

**A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF CHRISTIAN AND TRADITIONAL  
PARENTING AMONG THE ABAGUSII OF KENYA**

**BY**

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**DECLARATION**

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## **DEDICATION**

To Prof. Emily Choge and Prof. Joseph Koech of Moi University, School of Arts and Social Sciences, extraordinary lecturers and supervisors, with appreciation for academic counsel and patience during my study and research, I dedicate this thesis to them. To the Christian, parents, and children of Gusii community and beyond who will embrace the findings of this study in addressing increased anti-social ills in the society, this thesis is equally dedicated.

## ABSTRACT

The nature of parenting globally is not only the cause of many society's ills but also a key to unlock positive change that determines the quality of the community. This is the case within traditional Gusii community, where parenting was not practiced casually, but as a life cycle process with a systematically structured programme. Unlike in the Christian where empowerment of parents is minimal and without a systematically structured programme. The purpose of this study was to compare the teachings and practices of parenting among the Christian and traditional Gusii community, to understand why there is increased anti-social ills. The goal was to develop a wholistic strategy for quality parenting aimed at reducing anti-social ills in Gusii community. The research objectives were:- First, to analyse Proverbs 1:8-19 that deals with parental instruction as a basis for the Christian teaching and practices and how it relates to the traditional Gusii teaching and practices on parenting. Second, to compare the teaching and practices of parenting among the Christian and traditional Gusii community. Third, To examine the factors that affects parenting in the present Gusii community. Lastly, To develop wholistic strategy for quality parenting among the Abagusii community of Kenya.. The study employed social learning theory. The study approach was twofold. First, Proverbs 1:8-19 applied traditional-historical method of Biblical interpretation. Secondly the study adopted qualitative approach, using qualitative interview schedule. Purposive sampling was used to identify the ten participants distributed as follows: 4 ordinary Church members, 2 office bearers and 4 senior citizens in Gusii community. Data analysis was guided by themes which sought to identify the interrelatedness and connectivity of the data with the research objectives. The study found out first, in Proverbs 1:8-19 that the parental instructions used at home were systematically structured, aimed at empowering the youth that can relate well with the other members of the community. Second, from the participants narratives, traditional Gusii community teaching on parenting was communal, a life cycle process and systematically structured. While the Christian teaching on parenting seems to be individualistic and without a systematically structured programme. In conclusion the parenting style revealed both in Proverbs and traditional Gusii community that should be embraced by the Christian for quality parenting is the authoritative parenting style. Six recommendations emerged from the study. First, the study of Proverbs 1:8-19 reveals that the church should consider to adopt and adapt the worldview of the parental instructions in Proverbs. Second, the church to consider parenting as a communal responsibility. Third, the church to develop a systematic programme for empowering parents. Fourth, the church to develop an alternative rite of passage with the purpose of empowering the youth who are potential parents with parenting skills. Fifth, the church to act as a moral agent that can hold the government and other agencies accountable to child care and protection. Lastly, the need to adopt and adapt some of the Gusii norms, taboos, customs and practices in the Christian context.

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## **DEFINITION OF OPERATIONAL TERMS**

**Children:** The term children will be used in this study to refer to anybody aged between 1 day-17years.

**Christian:** These terms will be used in the study to refer to the Roman Catholic Church and Seventh-Day Adventist Church.

**Christian Parenting:** The term Christian parenting is used in this study to refer to Parenting styles practiced in the upbringing of Children that draws their inspiration from the Christian teaching and practices on parenting.

**Conference:** The term will be used in this study as understood by the Seventh-Day Adventist Church to mean a group of Churches within a specific region. This is a regional section within the seventh-Day Adventist Church worldwide administrative structure. It is the fourth level after the local Church, the district and the station. The conference comprises a group of stations, stations comprise a group of districts, and district comprises of a group of local Churches (Church manual, 2010)

**Diocese:** The territory over which a bishop exercises ecclesiastical jurisdiction (Hardon, 2000).

**Gesarate:** The term Gesarate is a Kisii word used in this study to refer to the traditional Gusii communal place where elders and mature boys resided with their livestock. Gesarate served as a school for mature boys about to get married. The elders were instructors while the boys were students and workers.

**Middle aged:** The term middle aged will be used in this study to refer to anybody aged between 35-70 years.

**Parent:** The term parent is used in this study to cover all of those who carry out the primary responsibility for a child's well-being including biological parents, step parents, adoptive parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, and other carers.

**Parenting styles/skills:** The terms parenting styles and parenting skills will be used in this study interchangeably.



**Senior citizens:** The term senior citizens will be used in this study to refer to anybody aged 70 years and above.

**Tradition:** The term tradition is used in this study to refer to the entire on-going life, customs and practices of a group or community over successive generations. Traditions are transmitted from one generation to another orally and also later in written form.

**Traditional Parenting:** The term Traditional Gusii Parenting style is used in this study to refer to the parenting style practiced in the upbringing of Children that draws their inspiration from the Gusii teaching and practices.

**Youth:** The term youth will be used in this study to refer to anybody aged between 18-35years.

## ABBREVIATIONS

AKJV	Authorised King James Version
ANE	Ancient Near East
ANET	Ancient Near Eastern Texts
BST	Bible Speaks Today
EBC	Expositors Bible Commentary
JAOS	Journal of the American Oriental Society
JSOT	Journal of Study of the Old Testament
NAC	New American Commentary
NASB	New American Standards Bible
NBD	New Bible Dictionary
NIV	New International Version
BCE	Before Common Era
COS	Context of Scripture
OT	OT
SDA	Seventh-Day Adventist Church
DBI	Dictionary of Biblical Interpretation
NBC	New Bible Commentary
NEB	New English Bible
NKJV	New King James Version
NT	New Testament

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## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **1.0 Introduction**

This chapter presents the introduction of the study. The introduction of the study includes, the background of the problem, statement of the problem, aim of the study, objectives of the study, and limitations of the study. Then followed by review of literature on the effects of parenting skills and factors exerting pressure on parenting. The chapter also presents the theoretical and conceptual framework of the study, the rationale for selecting the two approaches-Traditional historical criticism for the study of Proverbs 1:8-19 and qualitative approach for collecting data from the Christian and traditional parenting participants. Finally the chapter discusses the methodology which includes, the details of the participants, data collection, coding, and analysis procedures.

### **1.1 Background to the Study**

The current state in African Society is that of decline of morality. This can be noted in the rise of crime and increase of delinquency among the youth (Harris, 1998). Scholars have attributed this to various factors including lack of quality parenting skills, secularization, poverty, unemployment and decline of traditional African family values among many other factors (Sleek & Staff, 1998).

Christianity with all its positive moral values is expected to have helped in curbing the breakdown of society, but this does not seem to be the case. Christianity was brought to Africa by European missionaries who were faithful both to Christianity and their culture. They viewed the Africans as uncivilized, pagans and having a backward culture that by all means should be uprooted and civilized (Ogbu, 2005). Those who converted to Christianity were expected to take on a new identity, that of the white man. This new identity includes areas like, the nature of dressing, social cultural associations, belief systems, education, eating habits, and names among others. Christian Missionaries did not fully meet the needs of the Africans. They introduced Christianity

with overtones of Western culture. The Western culture has influenced the upbringing of the African child significantly by introducing principles that were foreign to the African parenting styles. The centre of the Western cultural paradigm is self which can be explained as follows 'I am because I' the individual hero dream and do' (Mbigi, 2005). The individuals believe that what they think and do is the only way which is right.

The traditional African culture addressed the concerns of Africans in a wholistic manner, moral development is at the heart of the African way of life. The entire community participated in the development of an individual into an all-round moral agent, able to positively contribute to the growth and stability of society. This was accomplished communally through rites of passage, taboos, and traditional ceremonies among others. The family was the main institution for nurturing morally responsible persons. As Mbiti puts it "African families let a foundation upon which to build their parenting. In adopting the European way of upbringing of children, they became neither Western nor African. They adopted a half-way house identity" (Mbiti, 1969, p.57). Presently there seems to be a breakdown of traditional family values, resulting in a vacuum for moral development.

The survey conducted by the Daily Nation newspaper involving selected parents on what might have significantly contributed to the youth actively participating in the disturbances of the post-election violence in Kenya in 2008, one explanation became clear "the idea of the breakdown of the family values have paved the way for civil unrest" (Daily Nation, March 2008). Going further, some commentators lamented the decline of traditional family values a cause of social disintegration. The survey conducted by one of the developmental NGO's, ADRA-Kenya suggested that the general public concurred with this diagnosis, blaming poor parenting as the drivers of the behaviour by looters (Adventist Magazine, September 2009).

According to Manga Children Remand Home director, Gusii community is faced with all kinds of social ills emanating from the youth such as crime, corruption, teen pregnancy, drug and substance abuse, prostitution, violence in schools, accidents, suicide, abortion, juvenile delinquency, street children, abandoning children, defilement of children, dysfunctionality of the household. It is a challenge to bring up responsible children in such context (oral interview, July 2013).

The irony of the whole picture is that more than 80% of the population of the Gusii people claim to be Christian followers (Kenya National Census, 2009). If this were so, what went wrong in the Christians as regards to parenting? The family is the first and basic institution of learning. Life skills and formation of a child is expected to take place within the family. In this primary institution, it is expected that Christianity should provide an environment for interactions and relationships intended to nourish, protect and guide each life through its course of development.

Studies have shown that the quality of relationships between parents and children is emerging as an important life course in adulthood (Harris, 1998). The nature of parenting determines the quality of the community. Poor parenting contributes to antisocial behaviour among children such as educational failure, criminality, poor mental and physical health (Benardshaw, 2004). This demonstrates that parenting remains the most important aspect that determines the quality of society.

The above scenario was the motivating factor a comparative study of Christian teaching and practices and traditional Gusii teaching and practices on parenting to determine the real causes of increased trends of anti-social ills in Gusii community. The study endeavours to provide the community with a wholistic parenting strategy that is both critical and affirms relevant traditional family values on rearing a child. This is what this research attempted to do.

## 1.2 Statement of the Problem

Among the abaGusii community in Kenya, traditional values in raising of children seem to have been watered down as a result of many factors such as Christianity and secularization process. Antisocial behavior is on the rise among the youth which has resulted in crimes leading to many being placed in remand homes. In Gusii there is a children remand home meant to keep children in safe custody whose cases are still pending in court. The constitutional requirements of children that are kept in the remand home are aged between 10-17 years. These comprises of children who have either conflicted with the law or are in need of care and protection. This remand home is situated at Manga, the headquarters of Manga sub-county, Nyamira county, in the Gusii community. The records of Manga children's remand home show that:

In the year 2010/2011, the children who were in remand due to various criminal cases were 313 boys and 93 girls, in 2011/2012, they were 361 boys and 106 girls, and in 2012/2013 they were 520 boys and 147 girls. The children who were in need of protection and care because of various reasons including abandonment, truant, girls rescued from early marriages, found begging or receiving alms among others were in 2010/2011, 13 boys and 8 girls, 2011/2012, 32 boys and 21 girls and 2012/2013, 53 boys and 33 girls (Manga Children Remand home, August, 2013 records).

The above records describe the situation in the present Gusii community suggesting a continuous upward increase in the number of young people participating in antisocial behaviour (Manga children's home director, oral interview, August 2013). This could point to a breakdown in family values especially those of raising children.

There are several other children cases which have not come to the attention of the law enforcers. Other cases have been determined and taken to rehabilitation schools, released to their homes, others in probation orders, taken to borstal institutions, taken care of in children's homes and others placed under supervision of children officers (Manga Children remand home, August, 2013 records).



Research conducted by Lexmond (2010) came to the conclusion that the quality of parenting is a key determinant in predicting a child's involvement in anti-social activity and criminal behaviour whether as a child or later in life. This concurs with the conclusion that "as the search for the impact that parenting has on children's outcome continuous to grow, parents have come to be seen not only the cause of many society's ills but also the key to unlocking positive change such as improved social mobility" (Macarthur,1998, p.103). Based on this, the aim of the research is to find out; what the Bible teach about parenting in the book Proverbs 1:8-19 that deals with parental instruction as a basis for the Christian parenting and how it relates to traditional Gusii teachings and practices on parenting? Do these increased anti-social ills have any connection with the changing trends of traditional Gusii teaching and practices in preference to parenting of the Christian teaching and practices on parenting? What are the factors that affect parenting leading to increased anti-social ills in the present Gusii community? What strategy can be developed for quality parenting among the Abagusii community of Kenya? This research aimed at addressing the problem of increased anti-social ills in Gusii Community.

### **1.3 Purpose of the Study**

The Church as a central social institution needs to stand up and play a key role on equipping their adherents with quality parenting skills. To find the right balance between supporting parents on developing their parenting skills and capabilities and working to lessen the pressures of parents is basic for a healthy society. To achieve this successfully a positive framework (strategy) for equipping parents with parenting skills should be created and concrete steps taken towards creating a more friendly family society.

The research recognises the fact that parenting is a social role and for us to parent well we will require a family friendly society. Without a strong social cohesion, infant mortality, mental illness, drug and substance abuse, abortion, dropping out of education,

rates of imprisonment, teenage births, and crime (violence) are all higher. An American psychologist William Kessen rightly observes that “critical examination and study of parental practices and child behaviour are of paramount importance for social economic development” (2005, p.106).

It is pertinent to address the root cause of bad behaviour not just the symptoms, and this requires intensive support for families alongside addressing inequality. The best way to nurture good behaviour is to intervene early and support parents to help encourage confident parenting (Macarthur, 1998). The aim of these study was to find out the causes of increased anti-social ills and develop an integrated parenting strategy that equips parents with parenting skills necessary for quality parenting.

#### **1.4 Objectives of the Study**

The objectives of the study included:

1. To analyse Proverbs 1:8-19 that deals with parental instruction as a basis for the Christian parenting and how it relates to the traditional Gusii teaching and practices on parenting.
2. To compare the teachings and practices of Christian and traditional Gusii parenting.
3. To examine the factors that affects parenting in the present Gusii community.
4. To develop wholistic strategy for quality parenting among the Abagusii community of Kenya.

#### **1.5 Delimitations of the Study**

There is a growing recognition of the need for a research which specifically focuses on equipping parents with quality parenting skills. This research focuses on the responsibility the parents have in the development of morals among the youth. The role of the community in nurturing young people is paramount to controlling antisocial behaviour among the youth in the society. The Church as a community of believers and

the traditional Gusii community are conceived as the source of addressing the social challenges brought about by parenting. To address the challenges brought up by poor parenting, a comparative study of both Christian teaching and practice with traditional teaching and practice was essential. This provided a basis upon which an intergrated quality parenting strategy was developed. The strategy will help parents to play a key role in nurturing of morals in young people that have positive impact on morals displayed in the Community.

