying responses from adult learners. This research aims to explore factors contributing to the low participation of church members in KAG New Valley's adult Bible study programs. This inquiry seeks to understand why involvement is limited and identify potential changes to teaching approaches that could increase interest and participation from the congregation. The goal is to have a thoughtful, academic discussion to uncover ways to boost Bible study engagement among church members in these vital educational offerings.

### **2.1 Objectives of the Study**

- 1) To identify the factors leading to low participation of Church members in Kenya Assemblies of God New Valley Church Bible study ministry.
- 2) To establish whether teaching methods used in the delivery of instruction in the Bible Study have contributed to low participation of members in the Bible study ministry.
- 3) To suggest ways in which participation of members in the Bible Study ministry can be improved.

### **2.2 Research Questions**

The research was guided by the following questions:

- 1) What are the church members' perceptions of factors contributing to the low participation of members in Bible study ministry at Kenya Assemblies of God New Valley Church?
- 2) How do the church members perceive the teachers' character and their teaching skills in teaching Bible study program at Kenya Assemblies of God, New Valley Church?
- 3) How do the church members perceive the teaching methods used in the adult Bible study program at Kenya Assemblies of God New Valley Church?

### **2.3 Significance of the Study**

This study is significant to the academic community in the following ways: The findings of this study may highlight the challenges faced in the implementation of the teaching ministry through Bible study in Kenya Assemblies of God Churches, New Valley Church is one of them. This challenge may also be found in other Kenya Assemblies of God churches in Kenya and other denominations as well. The findings of this study may contribute significant information about Bible study ministry at KAG New Valley which can be tapped by the church leadership to improve the delivery of instruction in Bible study. This improvement is likely to contribute to increased participation of members in Bible study. Attendance to Bible Study is likely to contribute to increased spiritual and numerical growth among the members of the church.

In addition, the study has the potential to provide a basis for academic and professional community in adult Bible study attendance and improve teaching methods, techniques, and applications. Also, more courses about how to conduct adult Bible studies could be introduced in theological colleges based on the findings of this study. The trained pastors and teachers in training will be taught effectively and thereafter positively impact their local churches in teaching adult Bible study, which could lead to an increase in attendance of Bible study programs in the church. This study will contribute to the improvement of adult participation in church educational programs and ministries. The findings of the study will also lead to a positive contribution to the education sector by enhancing a better understanding of factors contributing to the low participation of adults in the learning process. This study will provide knowledge and skills concerning the adult learning process that will assist adult educators in improving adult participation in the educational ministries of the church.

## **3. Literature Review**

### **3.1 Adult Learning Theory**

Adult learning theory was developed by Malcolm Knowles who researched how adults learn differently than children. Several core principles define adult learning theory (Govindaraju, 2021).

First, Knowles identified that adults are self-directed in their learning. They desire autonomy over what they learn and how they learn it. Adults have an independent self-concept and need to direct their own learning journey, rather than being passive recipients of instruction. Effective Bible study provides space for self-directed exploration of scriptural texts guided by each person's curiosities, questions, and spiritual needs.

Second, adult learning theory recognizes that adults accumulate a growing reservoir of experience that becomes a resource for ongoing learning. As people mature, they attach more meaning to learning that connects to their past experiences and prior knowledge. In a Bible study context, adults benefit from relating scriptural concepts to their own memories, life events, and spiritual history. This allows them to assimilate new biblical insights within an experiential framework.

Third, Knowles observed that adults are goal-oriented in their learning. Adult learners pursue education for the primary purpose of acquiring skills, knowledge, or competencies that have immediate applicability. Bible study can provide a practical avenue for adults to gain biblical wisdom that can be integrated into complex life situations and current challenges. The goal is applying God's truths, not just studying information.

Fourth, adults desire learning that is highly relevant to their current life contexts. They thrive when the subject material relates directly to real-world roles, goals, and interests. Effective Bible study draws connections between ancient scriptural texts and contemporary realities, through discussion, reflection, and prayerful application.