This study focuses more on parents whose responsibility is to socialise their children on the expected moral values. Parents are understood in this research as to anybody involved in the upbringing of children.

### **1.6 Literature Review**

This section focuses a review of literature on parenting by various scholars. The literature is reviewed under two categories:- The first category comprise works that discuss the effects of parenting skills as it relates to the child's outcome and second category is the review of literature on the factors exerting pressure on parenting generally and as it relates to anti-social ills in Gusii community.

Key to this literature review was identifying the gap of the historical tension between Gusii traditional teaching and practices with Christian teaching and practices. The ultimate purpose is to develop a model of parenting that encompasses the teaching and practices of both traditional Gusii and Christianity on parenting addressing the anti-social ills in Gusii community. This is what was addressed in this section.

#### **1.6.1 The Effects of Parenting Styles on the Child's Outcome**

There are many opinions on the approaches of going about parenting. The different approaches can be categorized as different parenting styles. The idea that parenting styles exist was originally observed by Diana Baumrind in the 1970's (Lightfoot, Cole

& Cole, 2009). The term parenting style refers to behaviours and strategies used to control and socialize children (Lightfoot, Cole & Cole, 2009). In 1971, Baumrind conducted a study consisting of interviews and observations with parents and children, concluding in the identification of three types of parenting styles based on levels of demandingness (control, supervision, maturity demands) and responsiveness (warmth, acceptance, involvement). These parenting styles she called authoritarian, authoritative, and permissive. She described the authoritarian parenting style as black and white where rules are expected to be followed without question or there will be consequences. The authoritarian parents tend to be strict and demanding, while not treating their children as equals (Lightfoot, Cole and Cole, 2009).

The authoritative parenting style involves rules that must be followed, however the parents tend to be more open about their reasoning and take into account their children's opinions than the authoritarian parents. Authoritative parents tend to talk about issues with their children in a supportive manner instead of simply inflicting punishment.

Permissive parents tend to act more responsively and demand less from their children; in turn they do not usually discipline their children as regularly as the authoritarian and authoritative parents do. To some extent they are also communicative and nurturing.

Maccoby and Martin (1983) conducted a research to re-assess the three styles of parenting in 1983. They updated Baumrind's findings using demandingness and responsiveness as measures. According to their findings there appeared to be more parenting styles than had previously been shown. Maccoby and Martin (1983) divided the permissive style into two different parenting techniques that fit their findings when considering observed levels of demandingness and responsiveness. Consequently, they created the permissive and neglecting labels for these styles of parenting. Thereafter, four parenting styles have widely been acknowledged to exist, authoritative (high on demandingness and responsiveness), authoritarian (high on demandingness but low on

responsiveness), permissive (low on demandingness but high on responsiveness), and neglecting (low on both demandingness and responsiveness) (Maccoby and Martin, 1983).

Research conducted later by Steinberg with others (1994) supports the four dimension typology mentioned above. Furthermore, they looked into potential effects that parenting skills may have on children. Their research showed that children with authoritative parents were more competent than children coming from other parenting style families, in social, emotional, and academic abilities. Children with authoritarian parents were found to have lower levels of wellbeing than children with other style parents, while those with indulgent parents had high levels of wellbeing, but lower levels of achievement. Finally, Steinberg et al found that children with neglectful parents showed the lowest levels in all areas. The results indicate a true connection between parenting styles and children's outcome. Other research done by Grusec et al (1994) and Pomerantz et al (2005) found similar results; that children from authoritative parents show more proficient social skills, independent problem solving, psychological wellbeing and adjustment when compared to children raised by parents practicing other styles of parenting.

Researchers have looked for connections between parenting styles and children's outcomes. Most studies show there is indeed a connection between the two. There appears to be a correlation between certain parenting styles and higher or lower levels of global anti-social behaviour in children (Hosogi et al, 2012).

The current study's focus is on the comparative study of Christian parenting and traditional parenting in Gusii community. Past research in the field of parenting points to a relationship between parenting skills and children's outcome. A study conducted by Hosogi and others (2012) focusing on children showed that the environment where children are raised contributes significantly to the development of their behaviour in society. This means that everything from school and family dynamics to social

economic status and parenting skills affect children significantly. Additionally, another past study suggests more precisely that nurturing and supportive parenting styles could improve children's behaviour in society (Yang & Liang, 2008). This statement indicates that to understand and address the increased anti-social ills in Gusii Community, further investigation need to be done on the connection of parenting styles practiced in Gusii and the factors exerting pressure on parenting leading to anti-social behaviour.

Research conducted on the consequences of specific parenting skills concludes that these skills do affect the child's behaviour (Deuart, Pelham & Tennen, 2006). Some research has been done specifically looking at the effect of these four styles (authoritative, authoritarian, permissive, and neglecting). There is some variation among the results as to what parenting style leads to the highest level of good behaviour. Marlinez and Gracia (2007) found that children of indulgent parents hold the highest levels of positive outcome while children of authoritarian parents had the lowest positive outcome. Alternatively, Garcia and Gracia (2009) found that in children of indulgent parenting styles as well as the authoritative styles had the highest levels of positive outcome. It was also concluded in 2007 that the authoritative and indulgent parents' children scored highly on levels of positive outcome (Martinez, Garcia & Yubero, 2007).

Moreover, previous researches have indicated specific qualities such as supportiveness, involvement, nurturing, bonding, sensitivity and responsiveness of a parent can lead to higher levels of positive children's outcome. AntorioPoulu, Alexopoulos and Maridaki (2012) conducted a research which showed that the quality of supportiveness as perceived by the child predicted higher levels of implicit behaviour. This means that it is likely that children with neglecting parents would have lower levels of positive behaviour. Furthermore, parents who were recognized as more nurturing (authoritative or permissive) had a positive effect on their children's outcome, while parents perceived to be over protective (authoritarian) had a negative effect (Dewart, Pelham &

Tennen, 2006). Additionally emotional warmth (authoritative and permissive) has been positively correlated with higher levels of good behaviour, while negative loving, anger, rejecting were negatively correlated (Yang & Zhaou, 2008). At the same time, it has been found that inconsistent parenting can be related to aggressive and rebellious behaviour (Lightfoot, Cole & Cole, 2009). So where is the happy medium? Further studies have shown that for any and every age group the bonding, responsiveness, and sensitivity qualities in a parent are most important when trying to raise a happy effective child (Shamah, 2011).

The authoritative parenting seems to be ideal in addressing the challenge of antisocial behaviour. Children are not like an empty box to be filled with something. They have the capacity to conceptualize issues and ideas. Parents should learn the skills of positively engaging the children in a more open way of reasoning taking into account their children's options of expected behaviour among themselves. Talking about issues with children in a supportive manner is essential in guiding them to embrace expected social behaviour in the community.

The division of permissive style into two different parenting techniques labelling them as permissive and neglecting by Maccoby and Martin (1983) need consideration. Permissive has qualities that can qualify it as a parenting style. This is because the parent practising the style has low demandingness but high responsiveness. Neglecting does not qualify as a parenting style based on the fact that it hasn't any characteristics practised. The parent is basically non indulgent. He/she is neither demanding nor responsive. This describes absentee parents in the moral growth and development of a child. This nature of parenting style leaves the child navigating through life challenges unguided. Imparting knowledge to parents on the parenting styles and how to practice it on addressing antisocial behaviour is basic for the purposes of addressing increased antisocial ills. The comparative study of Christian and traditional Gusii teaching and practices on parenting shed light on the parenting styles practiced by each, their role on

the child's outcome and the best way they can be integrated to address the challenge of increased antisocial ills in Gusii community. This is the gap which this research attempted to address.

### 1.6.2 Factors Exerting Pressure on Parenting

Scholars have highlighted certain factors that seem to exert pressure on parenting. Such factors include poverty, work-family conflict; inter parental conflicts, discipline, modern technology, and child abuse. Below is the review of literature on these factors.

#### 1.6.2.1 Poverty

Among the major factors that exert pressure on parenting is Poverty. Poverty exposes parents to stress on meeting the basic needs of their children. Children find themselves in desperate situation that is beyond their control and without means of coming out of it. This exposes children coming from poor families to engage in antisocial ills. According to Fisher K. et al, (1999), an international poll conducted indicated that 76% of parents interviewed said that stress including financial pressures are undermining parenting (Fisher K. et al, 1999). Poverty is one of the most common features of families whose children come to the attention of social workers, yet many issues associated with poverty may fail to be properly recognized by professionals dealing with these families (McClelland, 2000). What is poverty? There is an on-going debate about what poverty means and how to measure it. A widely used definition is:-

Individuals, families and groups in the population can be said to be in poverty when they lack the resources to obtain the types of diet, participate in the activities, and have the living conditions and amenities which are customary, or are at least widely encouraged and approved, in the societies in which they belong (Townsend, 2011).

Poverty is generally to be understood in relation to typical living standards in society. Poverty is not simply going without material things; it is also about being denied power,



respect, good health, education and housing, basic self-esteem and the ability to participate in social activities.

Poverty makes parenting a greater challenge and can impair the health and development of children. The family stress model by Conger et al. (2000) proposes that the experience of poverty is one of the significant factors that can put severe strains on spousal relationships, bring feelings of depression and increase family dysfunction. The severe strain is usually associated with family distress that causes problems in relationships among adults. The problems in turn are linked to less effective parenting, a complex notion that involves insufficient surveillance, lack of control over the child's behaviour, lack of warmth and support, inconsistency and displays of aggression or hostility by parents and other siblings (McClelland, 2000).

People with inadequate income struggle to meet basic costs, including struggling to pay for food, accommodation, clothing, education, health care, utilities, transport and recreation and trying to balance competing demands (Ridge, 2009). The experience of living in poverty is always negatively overwhelming on adult's and children's lives in a variety of ways. They include loss of self-esteem and feelings of powerlessness, damage of present and future health and wellbeing, feelings of isolation and restricted opportunities and choices (Beresford et al., 1999). This places heavy demands on parents' capacity to manage everyday pressures under severe financial strain.

Severe financial strain undermines parents' efforts to maintain a satisfactory family life and provide children with security and support leading to anxieties about the present and future well-being. The circumstances that may lead to the child's involvement in drug or alcohol misuse, death, imprisonment, stealing, mental health problems, are often associated with financial disadvantage and deprivation (Dryburg, 2010). Not being able to afford to participate in leisure activities or to socialize, not having the right clothes and being perceived as somehow different to other people in society as a result of poverty, can all contribute to low self-esteem that lead to drug and

substance abuse, stealing and other crimes (Seaman et al., 2010; Green, 2006; Ridge, 2009).

People experiencing poverty may not describe themselves as 'poor' or wish to be labelled as 'poor' (Beresford et al., 1999). While they recognize they are less well off than many others and report experiences associated with poverty, people may be reluctant to acknowledge their poverty because of the negative image of being poor. This leads to reduced self-esteem and eventual consequences of projecting it to others that ends up being detrimental to the well-being of the society (Mckendredc et al., 2003). Financial difficulty is a key source of stress, which has detrimental effect on parenting (Ridge, 2009). It is the impact of stress on parenting rather than poverty itself, which appears to be the major factor affecting outcomes for children (Katz, 2007). The multiple stresses arising from living low income can be detrimental to physical and mental health and well-being (Turner, 2006). Poor people are likely to suffer from depression and stress which in turn is associated with harsher discipline styles and less positive relationships with their children (Kleiman & Huerta, 2008).

People on low incomes are increasingly likely to live alongside others who are materially disadvantaged (Ridge, 2000). Parents identify physical behaviour and health risks associated with their local environments for their children (Power, 2010). Parents see gangs or aggressive peer groups as potential threats to physical safety of their children which of course is a cause of insecurity in the community (Seaman et al., 2005).

Poverty can make people's lives much harder and excludes some people from life chances that others take for granted. Because of high population density and scarcity of land in Gusii Community, the level of poverty index is high and this may be one of the factors contributing to pressures on parenting leading to increased antisocial behaviour. The Gusii traditional had a way of mitigating the challenge of poverty. This was addressed through the consideration of parenting as a communal responsibility. Those

who were perceived as poor were provided for by their able relatives and neighbors. The extended family took responsibility to provide for the children of their relatives who were in need. This study recognises the fact that as much as poverty can contribute to pressures of parents parenting well, the real determinant of social behaviour displayed in the community is the nature of parenting skills practised in the upbringing of children. The study interrogated on how parenting styles of both Christian and traditional teaching and practices on parenting mitigate the challenge of poverty to improve the child's outcome.

#### **1.6.2.2 Work-Family Conflict**

With the increasing numbers of middle aged women in the workplace, maternal employment has tripled since 1951 (Hunt, 2009). This has led to positive progress on gender equality and seen fathers take more active role in child care than was previously the case. However, the challenge of making the 'dual earners' model work in practice creates specific pressures on parenting. As the expectation of fully shared co-parenting is still yet to be realised, it often continues to be a particular pressure for women. In one large scale survey, more than three-quarters of mothers stated that, in day-to-day life, they still have the primary responsibility for child care in the home (Ellison, 2009). Research conducted by Parker suggests that many women are still undertaking a 'double shift' in the workplace and at home (Parker, 2006).

Employment practices remain unfriendly to family life. In 2011, an international poll conducted indicated that 66% of the population employed did not stay together with family, 11.1% worked at night; 25.3% worked in the evening; 22.2% worked on weekends when children are at home (Hunt, 2009).

In Africa, cultural factors in the workplace can also work against families; even those employees who are still entitled to parental leave may still not necessarily feel able to take up their full entitlement. Green (2006) argues that "trends around migration, atomisation and couple separation mean that the social bonds which used to be central

to parenting have been weakened in some key respects” (Green, 2006, p104). To balance between work and parenting is a real challenge in the Modern World. The comparative study of Christian and traditional Gusii teaching and practices on parenting endeavoured to find out how this pressure can be addressed with the aim of reducing increased anti social ills in Gusii community. In this study, the traditional Gusii and Christian teaching and practices on parenting participants shed light on how parenting styles practiced relate to this factor. The ultimate goal was to find out how best this pressure can be addressed through parenting to improve the child’s outcome.

### **1.6.2.3 Parental Conflict**

Social pressures are also among the factors that contribute to antisocial ills in the society. They undermine the capacity to parent well. Research shows how sensitive babies as young as three months the cause of tensions in the interactions of adults around them (Boyette, 2009). Children will most likely thrive if caregivers, parents and grandparents, child minders, day care staff, nursery teachers get on with one another like a good team. Inter-parental conflict and its crucial impact on the lives of children should not be overlooked. Over the last two decades, convincing evidence has been gathered which shows that inter-parental conflict adversely influence children’s psychological development, social competence and academic achievement (Williams, 2005).

Indeed, it is also clear that sustained inter-parental conflict increases risk of anxiety and depression, aggression, hostility, and anti-social behaviour in children. And it is not rocket science to understand that this type of unhappiness is likely to spill over into a couple’s capacity to parent, with hostile couples being typically more hostile and aggressive towards their children (Bradson, 2009).

Children clearly find the dissolution of their parents’ relationship painful, but it seems that it is often the many consequences that flow from this life event that are most problematic. Parents often find the post separation relationship difficult and though

adults may have ways to tolerate this, children find it extremely challenging. Evidence suggests that conflict that occurs before, during and after divorce may explain more about children's adaptation to their new circumstances, than the actual event of divorce (Kelly, 2000). If couples are hostile to each other, children may take this way of relating as a template, making conflict resolution difficult in other parts of their life.

Conflict in itself is an inevitable part of human relationship but it is how conflict is managed that is crucial. The creative resolution of conflict allows family life and relationships to thrive and grow, and gives children a model that they can use in their future life at work, study, or in their interpersonal relationships. Where conflict is poorly resolved and anger flourishes, children do not learn to manage their dissatisfactions, resentments and disappointments and are more likely to channel these feelings into destructive anti-social behaviour (Toynbee, 2011). Supporting parents to work on their adult relationships has the potential to make a real difference to children's life chances, to social justice and to their emotional and social well-being. Resolving family conflicts creatively not only ensures family stability, it also gives children confidence and belief in a world and society that is just and fair. Inter-parental conflict is recognised in this study as one of the factors that exert pressure on parenting and thus contributing to increased antisocial acts in Gusii community. The study addressed how this challenge can be mitigated by quality parenting skills to improve the child's life chances and outcomes. Parenting plays a key role in determining the behaviour of children in the Gusii community. The comparative study of Christian and traditional Gusii teaching and practices on parenting shed light on how best they can be integrated for a quality parenting skills that can ultimately address this challenge to better the child's outcome. This was addressed in this study

#### **1.6.2.4 Discipline**

Kessen (1979) argues that we need to address the root causes of bad behaviour, not just the symptoms, and that this requires intensive support for families alongside addressing

inequality (Kessen,1979). According to her, the root cause of anti-social behaviour is parenting deficit in disciplining their children. She argues that discipline has been misunderstood, misaligned and marginalised. People no longer like to talk about discipline. The focus in parenting today is on freedom and discovery instead. This has led to a crisis, a crisis for parents and a crisis for young people. The increased anti-social behaviour illustrate that the crisis is no longer contained. Something must be done. This is the discipline challenge of our age. Then this leads to a searching question ‘what is the greatest thing a parent can give to a child?’ Is it a sense of love and security? Yes, certainly. But how can a parent give a sense of security? The answer is through discipline. What does it mean to discipline your child in today’s world? Well, it doesn’t mean beating the life out of them, or using fear and control to get your own way. To discipline, Kessen continues to say that “It is to come alongside, to correct someone’s behaviour; it means, in effect, to disciple them” (p38). Boyette (2009) describes the greatest challenge of discipline by saying,

The greatest barrier to discipline in contemporary society is western culture-which is all about me, me, me, me, and me. Young people do not learn to cede their desires, they learn instead to look after number one, “I (the child) am the centre of the universe” and ‘I am always right’. This is closely followed by ‘you can’t tell me anything’. Is there anything terrifying for a parent to hear than this? Our culture idolises children and this has not benefited either children or the rest of society’ (p83).

This is a real challenge to parenting. The parents serve as a coach to the child’s moral development. Granting unsupervised freedom and discovery is a great danger to the child’s moral growth. This supervision is in the form of discipline.

Many parents, according to Barnados (2012), “have themselves experienced poor parenting, abuse or neglect and are limited in their understanding of their child’s needs”( p43). This might be true to the extent, but not necessarily the only reason for discipline challenge. There are many other factors ranging from the environment upon which the child is brought up, peer pressure and others. This calls for a strategy that offers support to this group of parents on quality parenting skills. The argument is that

focusing on the extremes of bad behaviour and using harsh punishments is tackling the problem far too late. Instead the focus must be on supporting families at an early stage to prevent their children from developing discipline problems. Parents should be helped to be the best they can and that means supporting families, not just for disciplining children. The interrogation of the Christian and traditional Gusii teaching and practices on parenting in this study shed light on understanding the contribution of this factor in exerting pressure on parenting. The study further explored the contribution of this factor on the increased anti social ills in Gusii community. The ultimate goal was to find out how the Christian and traditional Gusii teaching and practices on parenting can be integrated to mitigate this challenge and improve the child's outcome.

#### **1.6.2.5 Modern Technology**

Technology has greatly contributed positively to human development but in equal measure, it has its share in increased anti-social behaviour. Family life recognizes the challenges many parents face in balancing their children's access and exposure to commercial pressures and the fast pace of modern society and technology (Stuart, 2011). A 2010 international survey on family life revealed that, 70% of respondents felt that parenting today is harder than when they were children, and 76% found parenting either harder, or much harder than they expected. This findings was backed up by another survey in June 2011, which found that almost three quarters (74%) of parents think the issues their children face today are more serious than the issues they faced at the same age (Byrons,2011). Developments in technology and society in which over the years sexual permissiveness has increased competition to giving parents a complex job in keeping their children safe (Stuart, 2011).

Technology exposes children to influences outside their parents' control. In a June 2011 International survey of young people by 'Family Lives and Drink Aware', 12% of 10-12 year olds and 25% of 13-15 year olds reported that they had seen sexually explicit images on the internet. In the same survey, 86% of parents feel increased technological

exposure is influencing their children growing up too quickly. The survey exposed real gaps in parents' confidence around technology and the way children interact with the cyber world. Alarmingly, despite several years of messages to parents about the importance of not allowing unsupervised access to computers in their bedrooms, half of 10-12 year olds that were surveyed have unsupervised access to a computer in their bedroom (Stuart, 2011). This indicates that the messages about how to keep children safe online are not filtering through parents. It is clear that there is a more work to do, both to ensure that all parents hear the advice about the simple ways to help keep their children safe online, but also to offer more advanced training for parents to increase their confidence around interactions such as parental controls.

There are many issues that face parents when trying to keep their children safe from harm largely made more challenging by the advent of new technologies which despite their many advantages also bring risks for young people and families (Byron, 2011). The comparative study of Christian and traditional Gusii teaching and practices on parenting endeavoured to find out how the factor contributes to increased antisocial ills in Gusii community. The study recognises that in traditional Gusii community, modern technology was not a challenge, but it endeavoured to find out the traditional parenting principles that can be integrated with the Christian parenting skills to improve the child's outcome. The study addressed this challenge with the aim of finding out how to address the challenge of increased anti social ills in Gusii community.

#### **1.6.2.6 Child Abuse**

The other factor that has been raised as the cause of anti-social behaviour among children is child abuse. Bradson argues that "child abuse is the cause of long term dysfunction and our unwillingness to consider how to provide consistent attachment and love has led to a pre-occupation with procedures and systems" (Bradson, 2009, p116). A child's sense of identity and integration is acquired through the reflection provided by a loving parent. Some parents whilst negotiating their own childhood



traumas, experience their children as toxic. The child's needs and attachments seeking behaviour might feel draining or repellent. At times the parent may infuse the child with shame by transmitting discontentment, wishing the child had greater qualities (Bradson, 2009).

Across the world, it is recognised that 87% of children who are being abused experience maltreatment at the hands of close relatives, neighbours, and family friends (Stuart, 2011). Clearly, child abuse is an epidemic, the victims of which are too silent and powerless to hold the society accountable for their safety (Dech, 2011). The rage either turns on the self, or in revenge, is hurled at other contributing into antisocial ills. There is a remarkable consistency between child abuse, criminality, and long-time dysfunction (Bradson, 2009). Bradson further argues that "everyone is preoccupied with morality. If only high moral values could be hammered into the heads of the amoral, we would have a perfect society" (Bradson, 2009, p83).

Children experiencing abuse sink into despair, which vacillates between passive suicidality and vengeful hatred. All kinds of child abuse ranging from home, neighbourhood, School, Church, social places. The study recognises that child abuse is one of the factors that play a great role on exerting pressure on parenting. As already noted early in this study, the major determinant of behaviour displayed in the community is the quality of parenting. The comparative study of Christian and traditional Gusii teaching and practices on parenting provided a basis of developing an integrated strategy aimed at improving the quality of parenting with the ultimate goal of improving the child's outcome.

### **1.7 Theoretical Framework**

This research employed the Social Learning Theory. This is one of the most influential models of parenting and closely associated with the ideas and findings of Bandura (Bandura, 1977). The conceptual basis for social learning approaches as applied to parenting is most closely associated with the work of Gerald Patterson (1969), founder

of the Oregon Social Learning Centre. Also influential was Constance Hanf (1969), who developed play therapy based on rewarding child behaviour through attention. Later day interventions, notably the programmes of Carolyne Webster-Stratton (1981) and Dorge (1996), directly incorporate social learning principles.

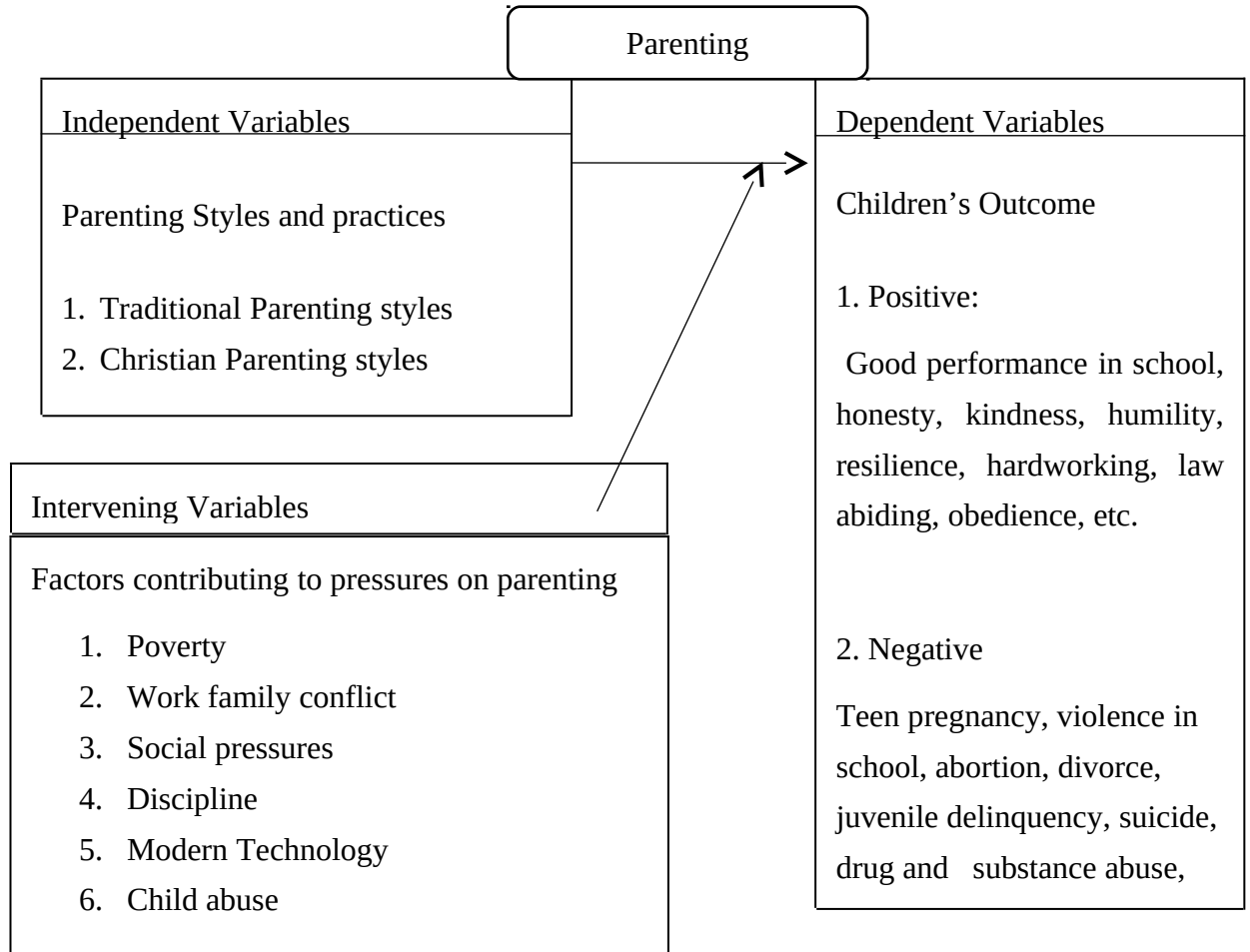
Several leading practitioners have expanded the social learning model to incorporate consideration of the parents social setting that may contribute to poor parenting, including Dix (1992) whose programme recognized the particular needs of isolated mothers. Broadly put, Social Learning Theory argues that 'children's real life experiences and exposures directly or indirectly shape behaviour'. For Patterson et al. (1989, 1976) there is a focus on traditional behavioural principles of reinforcement and conditioning, the fundamental tenet is that moment-to-moment exchanges are crucial; if a child receives an immediate reward for his/her behaviour, such as getting parental attention or approval, then he/she is likely to do the behaviour again, whereas if she/he is ignored (or punished) then she/he is less likely to do it again. Other advocates have expanded this focus to consider the cognitive or 'mindful' processes that underlie the parent's behaviour Bugenthal et al, (1989) and Dix (1992) and its effects on children (Dodge et al, 1995). Whether the assessment and conceptual focus is on behaviour or cognitions, the model suggests that the children learning strategies about managing their emotions, resolving disputes, and engaging with others not only from their experience, but also from the way their own reactions were responded to. For younger children especially, the primary source of these experiences is in the context of parenting and the family environment.

Given its historical emphasis on altering negative aggressive behaviour in children, models of parenting based on social learning theory have tended to emphasise parental conflict, coercion and consistent discipline. Other theorists have incorporated positive dimensions of parenting as a way of promoting child positive behaviour and effect, improving the pleasurable nature of parents and children's interactions with one another

(Gardner, 2000). Since Christian parenting emphasize on socializing children in the way of the Lord, and directing them to embrace their religious values and beliefs as unique, the theory of social learning fits the study. The traditional Gusii Community and Christianity emphasise communalism more than individualism. Christianity is practiced in a social setting. Gusii Community see each individual as a participant in building a society. Community values and beliefs are constructed in such a manner that enhances unity. Therefore social learning theory fits well in understanding Christianity and Gusii people on parenting and its intended outcome.