Fifth, adult learners are practical in their educational orientation. Adult interest often focuses on learning that has instrumental value for everyday matters. Bible study offers a venue to identify timeless biblical principles and concrete instruction that foster growth in areas of life that deeply matter to adult participants.

Ultimately, Knowles' ground-breaking characterization of andragogy, or adult learning theory, recognized adults' self-directedness, experiential basis, problem-centered motivations, and practical focus. Bible study aligned with these principles can provide meaningful engagement for adult learners.

### **3.2 Characteristics of Effective Teaching**

Jesus Christ is the Master Teacher, as a model teacher his teaching is relevant to the lives of the adult learner and teacher. He lived what he taught. Jesus continues to transform the lives of people today through teachers who emulate his example in their lives and through the power of the Holy Spirit. According to Anthony (2001), Jesus' life, teaching content, and methodology should guide our teaching practice today. Jesus taught with authority as demonstrated by his words and actions (Mark 1:27). He taught the truth and allowed the audience to come to their personal conclusions concerning the lessons taught. Jesus allowed the learners to think by asking questions. He lived what he taught and loved the learners by developing an intimate relationship with them (John 13:12-17; John 15:12-13).

According to Boud & Dawson (2021), teachers exhibit varying degrees of effective and ineffective practices. No teacher is consistently excellent or inadequate. Rather, the difference lies in the balance between helpful and unhelpful behaviours, as well as the teacher's consciousness of their impact on students. The most effective teachers maintain self-awareness about how their actions affect learning and openly discuss this dynamic. Learning stems from experience. The role of education is to cultivate the natural learning process by providing enriching experiences. Teaching should aim to nourish experiential learning rather than control it. The implication is that teachers must attune to the subjective, experiential nature of learning and adopt methods that spark students' innate drive to learn from life.

Effective teaching requires more than just knowledge and skills from the teacher. Teachers must adjust their thinking and practices to create a reflective, learner-centred

environment. The classroom should mirror the teacher's own habits of reflective learning. Excellent teaching is both a science and an art, encompassing ideals like learning, participation, collaboration, and activism. In Day's model of "reflective professionalism," the classroom becomes a space where knowledge is mutually shared between teacher and learners (Mebratu Mulatu *et al.*, 2020). From this viewpoint, effective teachers unconditionally share their expertise while also becoming co-learners. They understand their responsibility is not just to impart information, but to collaboratively shape a productive learning environment. Therefore, adult educators need to develop strong pedagogical skills while also cultivating an open, reflective approach to teaching that empowers learners. More than competence, they must model a spirit of inquiry.

### **3.3 Adult Learning Principles**

Adults learn effectively when they are grouped according to their age, gender, similar interests, and moments of transition in life. The grouping of adults helps in encouraging the adults to share their experiences, hence facilitating the learning process. According to Davies (2001), various ministry models of adult ministry apply to different contexts of adult education. The first is the permanent grouping model of adult ministry which adults expect to remain together indefinitely and share approximately the same age bracket. The second is the temporary grouping model which is a group of adults in the class grouped for a limited time, because of a topic for discussion. The third is the segregated grouping model which is a group of adults who are grouped according to their gender, racial origin, and marital status. The fourth is the special interest/task force grouping model which is a group of adults formed of people who come together to learn and have similar interests. And lastly is the life stage grouping model which is a model that consists of adults going through transitions in life, moments of change in life, or "teachable moments." This is a good learning moment "when an adult is more open for special impact learning". The model chosen to teach adults will depend on many factors like the vision, goal, facilities, teachers, established traditions and cultural expectations, and size of the adult Bible study.