### 1.8 Conceptual Framework

The concept adopted in this study is cause or the determination of how parenting skills directly or indirectly influence children's outcome



The conceptual framework can be described as follows: the traditional parenting styles and the Christian parenting styles are the independent variables that have a direct effect on specific child development outcomes. In contrast, the parenting styles influences child development primarily through environmental factors such as poverty, working parenthood, social pressures, modern technology, child abuse, discipline among others. The conceptual frame-work assumes that if the independent variables which are the Christian parenting styles and traditional parenting styles can be manipulated, then the child's development outcomes can be improved.

Equally the intervening variables of the environmental factors if put on check, will improve the child's developmental outcomes. The concept fits well the study in the sense that we consider the parental responsibilities emanate from the realization of his/her dignity. The dignity of parents calls for understanding his/her religious and social role to direct their children on the ways that benefits them to live a responsible life. Parents should be intentional in embracing attributes and standards that they desire to socialize their children on. The parental style and parental practices should be directed by the parenting goals for socialization. The child's duty is to be open and willing to be socialized. Socialization is a key concept that informs this study.

## **1.9 Methodology**

### **1.9.1 Research Design**

The purpose of the study is to compare Christian and traditional teaching and practices of parenting in Gusii Community with the aim of unearthing the causes of increased anti-social ills among the youth in the Community. The goal is to develop an integrated quality parenting strategy to address the challenge of anti-social ills in the Community. This research was approached in two ways: first, the Biblical texts that focus on the home as the basic institution of instruction of children was analysed through textual interpretation. There are many passages that show how parents and children should relate. In many instances it refers to the dignity of parents and duties of Children. In most cases it refers to the regulations about parents and children. It is Proverbs 1-9 that contains instructions from parents to their children. In order to analyse the Biblical texts of Proverbs 1-9 and in particular Proverbs 1:8-19 that deals with parenting instruction which informs the Christian teaching and practices on parenting and relevant to traditional Gusii teaching and practices on parenting, traditional historical method of Biblical interpretation was applied. Mckenzie commenting on it says "Traditional-Historical criticism, seeks to construct the history of the transmission of various individual traditions and tradition complexes that are to be found in the OT" (Mckenzie,

1994, p.21). The history of interpretation of a text is an important part of any given study of this nature. This means that other scholarly works on Proverbs 1:8-19 that have followed the traditional historical method of interpretation were considered. This method of interpretation that was applied on textual analysis of Proverbs 1:8-19 made it possible to understand the traditions about parenting in the text, find out how these traditions can be relevant and significant to parenting in the Gusii context. Knowing how the text was interpreted in history affirms the necessity of the present study in the sense that the text was relevant and significant in the contemporary Gusii community and beyond on the upbringing of children who are the building blocks of a healthy society. The study of Proverbs 1:8-19 provided a foundation upon which the Christian participants field data about Christian teaching and practice was evaluated and critiqued on the source of their teachings. It also provided a basis of understanding the relevance of Biblical traditions on traditional Gusii teaching and practices on parenting and developing an integrated framework for equipping parents with quality parenting skills in Gusii community and beyond.

The second research design the study adopted is qualitative approach. Using a qualitative interview schedule, the research sought to understand how parents are equipped with quality parenting skills by their churches in Gusii community. These two predominant Christian denominations were the Roman Catholic and the Seventh-Day Adventist churches. This qualitative interview schedule in the Christian perspective was, to compare how parents are/were equipped with quality parenting skills between Christian and traditional teaching and practices on parenting in Gusii community, examine their understanding of the factors exerting pressure on parenting in Gusii community, and finally explore how Christian teaching and practices on parenting and traditional teaching and practices can be integrated to develop a quality parenting strategy to address the challenge of anti-social ills in Gusii community.

The next step, to understand the views of key informants of traditional Gusii parenting using a qualitative interview schedule, we compared their understanding on how parents are/were equipped with quality parenting skills between Christian and traditional teaching and practices on parenting in Gusii community, examined their understanding of the factors exerting pressure on parenting in Gusii community, and finally explored on how Christian teaching and practices on parenting and traditional teaching and practices can be integrated to develop a quality parenting strategy to address the challenge of anti-social ills in Gusii community.

In the application of the qualitative approach, the use of narrative inquiry method was ideal. Clandinin and Conney (1994:2000) describe narratives as a way people tell of the experiences of their lives through the use of stories. One goal of narrative inquiry is to shed light on human experience and uncover meanings people assign to aspects of a personal and social history (P. 415). Stories are unique to the individual and a way to look into the world of human experience, with consideration given to each perspective. These narrative stories assists to grasp the participants' views regarding parenting and the causes of increased anti-social ills and suggested strategies to curb the challenge.

According to Sadman(2006), for researchers who are interested in the life stories of others, human science is a way to gain insight into the way one experiences an event without classifying or categorising it. Since the aim of the study was to understand the role of parenting on social behaviour displayed in the community, then qualitative approach was ideal for this comparative study.

### **1.9.2 The Area of Study**

The area of study is the Gusii Community. The Gusii people are Community of Bantu speakers who inhabit the two counties, which include Kisii and Nyamira County in Nyanza province, Western Kenya. According to a 2009 Kenya national census (2009), the AbaGusii population stood at 2.2.million. Gusii is regarded as one of the economically active communities in Kenya, with rolling tea estates, coffee and banana

groves. Gusii has a very high population density. It is one of the densely populated areas in Kenya.

The Gusii people are sandwiched between the Luo, Kipsigis and Maasai. Gusii is situated on the highlands and fertile areas of Kenya. The Gusii constitute the sixth largest ethnic group, comprising 7% of the national population. Gusii land is very fertile and often wet throughout the year making it a rich agricultural area.

Today Gusii residents are predominantly Christians, with a few still practicing their traditional religion. Gusii people believed in a supreme god called Engoro, who created the universe and is the source of all life. Death is considered an 'unnatural' event brought on by witchcraft. Gusii people believed in medicine men and the spirits of the ancestors. Today witchcraft is still feared in Gusii Community.

The majority residents according to national census of 2009 identify with the Seventh-Day Adventist church and Roman Catholic Church. Of the 80% of Christians in Gusii, SDA comprise of 29.5%, they are followed by Roman Catholic Church which comprises of 22.2%. Other residents of 28.3% Christians identify with other denominations such as Pentecostal Assemblies of God, The Church of God, The Lutheran Church, Deliverance Church of Kenya, the Anglican Church of Kenya, Redeemed Church and the Full Gospel Church of Kenya (Kenya national census, 2009).

### **1.9.3 Target Population**

The target population for the study was the Church leaders and some of the members of the two dominant Christian denominations in Gusii Community. As described in the area of study, the predominant Christian denominations are the Roman Catholic and Seventh-Day Adventists churches. According to the SDA 2012 year book the Seventh-Day Adventist church has 1114 churches divided into two conferences in Gusii community. The conference of churches is a subsection of the worldwide structure of the Seventh-Day Adventist church. It coordinates all the SDA activities within its



jurisdiction. In Gusii community, there are two Conferences, which include the South Kenya Conference covering Kisii County and Nyamira Conference covering Nyamira County.

The Roman Catholic Church has 684 churches managed by the Diocese of Kisii. The Diocese is a subsection of the worldwide structure of the Roman Catholic Church; it coordinates all the Roman Catholic activities within its jurisdiction. The Roman Catholic Diocese of Kisii is located in the town of Kisii in the ecclesiastical province of Kisumu in Kenya. It was established as the Diocese of Kisii from diocese of Kisumu in May 21<sup>st</sup>, 1960.

Below is the table of the target population in terms of numbers

Target Population in Terms of Numbers

	Group	Church Members		Church Leaders		Grand Total
		Male	Female	Male	Female	
1	SDA Church	1	1	0	1	3
2	Roman Catholic Church	1	1	1	0	3
3	Senior Citizens/ Key Informants	2	2	-	-	4
	Subtotal	4	4	1	1	10

Four Church members and two office bearers both male and female were interviewed from the two dominant denominations. Two church members and one office bearer represented each denomination. Since Gusii community comprises of two counties, each denomination was represented by one church member from each county. The Roman Catholic Church provided a male office bearer participant from Kisii County and the Seventh-Day Adventist church provided a female office bearer participant from Nyamira County. This is because there was need to study the leaders' understanding of

parenting. Since the study is on the Christians in Gusii, there was need to include male and female. This provided equal distribution.

This sampling was done using purposive sampling technique. Interviews were also conducted among four senior citizens both male and female distributed equally for the study of traditional parenting in Gusii community. The senior citizens were aged 70 years and above. The reason of choosing them is because they went through traditional teaching and practice on parenting and witnessed the introduction of Christianity and propagation of its principles including parenting. Each county provided two senior citizens both male and female for the study

#### **1.9.4 Sample Size And Sampling Techniques**

The sample comprises ten participants both male and female. These participants were distributed as follows: 4 Church members, 2 office bearers and 4 senior citizens in Gusii community. The reason is that the study is qualitative. This required fewer participants that allow in-depth information. At the same time to have a target population that is inclusive and able to provide reliable and valid results.

Purposive sampling technique was used to determine the subjects that were included in the interviews. Since the study required participants that offer in-depth information, the sampling technique that involves selection of participants that manifest the phenomenon of interest intensely was ideal. There are very few people who can competently give intense information that can be objective to the study. That is why the research adopted purposive sampling technique for identifying the participants for the study.

#### **1.9.5 Research Instrument**

The research instruments used in the study were the interview schedules. In the interview schedule the open ended questionnaires were used. To understand Christian parenting in comparison with traditional parenting in Gusii community, the interview schedule was ideal.

### **1.9.5.1 Reliability**

Before the final survey was conducted, a pilot study was conducted in one Roman Catholic church and one SDA church to test the reliability of the research instruments. The churches selected for a pilot study were not included in the sampled churches for the final study. The feedback from the pilot study facilitated the review of the research instruments.

### **1.9.5.2 Validity**

Interview schedule questions were structured in such a manner that detailed extensive use of member checking throughout each phase of the research. To minimize subjectivity, related questions were asked throughout each interview to clarify statements, search for deeper meaning and limit a biased interpretation. In addition, at each stage, participants were asked to review statements said and used member checking to assure that data is interpreted the same as the participants intended. The third session of interview was dedicated for the participants to listen the audio-taped interview with an aim of ensuring that the collect information was recorded and remove what they felt should not be included. This was meant to ensure validity of the collected data.

### **1.9.6 Data Collection Procedure**

I applied for the permit to enable me carry out research. Then permission was sought from the relevant authorities of the sampled churches to collect data from the church members in their respective churches. After the confirmation from the authorities and respondents to carry out research, the respondents were requested to allocate approximately ninety minutes to two hours for the initial interview, and one to one and a half hours for the follow up interview. For church members interviews were carried on site in their respective churches. For the key informants on traditional parenting in Gusii Community, interviews were done in their homes. Prior to the interview, the

consent form was taken to each subject. During the day of interview, the purpose of the interview was restated; explaining the transcription process, and how the data would be used. Each interview was audio taped. Throughout the interview participants were encouraged to ask questions, and /or express concerns. Prior to leaving, I reiterated the confidentiality of the study.

When the transcriptions of the interview were completed, each participant was requested to listen to the audio taped interview and review the data and confirm its accuracy, noting my availability for a second interview to fill in the gaps, check for the accuracy and clarify information.

### **1.9.7 Coding Data**

After completing the interviews, audio taped interviews were listened to making passages that were significant in relation to Christian parenting and traditional parenting in Gusii community. The similarities and differences of Christian parenting and traditional parenting in Gusii Community were examined. Close attention was given to the environmental factors that contribute to the increased anti-social ills. The search on how to integrate traditional parenting with christian parenting in Gusii community for a quality parenting strategy was sought. Once themes were identified, the passages were reread within each category, and examined their interrelationships. When writing the findings, note was taken on how the categories were interconnected, each one in some way related to the others.

Each audio taped data was transcribed using thematic coding. Different highlighting colors were to color code themes in the transcribed text. The color coded data was sorted and stored in electronic files with the theme noted as the file name. Once the coding of all interviews was completed, each folder was reviewed to check the accuracy within various folders. This assisted in organizing themes, linking data sources, and drawing conclusions.

### **1.9.8 Data Analysis**

Unity among themes was sought by identifying the interrelatedness and connectivity of the data with the research objectives. As the audio taped interview was guided by the objectives of the study, the data was analysed and interpreted to provide the participants understanding of traditional and Christian teachings and practices on parenting. As patterns emerged from the narrative information, the literature review was referred to ensure that extrapolated data have context and a foundation for meaning.

All data was synthesized and created a narrative around the themes to bring theoretical ideas about the nature of equipping parents with quality parenting skills.

### **1.10 Ethical Considerations**

Throughout the study, my responsibility to the participants included avoidance of harm, assurance of confidentiality and feedback of results. Research was conducted in full compliance with and approval of Moi university requirements,

- **Avoidance of harm:** The research was conducted with a minimal amount of risk. The risk associated with participation is commensurate to that which they can experience in everyday life.
- **Assurance of confidentiality:** protection from harm included confidentiality and a guarantee that no participant could be identified from the research data or in published findings. All records were kept private to the extent that is ethically acceptable.
- **Feedback:** I was indebted to the participants for sharing their experiences. Their willingness to openly discuss issues of parenting provided a wealth of information. Throughout, the process was carefully explained at each stage and questions regarding participation were answered. In an attempt to remove any misconceptions, prior to, during, and after the first interview the feedback was sought for. Once the first interview was transcribed, it was availed to the participants as the basis for the

beginning of the next interview. Their feedback allowed for clarity in the transcribed data, and at their request, sections they never wanted to be included were removed. This process was repeated after the second interviews. The combined reviews of the participants and my own, contributed to an honest and factual reporting.

### **1.11 Summary**

This chapter deals with, the background of the problem, statement of the problem, aim of the study, objectives of the study, and limitations of the study. Then the review of literature on the effects of parenting skills and factors exerting pressure on parenting was presented. The chapter also presents the theoretical and conceptual framework of this study. Finally in this chapter, the rationale for selecting the two approaches for this study that is Traditional historical criticism for the study of Proverbs 1:8-19 and qualitative approach for collecting data from the Christian and traditional parenting participants was presented. In the discussion of methodology, the details of the participants, data collection, coding, and analysis procedures were presented. The chapter concludes with a description of the reliability, trustworthiness, and ethical considerations of the study. Chapter 2 that follows, analyses the Biblical texts of Proverbs 1:8-19 that deal with parental instruction which is thought to inform the Christian teaching and practices on parenting and its relevance in traditional Gusii teaching and practices on parenting.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **PARENTING ACCORDING TO PROVERBS 1:8-19**

#### **2.0 Introduction**

Proverbs play a central role in most communities including the Gusii society on addressing social issues. The book of Proverbs was studied in such a way that a contemporary reader in Gusii community and beyond sees its relevance and significance in resolving questions related to parenting. The book of Proverbs regards the home as the basic institution of learning life skills. It was therefore prudent to study the book of Proverbs and understand the principles that give direction and guidance to Gusii parents in their noble task of parenting to mitigate the challenge of increased anti-social ills. The interest of this study is not merely on the text itself, but on the relevance of the text to issues that Gusii parents are facing in their parenting.

#### **2.1 Background to the Study of Proverbs 1:8-19**

The section addresses the following areas:- the meaning and development of traditional-historical criticism as a method of Biblical interpretation, analysis of the traditional historical nature, the social setting, and the purpose of Proverbs 1:8-19, the relationship between Proverbs 1:8-19 and other ancient near East wisdom literature, the authorship, social-cultural environment, and the structure of the text. Secondly, the textual-critical analysis of the text follows, applying traditional-historical method. Finally the interpretation of the findings highlighting the focus of the study on parenting is presented. These areas include: - The parenting styles, contents of instructions and the goal of the instructions in Proverbs 1:8-19. The ultimate goal is that Proverbs 1:8-19 served as a foundation upon which the understanding of parenting of the Christian church in Gusii was evaluated and critiqued for the purposes of comparing it with traditional Gusii teaching and practices on parenting. Understanding the Biblical teaching on parenting in Proverbs 1:8-19 deepens the understanding of Christian

parenting in Gusii community hoping that it will contribute towards reducing anti-social ills.

### **2.1.1 The Meaning and Development of Traditional-Historical Criticism as a Method of Biblical Interpretation**

To appropriate the book of Proverbs in the life of the community and parenting, we should trace the growth and development of wisdom literature. This will help us to uncover the earlier times that the Proverbs existed in the oral form.

Before analysing Proverbs 1:8-19 and parallel passages using the traditional-historical criticism, it was important to understand its meaning. Traditional-historical criticism as a method or approach does not function alone, since it lacks any generally accepted techniques or evaluation criteria of its own. It draws its techniques from the traditional methods of textual criticism, source criticism and form criticism which present a more or less systematic body of specific procedures on analysing a text to a certain guidelines. Traditional-historical criticism formulates the use of results obtained from operation of these methodologies (McKenzie, 1971, p55) defining traditions says:-

Although the word tradition can be as broad in its meaning as to embrace the entire on-going life, customs and practices of a group or community over successive generations, it is used here in a narrower sense to refer specifically to tradition that is to words and text transmitted from one generation to the next orally and/or by means of writing.

McKenzie's definition seems to be narrow. This is because the study of words and texts of any community can reveal its entire ongoing life, customs and practices. This research considered traditions in a broader sense as opposed to narrower sense of McKenzie.

Ancient Israel traditions were transmitted from one generation to another orally and also later in the written form. They form part of the ancient Israel literature as presented in the OT. The traditions include but are not limited to Proverbs, riddles, songs, poems,



epics, and various kinds of folk narratives. These traditions usually originate with an individual or community and then are developed and shaped over the course of their transmission by a group or groups who have a direct interest in their preservation and for whom they play a vital role. These traditions became alive only as long as they are functional on meeting the evolving “needs” of the group. Traditions have characters of change, or development over the course of their transmission if they are to continue to be viable ((McKenzie, 1971).

McKenzie (1971, p.54) further says “traditional-historical criticism seeks to reconstruct the history of the transmission of the various individual traditions and tradition complexes that are to be found in the OT.” Beginning with the recognition of the history of the Bible and its contents, it views the OT and its various component parts as a body of largely traditional literature. This simply means that an exegete engaging traditional-historical criticism views the Bible as the product of a long process of composition and transmission and is most concerned with extending back beyond the written stage of the Bible’s formation to embrace stages that can be discerned in the pre-literally history of a textual unit. Knight (1975, p.70) comments on this by saying that “for many traditional-historians it is really this oral stage of traditions composition and transmission that is of utmost importance for understanding its particular characteristics.” He further defines traditional-historical criticism as follows “it deals with the entire sweep of history that a tradition passes through from its earliest beginning as independent tradition unit to its final elaboration and expression within the Bible” (Knight 1975, p.71). McKenzie (1971, p.55) traces the emergence of traditional-historical criticism as follows “the origin of the discipline may be found in an impasse that had been reached as a result of a source critical studies in the Pentateuch, culminating in Julius Wellhausen’s classic formulation of the documentary hypothesis at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.”

It became apparent that the challenge posed on the source critics brought about little or no access to the period before the documents were actually written. He further says that “Herman Gunkel was able to show a way behind the written text of the Bible to earlier sources of Israel” (Knight 1975, p.70). In Gunkel’s view, “the writers of the OT were not so much authors as they were redactors (collectors) of the traditions of their people, adding little of their own to what they had received.” And what they received “was merely the latest stage of a long process of these traditions formation in which they had been passed down faithfully over many generations by word of mouth” (McKenzie 1971, p.56). This means that Gunkel did not merely challenge Wellhausen’s conception of the OT sources as the written documents, but also developed a method congruent with the nature of the OT’s sources as “traditional” literature. This was form-criticism. His goal was to recover by means of form-critical analysis the earliest form of a traditional unit. Gunkel is justly recognized as the chief pioneer of traditional-historical criticism. Gunkel himself did not regard the products of oral tradition as appropriate materials for specifically “historical reconstructions.” However, a number of scholars who followed in his wake took note of his stance on the antiquity of oral traditions behind the Biblical narratives and the fidelity of oral transmission. The prominent scholar who used the method is Albrecht Alt who offered a description of the distinctive nature of patriarchal religion before the rise of Yahwism at the time of Moses. The two other earlier scholars whose names are closely associated with traditional-historical criticism are Gerhard Von Rad and Martin Noth.

Gnuse (1999, p.584-587) has suggested five helpful steps in traditional-historical method that will prove useful in the study of Proverbs 1:8-19. The steps in Gnuse’s methods are;

1. Ancient Near Eastern parallels to the Biblical passage. Proverbs 1:8-19 and parallel passages were studied in comparison with the neighbours of Israel

that may have influenced the author in oral or written formation of Proverbs 1:8-19 e.g. the Egyptian instructional Proverbs in relationship of the instructional materials of Israel.

2. The possible oral pre-history of the Biblical text being studied. A careful scrutiny of our present literally text reveal some of the stages of this development process, including the original form, message and social setting.
3. Envisioning how the Biblical text might have grown into its present literally context. In this step, diverse texts are associated with one another on the basis of common vocabulary, themes and theological ideas.
4. A reflection on how the great cycle of the texts genre was connected to an even larger segment of literature. The interest was in the editorial process, observing additions to the text that appear literally in origin.
5. The use or interpretation of the genre by later Biblical tradition. Here, the individual text was considered on how it fits into the message of the entire text and the wisdom literature theology with regard to parenting.

Gnuse's five steps as presented above seem to cover the essential areas that can assist in the study to understand how the ancient Israelite instructed the youth on life skills. To the researcher, these steps are crucial in revealing the role that parents play in curbing the increased anti-social ills in the community. Ancient Israel discovered that the greatest investment to be undertaken is to train up a child to be a responsible future adult. In turn, this contributed to establishing a moral and well-ordered Israelite community. A thorough analysis of Proverbs 1:8-19 using Gnuse's steps was crucial for this study.

### **2.1.2 The Traditional Historical Nature of Proverbs 1:8-19**

Understanding the traditional historical nature of Proverbs 1:8-19 is significant for this study because it provides a basis upon which Gusi Christian parents can build their

parenting strategy to address antisocial ills in the community. Proverbs are not peculiar in Israel. Wilson (1950, p.412) says “it is a universal phenomenon in ancient as in modern life.” These are often assembled and used as means of popular instruction. Such Proverbs Patterson says “hold a mirror up to life and reveal the quality of a people” (1976, p.42). Proverbs can provide a basis upon which “Tribal and National morality can be evaluated”. Therefore according to Patterson (1976, p.51), “Tribal and National morality can be evaluated by a study of Proverbs in any particular group and the development of a people may be measured by a study of its wisdom writings.”

The earliest oral forms of this literature are found in Egypt and reach as far back as third millennium BC. Fortunately the Proverbs have been preserved for us, which were used as means of oral instruction at home. Later they were preserved in written form and used as manuals of instruction in the schools and royal courts (Wilson,1950). Patterson seems to agree with Wilson. He says that the Proverbs collected in written form refers to ancient wisdom already known in oral form long before the scribal ages (Patterson, 1976). This means that Proverbs were used in the earliest oral forms as a means of instruction at home and later preserved as manuals of instruction at homes, schools, and loyal courts.

The central philosophy of the Proverbs in the earliest existence was for success. Proverbs instructed the children on the approach to life on the daily encounters. It was expected that those who adhered to the use of instructions became successful in life and were expected to be role models to others (Kent, 1926).

How can we reconcile the idea that the book of Proverbs which bears the name of Solomon didn't originate with him? That Proverbs was a collection of the traditions of oral materials that had existed for a long period of time and passed on from generation to generation before it was collected, redacted and then presented in the written form. Is

Solomon the one who wrote the Proverbs of Israel or how is he associated with the book of Proverbs? Patterson says “the wisdom literature of the OT is largely associated with Solomon, as the law is associated with Moses and Psalmody with David (1971, p.44). This can be adduced from the Biblical passage:

*Spake three thousand Proverbs....And he spake of trees, from the cedar tree that is in Lebanon even unto the hyssop that springeth out of the well; he spake also of beasts and of fowl and of creeping things and fishes (1 Kings 4:32, 33).*

Solomon appears to have been universal in his interests and comprehensive in his sympathies. He was a magnificent patron of arts. But wisdom in Israel is older than Solomon. Kent says:-

*We can pass back this date to earlier manifestations in the life of the Hebrew people. Wisdom had its home in the East and the children of the East are the wise par excellence (1926, p.258).*

That is why Jeremiah says:-

Is wisdom no more in Terman?  
Is counsel perished from the prudent?  
Is their wisdom vanished? (49:7)

Solomon was considered in Israel as the wisest king that ever reigned. To give the book of Proverbs wider acceptance, those who compiled it associated it with the name of Solomon. The Proverbs compiled had existed for a long time in Israel orally. In fact they were as old as Israel nation. They were in existence long before Solomon was born. Two hypotheses have been suggested in relation to the authorship of Proverbs by Solomon. These are that either Solomon participated in the collection, redaction, and combilation of the book of Proverbs or his name was attached to the book to give it a wider acceptance. Based on the preceding argument, the latter may be the most appropriate hypotheses.

In the process of identifying and understanding the nature and origin of proverbs in Israel, aiming to unearth the traditions handed down to us and the purpose of the

Proverbs, it is worthy to determine the roots of the book of Proverbs. According to Kent, the desert heritage of Israel is a most important factor here and whatever other influences may have affected Israel, we must not neglect this background. In the desert there was ample time leisure to reflection and the long fasts to which the desert dweller was lured lent to mind a swift detachment from the things of the sense. Faculties were strangely sharpened here and a strong self-regarding instinct developed without which the nomad could not survive. Experiences were interrogated and integrated into experience and wisdom was acquired in a most concrete and living fashion. There was constant conflict between men and wild beasts and wilder men. This wisdom found expression in realistic form and proverbs were born (1926). Bever seems to concur with Kent on the tradition behind Israel wisdom literature and proverbs in particular. He says "Proverbs like their literary successors, were intended to inculcate practical wisdom; they embody the distilled thought and reflection of countless generations" (1944, p.47). This study recognizes Trench's work in his book *Proverbs and their lessons* that was published in the year 1857 as the most relevant work trying to find out the roots of the traditional-history of the book of Proverbs in Israel, even though that was not his intention. He says:-

Certain qualities must adhere to the saying before it graduates to the class of Proverbs and attains the ranks of the elect. First, it must be brief, for brevity is the soul of wit. Secondly, it must have a sense that means it must not be so compressed that its meaning cannot be grasped immediately. Thirdly, the Proverb must have salt, that is, a distinct tag or flavour, the element of pungency that gives it "kick." Fourth element of the nature of a Proverb is popularity. The cute remark, all its sense and salt will fall still born to the ground if it is not caught up and repeated by the by standers. It must be endorsed by public acceptance and repeated through generations before it becomes a real Proverb (1944, p.48).

This implies that proverbs existed for a long time in the oral form. They developed over a period of time. Then passed through several stages of development and elaboration, before they were expressed within the Bible. Thus we may confidently say that proverbs are born and not made. Carn seems to put this statement clear as follows

“Proverbs are common property and belong to the world. There is no copyright in them” (1937, p.132). The putting together forth of proverbs and narratives demonstrate that they had a significant role in the moral development of humanity.

The OT itself provides a very incomplete historical outline into which its literature can be fitted. The historian must piece together the story from many sources Biblical and extra Biblical (Scott, 1971). Wisdom was a fine fruit of a tradition originally rooted in the moves of family and tribe and local community, and hence to a degree was as old as society itself (Perdue, 1994). Scott says “Any attempt to trace the history of wisdom tradition in Israel is handicapped by the relative paucity and selective nature of the OT historical sources” (Scott 1971, p.12). The editors of the primary narrative account of Israel’s history from the conquest of Canaan to the Babylonian exile are concerned chiefly with a prophetic interpretation of that history. In history, there are no incidental references to the activities of the sages, with the single exception of what is said about the wisdom of Israel (Alt 1953).

A history of the wisdom tradition can be outlined within the framework of Weinfield position. We may assume that from the earliest times a tradition of teaching and transmission of wise sayings existed among the Israelite families. These no doubt include strictly religious and ethical instructions as well as “common sense” teachings on the daily problems of life. The next stage of development was after the presentation of the covenant law of Moses. This law, particularly as it is summarized in the book of Deuteronomy, certainly would have had a profound effect in the ancient Israelite psyche and the teachings of family and folk wisdom (Deut 6:7; 20 Joshua 4:6). Much of Israelite folk wisdom would have continued to concern itself with common problems of daily life as it had from the beginning and would have included few explicit references to the Torah.