Adult Bible study principles focus on empowering adult learners, who will be able to make an impact in society. Rogers (2007) argues that the art of managing an adult group comes along with the skills and personality of the teacher. Outstanding teachers in the group are open, relaxed, and enthusiastic. They have learned to be transparent with the class. A comprehensive and effective adult ministry should emphasize the spiritual formation of the learners. The successful adult program should be viewed as a ministry to God. Adults need to be termed as lifelong learners who learn throughout their lives. Evangelism should be included in every adult program with a focus on relationships and friendship. Adults need to be encouraged to serve God through ministry to the church and community. They need to be challenged to leave a legacy to the next generation, by coaching and mentoring other adults and youth. The adult program should seek to promote genuine spiritual formation towards Christlikeness. This can be achieved by

teaching and encouraging adults to be involved in the spiritual disciplines of prayer, fasting, meditation, and journaling.

The adult Bible study ministry should influence the adult learner in a holistic manner that is spiritually, mentally, socially, and physically oriented (Luke 2:52). The adult Bible study should promote spiritual nourishment, personal development and create strong relationships that will result in fulfilment in the adult ministry. Teachers should view teaching as caring for the learners. They should aim to achieve quality education for adults by listening, guiding, developing, cooperating, and understanding the adult learner. Teaching in the church is the glue that holds together all the other ministries in the church. According to Richards (1975), education is a major task of the church. Adult education should therefore emphasize the total commitment of adults, transformation of lives, good planning of lessons, use of gifts, and equipping the adults to become effective ministers.

#### **4. Teaching Techniques for Adult Bible Study Program**

Instructing techniques for adult Bible study consist of different methods of teaching that the teacher can use to instruct adults. The techniques are as follows:

##### **4.1 Student-centred Methods**

In student-centred teaching methods, the teacher is not all-knowing with all the answers, but he becomes a co-learner. The learner is actively involved in the learning process. According to Bell & Lygo-Baker (2017), in group discussion which is an example of a student-centred method, students bring out free expression of their views. The teacher is then able to interact with the students' erroneous ideas and guide them in the right direction. The learner becomes active and committed when he is involved in the learning process. Student-centred teaching methods aim at making learning meaningful by actively engaging learners through different learning activities. There are applications of a variety of student-centred activities that reinforce learning. These activities include panel forum which involves two or more persons, who discuss on a topic in front of a class and there is moderator to facilitate the learning and drama which is applicable for learners of all ages, including the adult learner and effective in illustrating a biblical truth.

##### **4.2 Interactive Methods**

Interactive teaching methods are learner-centred because they encourage adult active participation. According to Loth (2004), interactive teaching methods allow adults to share experience, expertise, and knowledge in the classroom. As they interact, they can understand the content and apply the knowledge to their lives. The interactive study methods will encourage adults to desire to participate actively in future lessons and even share with their fellow friends about the value of the adult Bible study. Examples of interactive methods of teaching adults which can be used in teaching adult Bible study at Kenya Assemblies of God New Valley Church are, *"brainstorming buzz groups, group*

*discussion, two or three people who have different experience or experts are invited to speak to the class, and team teaching” (Loth, 2004).*

### **4.3 Self-Directed Methods**

Self-directed teaching methods focus on the learner. These results in practical application of the lesson learnt. Adults are self-directed learners, and they can determine their needs and learning objectives (Loth, 2004). Many adult programs have a possibility of failing because the adults are not involved in planning. Adults will participate actively when they are consulted in the organizing of the learning process. Adults love the freedom to personalize the learning process to achieve specific goals. The andragogical theory calls for treating adults as being more self-directed than children. The teachers view the adult learner as being independent, unlike the child who is dependent.

### **4.4 Experiential Methods**

Experiential teaching methods are student-centred, and they focus on teaching adults' lessons related to real life applications. This teaching method's main goal is to allow the adult learner to learn through experience of knowledge and skills. The classroom can be more than a laboratory as the learners put lesson truths into action. Examples of experiential methods include case study, simulations, role play, modelling, and field trip. Loth (2004) quotes Pratt who advises that adult teachers should think about the learners' abilities and commitment when it comes to choosing the means of instruction. Loth (2004) argues that adult learners are experiential learners. Teachers and learners are aware of the old saying “*you learn best by experience; experience is the best teacher*”. Each adult learner must experience the learning objective for learning to occur.

### **4.5 Teacher-centred Methods**

In teacher-centred teaching methods the focus is mainly on the teacher who delivers knowledge to the learners. The lecture method is the most widely used technique of teaching (Bature, 2020). The teacher does most of the speaking, communicating information to the adult learner. Storytelling is one of the favourite methods of teaching which is applicable to all age groups. The character picture is painted by the actions and spoken words. The teacher in adult Bible study should use lecture method in addition to other methods to be able to capture the interest of the adult learner. When using the lecture method, the teacher mainly shares knowledge and experience which one has acquired.

### **4.6 Barriers to Adult Learning**

For participation in adult Bible study to improve teachers and learners should understand different barriers that affect adult learning and seek for ways to bring solutions. First, situational barriers emerge from the adult learners at a particular time in life. Situational barriers, also referred to as life factors, are influences external to the individual or beyond one's control.



The second group of obstacles to learning fall under institutional barriers. Fagan (1991) asserts that institutional barriers or structural factors result from the ways institutions design, deliver, and manage learning activities, which have not always considered the needs of adult learners, but probably gradually will. Institutional barriers include procedures and practices of a church organization that may discourage potential working adult learners from attending an educational program. The way the adult Bible study is planned, presented, and organized may encourage more participation of adult learners or discourage participation.

Lastly, the third group of obstacles to learning fall under dispositional barriers. Fagan (1991) states that “*dispositional barriers are based on personal attitudes, psychological impediments also referred to as learner inherent. These barriers relate to learner’s perceptions of their ability to seek out, register in, attend, and successfully complete learning activities.*” These factors include self-confidence, attitudes about the benefits of learning, prior negative experiences in learning, perceptions learners have about the attitudes of administrative staff and teachers and health and age-related biases. Dispositional barriers are those factors related to attitudes or self-perception of the adult learner. Many older adults think that they are too old to learn. Adults with poor past educational history may lack interest and confidence to study.

## **5. Material and Methods**

### **5.1 Research Design**

This study utilized a qualitative case study approach to develop an in-depth understanding of low participation of church members to adult Bible study ministry at KAG New Valley Church. As Rashid *et al.* (2019) defines, a case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-world context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context may not be clearly evident. A case study was determined to be the most appropriate design for this research because it facilitated an exploratory, holistic examination of the Bible study program bounded within a single church. Data was gathered through interviews and observation of classes.

### **5.2 Study Population and Study Sample**

The study population involved church members at Kenya Assemblies of God New Valley Church in Kajiado County. The researchers used purposeful sampling to select participants from a total of 280 adults church members. Not all the church members are dependable in giving reliable information about adult Bible study. The ratio of male to female was 1:1. The researchers had two sample frames, one for male and the other for female. The researchers selectively hand-picked 8 males and 8 females, which totalled to 16 participants as presented in Table 1. The researchers selectively hand-picked them because of the longevity of the Church membership. Also, according to the Bible study

attendance register, they had attended all Bible study sessions over the past 6 months. The names of the participants were coded as per their first and last names.

**Table 1:** Summary of research participants

Names	Gender	Number of Years in Church
JN	M	8
JM	M	10
NN	F	7
AN	F	7
MR	F	10
GO	M	9
GA	F	10
PT	M	10
JC	M	5
IS	F	8
BC	F	10
JB	M	10
EV	F	10
AM	M	10
JS	M	10
TT	F	5

### 5.3 Data Collection Strategies and Procedures

The researchers collected the data through conducting interviews. The interviews were carried out at Kenya Assemblies of God New Valley Church in Kajiado County. The researchers utilized an interview guide, which specified the questions and the sequence in which they were to be asked. First, the researchers were looking for the church perceptions on factors contributing to low participation of members in Bible study ministry, second, how the church members perceived the teachers and teaching methods used in the adult Bible study program.