The third stage was the rise of the Monarchy and the beginning of the Solomonic empire. For the first time, a large upper class emerged in Israel. This included landed gentry, court officials, and members of the royal family. The rise of the powerful upper class with leisure time is often accompanied by an interest in literary culture and this was the case as well. The work of “the men of Hezekiah” (Proverbs 25:1) may be considered a continuation of the process. Israelite court wisdom was born, which combined the literary expertise of the scribes with the traditional wisdom of Israel to produce a synthesis that was both cosmopolitan and genuinely Israelite. The fame of Solomon’s wisdom among the nations (1 Kings 4:34) indicates its cosmopolitan outlook and common ties to the wisdom of the other nations and this is confirmed by comparison of extant near Eastern wisdom literature to the Bible.

This Israelite synthesis, however, was not “secular” in outlook but was based upon a Deuteronomic principle. Still, the roots of Israelite wisdom in traditional family teaching and international court wisdom guaranteed that the product would not just be applied theology or a commentary on the law but an original work dealing with the problems in life of God’s world. Proverbs is therefore a tradition that developed over time for practical and down to earth teachings and sayings for nurturing morality in the Israelite community.

The fourth stage of this history is the exile. The scribal traditions became exclusively tied to the temple and priesthood no longer was part of a loyal court. The Jews who returned to the land were determined to keep the law and avoid another disaster like the exile. In this context, the written Torah naturally became the explicit focus of attention. This process had already begun in the canon, but is fully developed in the apocryphal Wisdom of Solomon and Sirach. This research analyses Proverbs 1:8-19, within this context of the ‘traditional-historical’ development and growth of Israelite wisdom.



### **2.1.3 The Social Setting of Proverbs 1:8-19**

The *Sitz Im Leben* of the text is important for understanding the text's meaning and purpose in a concrete way (Stuart, 1980). Knowing the social setting of Proverbs 1:8-19 will definitely aid its interpretation, because it will be clear to the interpreter how the text was understood in the original context, and that will help the interpreter in the application of the text in his own context. Scholars do not agree on the social setting of Proverbs 1:8-19. Various settings such as royal court, school, and home are suggested as possible social contexts of the book of Proverbs. There is an assumption based on the nature of the book of Proverbs that it owes its formation to the royal court (Humphreys, 1978). It is assumed that there was an educated and literate group in Israel during the reign of Solomon that was responsible for writing down the Proverbs (Dell, 2000). Some have even suggested the Hezekiah royal court (Proverbs 25:1) when they could not deny the evidence that the book of Proverbs could not have been written during the reign of Solomon. This assumption has led to some scholars to conclude that there was a group of educated people who gave instructions to those who have potential to be leaders of society (Dell, 2000). It can be argued that this is a forced assumption based on the comparative studies of wisdom literature in Israel and in Egypt. This is unacceptable, because there are a few if any clear references to court schools in the OT. (Dell 2000) concludes this discussion by saying that the court context in general is taught by recent scholars as to have been overstressed. Therefore, this study does not support the royal court as a possible setting of Proverbs 1:8-19.

The second possible setting of Proverbs 1:8-19 that was suggested in its history of interpretation is that of a school. This implies that there were schools in ancient Israel, that is, a professional education, which involved both reading and writing, at a specific location to which young people came and for which fees were paid to a teacher (Crenshaw, 1995), whose primary task was to transmit knowledge from teachers to pupils. For this reason Proverbs 1:8-19 was evidently composed for use as a textbook in

such schools (Whybray, 1974, p.37). Von Rad (1972, p.17), in his argument for a school as a social setting of our text concludes “In Israel too, writing was known. But writing has to be taught, and was never taught without accompanying teaching material. It follows from this that there must have been schools of different types in Israel.” Von Rad, however, fails to bring forth concrete evidence either from text itself or from the history of Israel for the existence of schools in ancient Israel.

Moss (1972, p.429) argues that a supposition of the school in Proverbs 1:8-19 is intrusive and unhelpful. The text itself does not provide us with evidence to prove that the school was the social setting of Proverbs 1:8-19. Crenshaw (1985, p.601) concludes that there is a deficiency of hard evidence on education in ancient Israel.

The third possible social setting of Proverbs 1:8-19 is that of a household or a family. This simply means that it was the responsibility of a family through parents to impart knowledge as we have it in Proverbs 1:8-19 to children

Perdue (1981) and Van Leeuwen (1990) suggest liminality as a social setting of Proverbs 1:8-19. They were simply saying that the instruction in Proverbs 1:8-19 was used to guide a child from childhood to adulthood. A child is helped to pass from one stage to another and is given rules and guidelines for successfully meeting his new responsibilities. The road ahead to adulthood is full of temptations, peer group pressure and bad influence from the immoral members of the community (Perdue, 1981). Therefore, through these instructions the parents, both mother and father, are trying to entice the untutored to a wisely ordered and godly life (1:7, 29). From the text itself, there is evidence of a parent giving numerous instructions to his or her son (2:2; 3:13; 5:1; 7:4). This evidence led Murphy (1981, p.7) to conclude as follows; ‘the frequent address, my son is not merely stylistic and indicative of a teacher-pupil relationship in scholastic instruction. It reaches back into the family, where a responsible relationship

between parents and children would have first emphasized. In the text itself, we read words like “Father”, “Son”, and “Mother.” I do not see any reason for not understanding these words literally as expressing a family relation, and not a relationship between teacher and his pupil. The moment we start to understand them otherwise, it is an indication that we are not faithful to the text but are bowing to the external pressures of comparative studies of wisdom literature. The comments of Brueggemann, is writing to note that a family is a decisive socializing agent, which constructs a world of limit and choice of symbol and imagination, in which the child may safely live (1997).

Hagerdon (2000, p.113), referring to parenting in Israel, says “since it was a disgrace for the father to have brought up a son badly, so it was that the parents sought to control and direct the child.” This is exactly what is advocated by Proverbs, which stress the importance of guiding the son on the right path and the son is well advised to listen to the authority of the father. Family as a social setting in which a child is helped in his or her journey to adulthood, confirms God’s instruction to parents that they are the primary source for the impartation of knowledge and moral values in their children.

Therefore, we conclude in this section that Proverbs 1:8-19 is an instruction from parents to their children. This happens in the setting of the family where the father instructs the children on the principles of life. The mother equally contributes to the impartation of life skills to the child (Proverbs1:8). The book of Proverbs clearly reveals the father urging the son to hear the instruction of the father and not to forsake the commandments of the mother. The child, father and mother are not found in a school setting but at a home setting. The cooperation of the father and mother in the upbringing of children is clearly demonstrated in Proverbs. This supports the argument that the primary social institution of training children moral values is the home. The father and mother are instructors while the children are students. The lesson is moral

development. This is relevant and significant in addressing the challenges of increased anti-social ills in Gusii community.

#### **2.1.4 The Purpose of Proverbs 1:8-19**

Since the social setting of Proverbs 1-9 where our text in consideration of Proverbs 1:8-19 fall is the family, it was important to consider how it was appropriated for instructing children in Israel. It formed a basis for our textual analysis and its relevance and significance in Christian and traditional Gusii teaching and practices on parenting. Various scholars understood the main aim and purpose of Proverbs 1:8-19 as an instructional one. Mckane agrees that Proverbs 1:8-19 has to do with education, although his focus was on the impartation of intellectual knowledge to children. Mckane (19970, p.265) says “the educational process was more occupied with developing mature intellectual attitudes than with morality. Its concern was to impart negotiating skills, to nurture soundness of judgement and to produce a weighty and effective individual.” It did not educate men to change the existing world into something better, but to make their way successful in the world, as it was.

Brown rightly refutes Mckane’s assessment of the purpose of Proverbs 1:8-19, as it has to do with the development of intellectual attitudes. Brown (1996, p43) argues “that Proverbs 1:8-19 is concerned with both the intellectual and moral attitudes of a child. To dichotomise intellectual and moral values is to miss the point of Proverbs 1:8-19, and that dichotomy was never in the mind of an ancient sage.” Brown is absolutely right in his refutation of Mckane’s assessment because the sayings contained in Proverbs 1:8-19 also teach a young man how to live his life in such a way that he can promote peace in the community.

Whybray (1974, p.11) says “This is all pedagogical material, designed to be used in the preparation of boys and young men to face the problems and dangers of the adult world

so that they may become wise and responsible members of it.” For Whybray (1994), Proverbs 1:8-19 deals with the preparation of boys and girls in, the upper class of society to adulthood. Whybray’s conclusion is unacceptable, because there is no such indication in the text itself that its concern lies with children from the upper class. It is evident that he is working from the presupposition that Proverbs 1:8-19 is fulfilling, the same task as the Egyptian instruction. Harris (1995), in his assessment of Whybray’s understanding of Proverbs 1:8-19 in relationship with an Egyptian lesson book, argues that according to Whybray, Proverbs 1:8-19 has its roots in the Egyptian Lesson book. The lesson book was appropriated by the wise men of Israel. Whybray uses Egyptian instruction as a procrustean bed for Proverbs 1:8-19. This is unacceptable because the context of each text is of primary importance in this interpretation.

Fox (1997), also suggests that the wisdom that the father is teaching his son is more than intellectual. He regards wisdom as a power that resides in the learner as an inner light that guides a person through life. This wisdom cannot, therefore, be defined as erudition or unusual intellect but is a kind of wisdom that will help a child to withstand temptations and seduction posed on his way by sinful men and women and to discern right from wrong, and the desire to pursue right. For Fox (1997), the greatest goal for education, also in Proverbs 1:8-19, is to foster moral character in the child. Brown wrote a monograph entitled, “Character in Crisis,” In which he emphasized that building the moral character of a child is one of the greatest goals of wisdom literature in the OT, especially in Proverbs 1:8-19.

Brown (1996) indicates that where wisdom is received, a person will experience communal values such as righteousness, justice and equity. This implies, therefore, that those who receive the father’s instruction or wisdom become responsible and productive citizens of the community and whose identity is built upon the foundation of righteousness and justice founded by the past generation.

Estes (1997) devotes a whole Chapter to the goals of education in Proverbs 1:8-19. Estes is convinced that Proverbs 1:8-19 contains educational material. He notes that “It is evident that the transmission of knowledge from one generation to the next is the integral part of what education is seeking to accomplish. Knowledge, however, is not viewed as an end itself, but is only the foundation for more significant goals such as understanding and application” (p.63).

According to Estes, there are some six educational goals in Proverbs 1:8-19. The first goal that Estes regarded as foundational to all goals of education in Proverbs 1:8-19, is the development of the personal commitment of the learner. This is a commitment to hard work, discipline and devotion to wisdom. The learner should commit himself to reproduce what he learns from wisdom in his everyday life.

Secondly, Estes argues that another educational goal in Proverbs 1:8-19 is the formation of Godly character in the learner. This character will enable a child to function well with regard to personal discipline, in interpersonal relationships in the family, at work, and within the community. If this character has been truly formed in the life of a child, he will uphold the teachings of the wisdom teacher in every circumstance.

Thirdly, education in Proverbs 1:8-19 strives to develop in a child independent competence, the skill necessary to function well in Yahweh’s cosmos. This goal implies that if a child was well taught he will cope with the harsh realities of this life.

Fourthly, the goal of education in Proverbs 1:8-19 is for a child’s protection. The wisdom teacher is very clear about the fact that evil exists in the world. Therefore, a child’s acceptance of wisdom teaching will bring protection for him or her, because wisdom teaches how the dangers in life can be avoided.

Fifthly, wisdom teaching brings prosperity in the life of a child. The learner may become prosperous across the broad range of life. This goal is well understood within the reality that the body of wisdom literature pictures that life is at times mysterious and unpredictable because the ways of Yahweh are inscrutable to humans.

Lastly, Estes agrees that the ultimate goal of Proverbs 1:8-19 is the knowledge of Yahweh. He says, "Education, then, should produce in the learner more than just a sense of achievement, this kind of education will also cultivate reverence for Yahweh and an intimate fellowship with Him" (p. 84).

The above analysed goals demonstrate clearly that education in the family is really a foundation of life in the community. To conclude that the betterment of an individual child is not of primary importance in Proverbs 1:81-9, but the betterment of the community is justifiably right. Parents are not raising children for families per se but for the entire community. Children are the building block of any community. Children are going to live their lives in communities. Thus family is a foundation that has to take good waters to the communities for survival. Brown (1996, p.40) says the family provides the foundation and training ground for responsible communal life. Family life offers a microcosm of the community. If the community experiences social ills in its midst, it needs to revisit the life of the family in order to rebuild its structures. Brueggemann(1972, p.15) reminds us that "In Israel and the ancient world generally, the hope for life intimately links a person to his fellows, so that the promise of life applies to the community in which he lives." This connection between an individual and the community is well stated in Proverbs 11:10-11; "When it goes well with the righteous, the city rejoices; and when the wicked perish, there are shouts of gladness. By the blessing of the upright a city is exalted, but it is overthrown by the mouth of the wicked." Hence Brueggemann (1972, p.15) argues "the life which wisdom sees as the

goal and meaning of human existence is the well-being of the community and each of its members.”

Form and literary analysis of the text clearly show that the text is about the relationship between a parent and a son. It has to do with the father-son relationship, in which teaching-learning activity is taking place. In this relationship, a son is urged to adhere to his father's commandments and discipline. A parent gives his instructions in a second-person address to a 'son' or 'sons'. This indicates a close relationship and love that exist between a parent and a child. His instructions are described as wisdom, which a child has to strive very hard in order to find in this life, because they determine the course of his life.

The instructions contain themes which indicate that they have to do with the life of a child that is growing in the household. A child is warned against peer-group pressure that might entice him to join gang members, whose purpose is to destroy other people's lives in the community. In order to become a responsible community member, he is to seek wisdom like a silver or hidden treasure. Wisdom will teach a child the way of righteousness, equity and justice. Wisdom will also save him from the loose woman (2:1-22), who leads her victims to Sheol, and from the way of the wicked, who may lose their life for engaging in antisocial behaviour. A parent's instructions teach a child not to rely on his sight, but to rely and trust in the Lord. This implies that his relationship to Yahweh is essential for his success and prosperity in life. His relationship to Yahweh is a basis upon which a child can build a good relationship with his neighbours. In Proverbs 4:20-27, a father's instructions are described as a healing to all flesh. This means that if a son adheres to the teaching of his father or mother, he will save himself from several social ills that can affect his life. The father's instruction will help him to look after his heart and to be faithful to the wife of his youth. Estes (1997, p.69) says, “The Hebrews viewed the heart as the centre of the rational and emotional



life. Because the heart controls all of life, it is the key to personal success or failure. Consequently, the teacher challenges the son to guard it carefully, lest his whole life be ruined. The heart, representative of the character, inevitably affects the outcome of the total person.”