The researchers conducted two interviews daily, each taking a minimum of thirty minutes, and later typed the information collected. Interviews involved words uttered by the participants in the natural setting while observation helped the researchers to formulate their own opinion of what was happening from the participant. The researchers used note taking and tape recording to preserve the information collected from the interview. The researchers created rapport with the participants before engaging in the interview, asked questions in a language that was clear and used simple probes where necessary. The researchers collected data until the data saturation point was reached whereby there was no new data forthcoming.

## 6. Results and Discussion

### 6.1 Categories of Factors Contributing to Low Participation

**Table 2:** Factors contributing to low participation of church members at KAG New Valley Church

Situational Factors	Dispositional Factors	Institutional Factors
1. Family responsibilities 2. Work/fatigue	1. Ignorance of Bible study 2. Lack of commitment	1. Lack of good Bible study structure 2. Lack of Consistency in Teaching of the topics 3. Lack of consistency in Bible study time 4. Distance from the church

The factors presented in Table 2 emerged from the data collected from the interviews; the sixteen interviewees mentioned them as the possible factors contributing to low participation of church members at KAG, New Valley. The researchers were able to group them into three main categories namely: situational, dispositional, and institutional factors.

## 7. A Report of the Findings

This report has three sections. The first section narrates the findings of the first research question (RQ 1) already covered above which sought to understand the factors contributing to low participation of church members to adult Bible study at Kenya Assemblies of God, New Valley. The second section narrates the findings of the second research question (RQ 2) which sought to understand the Bible study teachers' qualifications. The third section narrates the findings of the third research questions (RQ 3) which focused on the teaching methods used in teaching the adult Bible study at KAG New Valley Church.

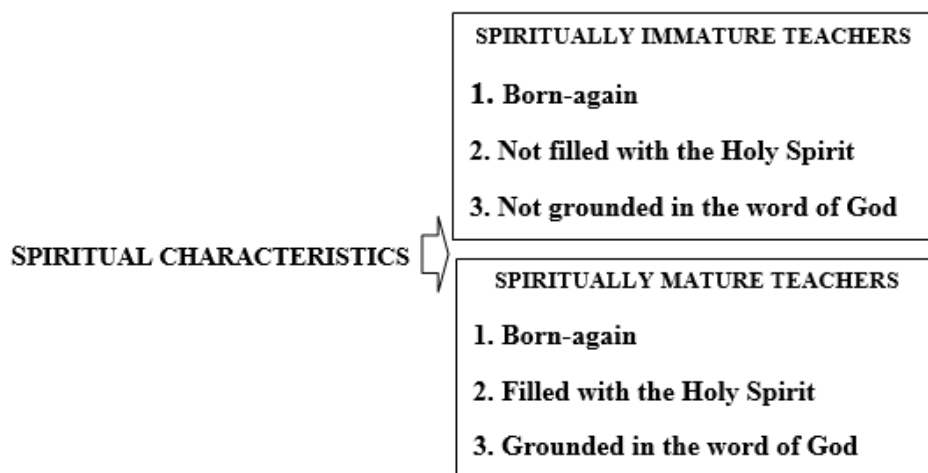
**RQ 1:** What are the church members' perceptions on factors contributing to low participation of members in Bible study ministry at Kenya Assemblies of God, New Valley Church?

The findings revealed that many church members faced external influences beyond their control that hindered their participation in adult Bible Study. The Bible study at KAG, New Valley Church is conducted on Wednesday at 7:00 pm to 8:00 pm and on Sunday at 10:00 am to 11:00 am. The two life factors mentioned by the respondents are work/fatigue and family responsibilities. In terms of internal barriers, many members were unaware of the benefits of Bible study and lacked commitment to participate consistently. There was ignorance about the value of scriptural engagement. Some failed to make Bible study a priority amidst other obligations. Institutionally, the inconsistent timing and topics of Bible study lessons discouraged involvement. There was no fixed

schedule which caused confusion. The subjects were not sequenced in a logical order. The lack of structure communicated that the program was not a high priority. Additionally, the distance to the church was an obstacle for some members. The location was far from their homes, which made attending in the evenings challenging. Overall, the findings uncovered situational, dispositional, and institutional factors that contributed to the low participation rates in the adult Bible study program. By addressing these barriers, engagement could likely be improved.