Therefore, Bergant’s (1997, p.93) argument that “the instruction is a general motivation urging compliance to the accepted mores and customs of the society,” is true. This is because the purpose of instructions as found in the book of Proverbs addresses a variety of virtues necessary for an individual to relate positively with other community members. This is clearly revealed in the section of the textual analysis that follows. The young child is admonished to listen to his elders and to pattern his life after theirs. Success and prosperity are placed before him as incentives to conform; the threat of failure and deprivation is meant to deter him from unacceptable behaviour. Estes (1997, p.86) views the ultimate purpose of the instruction as the impartation of the knowledge of Yahweh, which is a supreme goal that draws all of education and life together into an integrated whole.

The instruction in Proverbs 1:8-19 reveals that the household is an important place of piety and education. Both parents are involved in this kind of education in the household. This is confirmed by the fact that both mother and father are mentioned in the instruction genre as people who are responsible for parenting. Hence, the household is regarded in this genre as the most basic and primary functioning unit of the community (Clements, 1992, p.126). Thus, we learn from the instruction genre that traditional Israel had a systematic programme of empowering parents to carry out the responsibility of parenting. If this way of empowering young people on parenting is adopted and adapted in the Gusii Christian, it will help address the increased antisocial behaviour in Gusii community. This study explored on how this biblical teaching informs the Gusii Christian teaching and practices on parenting in comparison with the

traditional Gusii teaching and practices on parenting. This provides a basis upon which a strategy on how households can raise their children is developed. If every home achieves the purpose of empowering children with good moral virtues, then antisocial ills will be minimised in Gusii community and beyond.

### **2.1.5 The Relationship Between Proverbs 1:8-19 and other Ancient Near East**

#### **Wisdom Literature**

The study Proverbs 1:8-19 and its relationship with the ancient near east wisdom literature is of great significance for the textual analysis of Proverbs 1:8-19. Proverbs 1:8-19 has a close relationship with wisdom literature of the neighbours of Israel such as Egypt and Mesopotamia. Scholars generally agree that Israelite wisdom was greatly influenced by wisdom literature of her neighbouring countries, but they do differ on the extent of the influence (Whybray, 1965, Mckane, 1970; Clifford, 1999). This raises several hermeneutical questions. First, did Israelite wisdom teachers merely copy wisdom sayings from their neighbours? Is it true that Yahwistic thinking in Proverbs 1:8-19 was a later addition to the secular Proverbs from Israel's neighbouring countries? Does the relationship help us in understanding and interpretation of Proverbs 1:8-19?

The wisdom movement of Israel and especially instruction of Proverbs 1:8-19 are closely linked with Egyptian instructions. Von Rad argues that "Solomon's principal wife was an Egyptian princess and he seems to have modelled his court organization on that of Pharaoh's where for many centuries scribes had been engaged in literally composition as well as serving in the conduct of official business" (Von Rad, 1953, p.120). Features of Proverbs 1:8-19 comparable with the Egyptian instructions include an emphasis on the importance of hearing and obeying the teaching, the significance of the heart as the centre of the human will, and the parallel between wisdom and *Ma'at* (a Hebrew word meaning the heart) as the source of life and as governing the minds of the

authorities (Whybray, 1995, p.64). There are also differences between the two literatures. In Egyptian instructions, there is no constant employment of the expression “my son”, and the “mother” and “father” are not associated together in teaching their son. This clearly proves that one text cannot be used as a procrustean bed of another text. We may, therefore, agree with Mckane who argues for an international instruction genre in the Ancient Near East (Mckane 1970, p.7). Thus it is probable that the Israelite writing remained an Israelite writing for Israel. It was not copied from another culture. It never adopted any specifically Egyptian belief or vocabulary, but used what it was familiar with (Whybray, 1965, p.69). It is therefore, invalid for any exegete to see the Proverbs 1:8-19 text as full of Yahwistic additions. Such an assertion is a denial of the fact that Proverbs 1:8-19 is part of the Israelite pedagogical tradition that did not necessarily need to borrow from any other culture. Still, it probably did borrow. It is of great significance in the interpretation of Proverbs 1:8-19 to study it in the context of the Ancient Near East. This helps to understand how Proverbs were used and understood not only in Israel but also in the neighbouring countries. In turn, it will enable us to interpret our text. Clifford (1999, pp.8-9), in his study of Proverbs within the context of the Ancient Near East, spells out three assumptions of ancient wisdom that are so crucial for our own understanding of Proverbs 1:8-19. The first assumption is that wisdom had to do with practical rather than theoretical knowledge. A husband is wise because he knows how to look after his wife (Clifford, 1999, p.8). This is how wisdom was understood, not only in Israel but also in the whole region of the Ancient Near East. This is opposed to the understanding of wisdom in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Wisdom is understood as something that has to do with the amount of knowledge one possesses. However, this is not how Biblical wisdom is understood. Thus, we are provided here with hermeneutical parameters within which we are to understand and interpret Proverbs 1:8-19. Wisdom is how one lives one’s life, not the quantity of knowledge in one’s mind.

The second assumption is that wisdom belonged to the gods (Clifford, 1999, pp.8-9). Human beings needed wisdom from the gods to be civilized and to be good servants of the gods. This clearly tells us that wisdom was never a strange fellow in the religious world views of the Ancient Near East. Wisdom was always a part of the religious worldview of the Ancient Near East.

The third assumption that Clifford (1999, p.9) points out is that heavenly wisdom comes to the human race mediated by earthly institution or authorities, such as the King, scribes and heads of families. This is important for this study because it points to the crucial role of those who are authorities, such as parents. Children cannot be wise by themselves; they are to be led towards wisdom. In adulthood, children will reflect on what they have received from parents in their childhood. The only way that God has devised to impart knowledge to children is by using parents and others that are in authority, such as teachers.

It is therefore, maintained in this study that Proverbs 1:8-19 is to be studied and interpreted using the traditional-historical approach. This approach considered the Ancient Near Eastern context because it provides us with hermeneutical parameters. The historical-cultural context of extra-Biblical wisdom was included as a fifth guideline in the study. This is because the book of Proverbs shares the literary forms of proverbial and wisdom literature of the ancient near East. This common literary background may help the exegete achieve one of the purposes of the proverbs to understand the various types of wisdom Literature.

### **2.1.6 Authorship**

Scholars have given different views and opinions regarding the authorship of the book of proverbs. Despite the book's claims of essentially Solomonic origin ( 1:1; 10:1; 25:1) and its collection during the reign of Hezekiah ( 25:1) in 729-686 B.C., critical scholars

generally consider proverbs to have had a long and complex history of development not completed until after the exile. Three major traditional historical reconstructions of significance are those of P.W Skehan, R.N. Whybray, and W. Mckane. The major conclusion of their analysis is that proverbs does not have a single or even a major “author” at all in the traditional sense of the term but is instead a product of a long process of compilation, redaction, and theological revision (Skehan 1947, p.52). This can be noted when you get into a first encounter with the book of Proverbs. The book seems to begin over and over again, as if it were itself a mini-library containing smaller works each with its own title and author, “The Proverbs of Solomon”, “Words of the wise”, “The words of Agur”, and so on (Mckane 1970, p.5). The book claims Solomon the son of David, king of Israel as its author (Proverbs1:1). According to Nichol 1976, p. 945 says that “Solomon was author of the book seems evident from chapters 1:1, 10:1, and 25:1.” However what Nichol is not able to reconcile in his argument of Solomon as the author of Proverbs based on the internal evidence of the book is what we read in Proverbs 30:1, and 31:1 which ascribes the words of Proverbs to Agur the son of Jakeh and king Lemuel respectively.

Mckane’s argument seems to provide a basis of understanding why the book of Proverbs contains the micro-level of the individual Proverbs and the macro- level of the book as a whole. He says “the author of the micro-level of the individual proverbs can not represent a single author but a production of traditional materials of various individuals, families and clans” (1970, p.5). It can be argued that the macro-level of the book as a whole represents the compilation of the individual traditional materials of individuals, families, and clans into a written form. Individual Proverbs existed for a long time in Israel and ancient near east in the oral form. It was developed over a period of time. It passed through several stages of development and elaboration, before they were expressed within the Bible (Whybray 1972, p.13). Thus, we can confidently say that no individual wrote all the proverbs but they were simply compiled from the

already existing traditional individual proverbs. Carn's (1937, p. 132) conclusion that "Proverbs are common property and belong to the society and there is no copyright in them", seems to provide a convincing argument about the origin and authorship of Proverbs. It can be argued that Solomon son of David, Agur the son of Jakeh and king Lemuel edited, compiled and put together forth the individual Proverbs. The putting together forth of Proverbs and narratives demonstrate that they had significant role in the moral development of humanity.

Solomon was considered in Israel as the wisest king that ever reigned. To give the book of Proverbs wider acceptance, those who compiled it associated it with the name of Solomon (Kent 1926, p.9). The Proverbs compiled had existed for a long time orally. In fact they were as old as Israel nation. They were in existence long before Solomon was born.

This study adopts the conclusion of R. Scott, to be the most probable position about the authorship of Proverbs. Scott's conclusion is that much of the attribution of great wisdom to Solomon is late, legendary, and of little historical value. He further argues from Proverbs 25:1, that the real dawn of literally wisdom in Israel was in the reign of Hezekiah ( Scott 1971, p.9). It is reasonable assumption that the materials contained in Proverbs may perhaps have existed and passed on orally before they were elaborated and compiled in written form from the period of Hezekiah and forward. The study takes the assumption that the instruction in Proverbs may have established itself in Israel long before Solomon and the compilation of the instructional genre. This is the reason why understanding the traditional historical circumstances of the instructional genre of Proverbs will aid the study to understand how parents were instructed in traditional Israel, its significance in addressing antisocial behaviour if appropriated in Gusii Christian parenting aimed at comparing it with traditional Gusii teaching and practices on parenting.

### **2.1.7 The Social-Cultural Environment of Proverbs 1:8-19**

The social cultural factors that occasioned the origin and development of the instructions in the book of Proverbs is essential to this study because it provides a basis of comparing its teaching and practices with the traditional Gusii teaching and practices on parenting. Von Rad says that “Israel’s own history begins in the thirteenth century BCE with the liberation of a number of groups from various situations and domination and oppression. These experiences were all caught up and focused in the story of liberation of a small but important minority of what grew into ‘Israel’ of the tribal confederation period, roughly 1250-1050 BCE” (1974, p.11). The model or paradigm story of the liberation of the people of Israel is ‘the Exodus’ from Egypt of a small group of slaves under a leader named Moses (Whybray 1972 p.24). The above arguments have raised a lot of debate surrounding the origin of Israel as a nation. Several hypotheses have been advanced about the origin of Israel ranging from the miraculous deliverance from bondage in Egypt by almighty God, liberation of a number of groups from various situations, domination and oppression and a coming together of mountain dwellers that identified themselves with a unique God (Von Rad 1974, p.9). The scope of this study is not the origin of Israel as a nation but on how the parents of Israel instructed their children on moral development. The social cultural environment upon which these instructions flourished and found its expression and wider use is what can provide a solid foundation for its comparison in the modern Gusii Christian society with traditional Gusii teaching and practices on parenting.

Von Rad provides an insight into social cultural environment of the instruction as expressed in Proverbs 1:8-19. He says that “already clan and family wisdom had flourished for centuries among the various peoples who made up early Israel. This ‘popular wisdom’ evolved over generations through parenting, and prepared each generation to cope with life and achieve some degree of success and satisfaction”

(1974, p.13). From the Exodus and subsequent formation of 'the tribes of Israel', in the hill country of Canaan, Israel wisdom will bear the mark of the religious culture of these people. It was a religious culture characterised especially by their worship of Yahweh, the God who stands by parents for a well ordered and moral society. Establishment of moral individual, families, clans and Israel as a whole was considered paramount for the proper functioning of Israel as a nation (Whybray 1972, p.26).

Israel as a nation underwent several historical, social, and cultural development including the establishment of the monarchy around 1000 BCE, the uprising of the Mesopotamian powers that conquered Israel and other ancient near east nations and took them captives such as Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece and then the Roman government (Mckane 1970, p.31).

The crisis of the exilic and post exilic period that Israel found itself in threatened their identity as a people. A confusion followed this crisis of losing their identity. At one blow, all that had appeared to be at the heart of their life as a people-the holy city of Jerusalem, its temple, and rich cultic traditions and the Davidic kingship- had been brought to a brutal end. The effort to grasp what had happened, much less to begin to pick up the pieces and rebuild was staggering (Von Rad 1974, p.16). The challenge for the Jewish people during the exile and into the post exilic period was not only to survive but also to lay the groundwork for the future without abandoning their past roots. They had literary to rebuild and recreate their identity as a people. This rebuilding and recreating involved an enormous literary activity which resulted in the production of large portions of Israel's history, cultic teachings, Laws and many other materials of what today constitutes our Bible among them the instructions as contained in Proverbs 1-9 (Whybray 1972, p.27).



The compilation of Israel's traditions that had existed for a long period of time orally, facilitated the democratization of culture and thus provided a new dynamic for cultural change. Written documents played an important role in the peoples struggle to articulate their self-understanding and to safeguard future generations founding visions and hopes. The wisdom writings, within which instructions are found, deal with family matters and individual concerns mainly meant for moral development (Kent 1926, p.14). The wisdom literature in general and the instruction in particular in Proverbs 1:8-19 represent a whole array of survival strategies in the midst of the confusing and challenging postexilic world. The instructions offered away for the 'wise' individual to live a fulfilling and satisfying life of love and loyalty to Israel's covenant God a 'spirituality' for dealing with the pressures and challenges of daily life as a faithful Jew. This is the background upon which wisdom movement in Israel emerged.