**RQ 2:** How do the church members perceive the teachers' character and their teaching skills in teaching Bible study program at Kenya Assemblies of God, New Valley?

The findings revealed mixed perceptions of the Bible study teachers' qualifications at KAG New Valley. In terms of teaching skills, many members felt the teachers were inadequately prepared and lacked robust lesson planning. Some teachers failed to bring required resources and aid. The delivery and communication skills varied, with some teachers being dull and ineffective. Regarding spiritual characteristics, perceptions were divided. Some teachers were described as mature Christians well-grounded in scripture. But others were criticized as less spiritually developed, not living out biblical principles, and lacking the fruits of the Holy Spirit. Overall, while some teachers exhibited strong spiritual maturity and pedagogical competence, others appeared deficient in these areas as presented in Figure 1. The uneven qualifications likely contributed to lower engagement and participation among adult learners. Addressing the teaching skills and spiritual depth of instructors could enhance the quality and impact of the Bible study program.



**Figure 1:** Spiritual characteristics of teachers at KAG New Valley Church

**RQ 3:** How do the church members perceive the teaching methods used in the adult Bible study program at Kenya Assemblies of God New Valley Church?

The findings showed that lecture was perceived as the predominant teaching method used in the adult Bible study at KAG New Valley. This passive, teacher-centred

approach involved the instructor imparting information to learners through one-way communication. However, members expressed desire for more learner-centred methods that actively engage participants. Small group discussions were valued but rarely used. Some question-and-answer sessions occurred but were limited. While respondents appreciated the instances of discussion and dialogue, they felt teaching overall was dominated by lecture-based delivery. This overreliance on lectures likely contributed to lower participation and engagement from adult learners. The findings suggest introducing more interactive, participatory teaching techniques could increase member involvement and enthusiasm. Small groups, discussions, activities, and learner-led methods may resonate better with adults and address their learning needs more effectively. A summary of the findings is presented in Table 3.

**Table 3: Summary of findings**

Research Question	Key Findings	Analysis
<b>RQ1:</b> What are the church members' perceptions on factors contributing to low participation of members in Bible study ministry at KAG New Valley Church?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Situational barriers like work, family responsibilities</li> <li>- Dispositional barriers like lack of awareness, commitment</li> <li>- Institutional barriers like inconsistent timing, topics, structure</li> </ul>	The findings identified multi-faceted reasons for low participation spanning situational, dispositional, and institutional factors. Addressing these barriers through revised programming, promotion, and logistics could boost participation.
<b>RQ2:</b> How do the church members perceive the teachers' character and their teaching skills in teaching Bible study program at KAG New Valley?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Mixed skills - some teachers prepared, others not</li> <li>- Varied spiritual maturity - some grounded, others less so</li> </ul>	The uneven teaching qualifications likely impacted engagement. Standardizing competence through training and selecting spiritually mature teachers could improve instructional quality.
<b>RQ3:</b> How do the church members perceive the teaching methods used in the adult Bible study program at KAG New Valley Church?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Lecture predominant method</li> <li>- Limited participatory techniques used</li> <li>- Desire for more interactive methods</li> </ul>	Overreliance on passive lectures inhibited involvement. Introducing more engaging, learner-centred methods could increase participation and enthusiasm.

## 8. Discussions

From the findings, it was established that the church members experienced situational, institutional, and dispositional challenges. In the category of situational challenges, the study found out that some respondents had difficulties which were beyond their control. Two circumstantial challenges were underscored. They are family responsibilities and fatigue.

In relation to institutional challenges, the data revealed that the church members faced various challenges. Pertaining to dispositional challenges, the respondents felt that

church members were unaware of the adult Bible study program and secondly, they lacked commitment to participate in adult Bible study. In relation to teacher's qualifications, the study established the following characteristics of teachers at KAG, New Valley Church. As regards the teaching methods applied at KAG New Valley Church, the study revealed two broad teaching approaches: First, teacher-centred teaching method and secondly, learner-centred teaching method. Several respondents established lecture method as the only teacher-centred method used in Bible study teaching. They also revealed that learner-centred teaching methods applied in Bible study included: small groups which were rarely applied discussions and question and answer methods. The findings indicated that the majority of church members preferred learner-centred teaching methods.

The research findings are a challenge to the church education program, Christian educators, and Christian institutions. Church educational programs should be able to address situational, institutional, and dispositional barriers to adult learning. The situational, institutional, and dispositional barriers contribute to the low participation of church members to adult Bible study. Christian educators need to focus on addressing the issue of qualification of teachers for adult learning. The teaching of adult Bible study by teachers who are not qualified or who do not have competencies to teach may result to low attendance of church members to adult Bible study. Christian institutions need to be sensitive about the teaching methods applied in teaching adult learners. Predominant application of teacher-centred methods in teaching adult Bible study may discourage active participation of adult learners, while employing learner-centred teaching methods may result in improved participation of church members to adult Bible study.

## **9. Recommendations**

In light of the findings and the relevant interpretations, the following are the recommendations of the study:

- 1) Concerned church administration should consider revising the entire Bible study program. In addition, the church administration needs to consider introducing regular training of Bible study teachers in form of seminars, workshops, conferences, and Bible school.
- 2) The administration needs to consider introducing more learner-centred teaching methods like small groups, discussions and question and answer teaching methods.
- 3) The church leadership should seek for effective ways to sensitize the church members about Bible study through Sunday service announcements, inviting guest speakers to teach on relevant topics, teaching on importance of adult Bible study, teaching on time management, conducting open forums with congregation and person to person follow-up of new believers.
- 4) The church administration needs to consider constituting a Bible study committee that will coordinate the Bible study program at KAG New Valley Church.

- 5) The church administration should think of ways to motivate adult learners, to encourage them to actively participate in adult Bible study. For example, the giving of short tests, certificates, and gifts for those who consistently attend adult Bible study.
- 6) The church leadership should select the best possible teachers/leaders and send them for training seminars and workshops. They need also to prepare brochures of the various Bible study programs, which includes the name of the program, description of the course, class format, target audience, name of the teachers/leader, and time of class and cost of the class. The pastor should be able to launch the program and continue to promote it in many ways as possible including use of the pulpit.
- 7) The pastors should organize regular meetings with the adult Bible study teachers throughout the year, with the purpose of getting feedback and encouraging the teachers in the teaching ministry.

## 10. Conclusion

In conclusion, the findings of this study indicate that low participation of church members in adult Bible study at KAG, New Valley Church is based on situational, institutional, and dispositional barriers. It was concluded also that some teachers at KAG, New Valley Church are qualified, and others are not qualified to teach adult Bible study. The teachers who are not qualified are lacking in teaching skills and spiritual characteristics. This may have resulted to the low participation of church members in adult Bible study because a teacher's teaching skills and character at KAG New Valley Church can either positively or negatively influence the learning process. The findings revealed that teacher-centred teaching method was the predominant method of teaching which is employed in teaching Bible study at KAG New Valley Church. The church members prefer the learner-centred teaching methods that actively involve the adult learner, especially learning in small groups. The application of learner-centred teaching method is likely to contribute positively to participation of many adults in Bible study programs.

### Conflict of Interest Statement

We declare that we have no conflicts of interest. All co-authors have seen and agree with the contents of the article and there is no financial interest to report. We certify that the submission is original work and has never been presented to any other publication.

### About the Author(s)

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