### **2.1.8 The Structure of the Instructions in Proverbs**

This section deals with how instructions in Proverbs where our key text of study Proverbs 1:8-19 falls are structured. There is scholarly consensus that the book of Proverbs is composed of distinct sections. Scholars also agree that Proverbs 1-9 where our instruction on consideration of Proverbs 1:8-19 falls is also distinguishable from the rest of the book (Dillard and Longman, 1994, p.237). Whybray (1995, p.62) argues: "The commentators of the latter half of the nineteenth century were aware of the differences in style, and to some extent in character and intention between chapters 1-9 and the sentence literature of 10:1ff." Skehan's (1947, p.190) structural analysis of Proverbs 1-9 shows that these chapters form a distinct section from the rest of the book. He argues that Proverbs 1-9 is composed of seven columns or pillars. Seven columns are seven poems of uniform length that extend between chapters 2 and 7. He views chapters 1, 8 and 9 as the framework within which the seven columns stand. Skehan, in his structural analysis of Proverbs 1-9, fails to provide convincing evidence of proving how chapters 1 and 8, 9 form an *inclusio*. A literary analysis of the text itself does not

clearly indicate that these chapters form an *inclusio*. Thus, it seems necessary to rethink the conclusions reached by Skehan. Dillard and Longman (1994, p.239) says: “The most serious difficulty with Skehan’s interpretation is that there is no reason for taking what appeared to be two separate discourses in the first chapter (1:8-19; 1:20-33) as part of a frame.” Later interpreters like Whybray and Fox, seriously differ with Skehan in their structural analysis of Proverbs 1-9. Whybray (1965, p.31), in his structural analysis of Proverbs, identifies two types of literary forms that are distinguishable from each other. The first literary form is that in which the wisdom teacher addresses his pupil and offers his own human teaching. Here Whybray identifies ten instructions or discourses. He argues that these instructions have been deeply influenced by the Egyptian genre of wisdom literature known as ‘instruction’ (Whybray, 1965, pp.61-71). Whybray's research result was widely accepted by various scholars (Fox, 1997, pp.613-633; Clifford, 1999). Whybray (1965, p.32) identifies the following portions as his ten instructions: (1) 1:8-19; (2) 2:1,9,16-17; (3) 3:1-10; (4) 3:21-24, 27-31; (5) 4:1-5; (6) 4:10-18; (7) 4:20-26; (8) 5:1-8, 21; (9) 6:20-25, 32; and (10) 7:1-5, 25-27. These ten discourses are put together as a unit due to characteristics they share. Each discourse is preceded by an introduction in which a father exhorts his son to pay attention to his words and points out the advantages that will accrue from doing so. Whybray identifies the following as the common characteristics of these introductory verses:

- They are all addressed to my son (sons).
- Pupils are commanded to hear, receive and not forget the instructions that follow.
- They all assert the personal authority of the speaker, the father or teacher.
- They all assert the great value and utility of the father's words.
- There is no reference to any authority beyond that of the father himself.
- The word ‘wisdom’ refers to ordinary human wisdom.

In his analysis, Whybray makes extensive deletions to recover the original form of the discourses. He deletes certain verses, because he views them as an expansion of the original form (Whybray, 1965, p.41). Whybray (1965, p.52) says: “In the course of the analysis of these chapters, it has been suggested that some of the secondary material was added in order to modify the teaching of the discourses by equating the words of the wisdom teacher with an objectified or personified wisdom, of which there is no mention in the discourses themselves, to attribute the salutary effects of obeying them.”

Michael Fox and other scholars have rejected Whybray's deletion of certain verses of the text (Fox, 1997, p.614). Whybray himself appears to have changed his position in his later discussion of the composition of Proverbs 1-9 (Whybray, 1994). In his later discussion, he included verses, which were earlier described as expansions, as part of the original instructions.

The second literary form that Whybray identifies is what he termed wisdom poems. In these poems, a personified wisdom, claiming to possess divine authority makes a direct appeal to men (Whybray, 1965, p.31). These poems (1:20-33; 3:13-20; 8:1-36) differ both in form and substance from the ten discourses. Wisdom is no longer spoken of in the third person as in the discourses. In the wisdom poems, she is portrayed as a speaker (Whybray, 1994, p.35).

Fox (1997, pp.613-633) analyses the composition of Proverbs 1-9. In his structural analysis, he points out that it is composed of two literary forms that consist of ten lectures and five interludes. The ten lectures are as follows: (1) 1:8-19; (2) 2: 1-22; (3) 3:1-12; (4) 3:21-35; (5) 4:1-9; (6) 4:10-19; (7) 4:20-27; (8) 5:1-23; (9) 6:20-35; (10) 7:1-27 (Fox, 1997,p.614). These lectures are marked by three characteristics that are common to all lectures. They all have an introduction that is comprised of an address, exhortation and motivations. The second characteristic is a lesson to the audience. The

third one is a conclusion that is a summary statement generalising the principle of the lesson. This characteristic is not always traceable in all instructions. The following is an example of how a lecture which is a key text of our study in Proverbs 1:8-19 is structured:

Proverbs 1:8-19

1. Introduction:

(a) Address ... v.8.

(b) Exhortation ... v.8

(c) Motivation ... v.9

2. Lesson or counsel: verses 10-18

3. Conclusion: verse 19

Fox's structural analysis shows evidence that unlike Whybray his analysis is not influenced by his knowledge of the instruction genre from other cultures, but that he relied heavily on the information from the text itself. The five interludes that according to Fox form part of the structure of Proverbs 1-9, are the following: 1:20-33; 3:13-20; 6:1-19; 8:1-36; 9:1-18. Interludes are quite different from the lectures. The lectures present themselves as addressed by a father to a son. The wisdom interludes either address people generally or people identified in the text (Fox, 1997, p.617). They depict wisdom in female terminology. The textual analysis in this study followed the structural analysis of Fox because it heavily relies on the Bible unlike Whybray who was influenced by the wisdom literature of other cultures. Only the first lecture found in Proverbs 1:8-19 was considered in the textual analysis extensively while the rest of the nine lectures served as support information to the major text. The justification of choosing the first parental instruction in Proverbs 1:8-19 is because of, first the scope of the study and second, the instruction consists of all the features of the parental instructions in Proverbs 1-9.

## 2.2 Textual Analysis of Proverbs 1:8-19

The current section's concern is the analysis of the main text of Proverbs 1:8-19 and parallel passages of the other nine instructions as they are found in the book of Proverbs 1-9 to support the main text when extracting the emerging themes about parenting from our main text. The intention of the analysis is to understand the Israelites traditional teaching and practices on parenting with the purpose of understanding how it informs the Gusii Christian teaching and practices on parenting. The ultimate goal is to aid in comparing Gusii Christian parenting with traditional Gusii parenting aimed at addressing the challenge of increased antisocial ills among the youth in Gusii community and beyond.

Textual analysis is an attempt to determine the meaning of the historical text (Mckane, 1970, pp.8-9). There is also a history in the text itself, i.e. the situation or situations described in the text itself. Mckane (1970, p.7) says "my own investigation will show "that Proverbs 1-9 is largely made up of (a) pieces which are strictly instruction, and (b) Those in which there is a development indicating that they are international genre in nature." This means that Proverbs 1:8-19 and the rest of the instructions in Proverbs 1-9 material existed in oral form and underwent several stages of development before it was collected, compiled and edited to its written form that has been handed down to us. Textual analysis appreciates the history behind the written form of the text which is referred to as traditional-historical criticism. This is the matter which primarily we are interested. How then can the traditional historical questions be unearthed? Mckane (1970, p.9) seems to provide a basis upon which this textual analysis can be considered as follows:

Instruction did not establish itself in Israel only during the reign of Solomon. When a class of officials came into existence to serve the new structure of the states and there

was a consequent need for instruction with the same educational function as it had in Egypt. This is a very different stating-place. Instruction had existence in the Israelite long before the advanced stage had reached during the reign of Solomon. In other words, it has to be understood that the pieces in 1-9 are representative of later stages in the history of the tradition of the instruction of parents to their children at home. Even those passages which are strictly educational in tone have character of instruction for a way of life and not for a successful career.

Thus, the literary entity provides a glimpse of focusing the history behind it. Steck (1998, p.4) argues that “historical textual analysis corrects arbitrary exploitation of the text, indicates the central subject matter of the text and exposes the texts particular impulses, which the present application needs.” Thus, it can be concluded that the present understanding and application of our text is not viable apart from the historical understanding of the text.

The traditional-historical method of Biblical analysis is followed in the quest for the meaning of the text. As already noted early, the study applied the traditional methods of textual and form criticism from which traditional historical method heavily relies on their techniques or evaluation since it generally lacks its own techniques. Textual and form critical remarks are considered; since they provide a basis of understanding the historical tradition of the text.

This study intensively analysed the first instruction as found in the book of Proverbs 1:8-19. The rest of the remaining nine instructions are not intensively analysed, but are highlighted to serve as supporting materials of the key instruction on extracting some important parental aspects that are essential in the analysis of the comparison of Christian with traditional Gusii teaching and practices on parenting. The justification of selecting the first instruction as opposed to the other nine is because of, first the variety

of the content that is being passed from the parent to the child in the instruction. Secondly, because of the scope of the study of understanding the biblical teaching on parenting for the purposes of a comparative study of Christian and traditional Gusii teaching and practices on parenting.

The following steps are followed in this section. The first step is the presentation of its form structure. It is not presented on a verse basis; the form of the entire instruction is presented. Secondly, textual analysis is done together with the explanation of the textual-critical remarks where necessary. Lastly, the summary of the instruction analysis is provided.

### **2.2.1 Proverbs 1:8-19 Analysis**

The instruction commences with the imperative word “hear”; “listen”; “attentive”; in verse 8 which serves as an introductory plea for attentiveness and receptivity. The Hebrew “Hear” has additional note of obedience (CF Exodus 24.7, Proverbs 6:20). Here the parent stresses the importance of his instructions and urges the son to obey them (Whybray, 1972, p.17). The second important word that provides the traditional-historical basis of the book of Proverbs is the word “my son.” This is a customary form of address in Egyptian, Babylonian, Assyrian and Jewish wisdom books. This form of address is not a unique phenomenon in Israel but was a tradition that had roots in the Ancient Near East wisdom movement. The convention was derived from the fact that the primary responsibility for moral instruction of children lay with the father (Scott, 1965, p.38). The significance of the mother’s influence is striking in this book and is in no way inferior to that of the father. It took a united effort of the father and mother in traditional Israel to instruct the child on the expected morals in the society. The creation of a quality society is one of the ideals of the wisdom teaching and the mother plays a major part. The level of society is never higher than that of the quality of home life. The family is the most formative context for the early development of character (Jones,

1961, p.59). The inclusion of the father and mother, giving instruction to the son is a clear introduction that Proverbs 1-9 are instructions used in parental training at home and never in school. This implies that they were used at home from one generation to another for the instruction of children orally for a long period of time before they were collected, edited, and compiled in literary form during the period of postexilic to preserve the Israelites' identity and serve as a manual for parental instructions.

The key word that gives the title of our textual analysis is found in verse 8. This key word is "Discipline, or instruction." When it is a verb, it means to "discipline, instruct, correct or chasten" (Koehler et al., 1985, p.387). It has a sense of communicating knowledge in order to shape specific conduct. It is usually addressed to a child (Branson 1990, p.129). When in a noun form, it means "Chastisement, correction, learning or discipline" (Brown et.al, 1906, p.416). It denotes correction that results in Education (Harris et al, 1980, p.386). This word has been widely used in the Old Testament, thirty-six times in the book of Proverbs (Harris *et al.*, 1980, P.387). In the Pentateuch, it denotes God's corrective discipline that seeks the reformation of people (Lev. 26:18, 28; Deut. 11: 2). The word as used here refers to a God-centred way of life that parents are to instil in the hearts of their children (Harris *et al.*, 1980, P.387). It has to do with learning by exhortation and example (Merrill 19964, P.80). The word as used in verse 8, which is the introduction to the instruction refer to the entire instructions in Proverbs 1-9. This is the parental teaching that the son is encouraged not to forsake and to which he should give heed (Keil, 1989:60; Toy, 1899:14). Thus the parental teaching that the son is encouraged not to forsake and to which he should heed (Keil, 1989, p.60; Toy, 1899, p.14).

The child is not to rebel against the authority of his parents "do not forsake the teaching" (V. 8) (Mckane, 1970, p.268). The authoritative instruction of his parents is a



discipline to which he should submit with unquestioning obedience. Here the only authority which is implied by its use is parental authority.

The home is a primary educational agency, and it is there that the foundation of civilized behaviour and general excellence is laid. Parental instruction embellishes and adorns and promotes an attractiveness of manner and bearing (Mckane, 1970, p.268). Young people are expected to retain the parental instructions in their hearts. They are to take them seriously and live in obedience to what their parents say, otherwise the youth will ruin their own lives and become an element of corruption to fester in the heart of society (Arnot, 1978, p.25).

Verse 9 is closely linked to verse 8 and it provides the child with the motivation of hearing the instructions of the parents. The child will gain a “headdress.” This is a rare word in the OT history, from a root “to wind, twist” hence presumably a turban of some sort. In traditional Israel society, authority and honour were marked by special headdress (Scott 1965, p.38). This means “a wreath of favour”, or “a fair garland” (Brown *et al.*, 1906, p.531). It signifies that parental instructions are a wreath of favour to the youth who gives attention to the father and mother’s instructions (Brown *et al.*, 1906:531). The other word used as a reward is the “necklaces” which denotes a masculine adornment, probably of wrought silver or beads (Scott, 1965, p.38). The metaphor signifies the benefits of learning and thus bolsters the exhortation to pursue and retain wisdom (Fox 2000, p.83). Parental instructions are essential for the wellbeing of the young person. They decorate his life and promote the attractiveness of his character (McKane, 1970:268). The lesson has in view young children whose home training lies behind them who are now going out into the world; in their new found freedom the moral principles learned from their parents will be their safeguard.

Verse 10 provides a summary statement of all the parental instructions to the young one. The parent turns in Verse 10 from general to more specific instruction (Kathleen,

1991,p.28. What is envisaged is the tempting or enticing of a young man (“my son”) by sinners and is urged to resist their subtle persuasive devices (‘do not consent’) (Mckane, 1970, p.268). Jones (1961, p.60) describes the passage as a tradition where the traditional Israelite parents exhorted their children against a breakdown in social values and standards that leads to social ills. In such a climate of opinion, the urgency of wisdom teaching by parents should be emphasized. It is observed that there are criminals in every period of history and children must be instructed by parents to resist the temptation to join them (Mckane 1970, p.268). Perhaps it is particularly significant that the first of the instructions should recognize some of the ways in which greed and social peer pressure can lead youngsters to forget the teachings of their parents. It would not be difficult to find present-day correspondence for ancient piece of advice. We sometimes think that wanton violence is a phenomenon peculiar to our own times. But this passage indicates that people in the author’s time were also familiar with both the senseless shedding of blood (V11) and violence for personal gain (V 13) (Kantleen, 1991, p.28).

Verses 11-14 provides the parental instruction to the youth on how the sinners (gang) will entice him/her to own them. They present their folly in an attractive manner. The parent urges their son not to go along with them, for he/she can see where it will end. It will not in fact yield all sorts of valuable things (V13); it’s their own blood that will be forfeiting, their own selves who are way laid (Motyer, 1996, p.70).

In ‘Verse14’ the use of the word “lot” is almost blasphemous in view of the function of the lot (Proverbs 16:33), to determine the will of God. It stands here for the common fate and sharing that will come from the evil adventure (Murphy, 1998, p.9). Actual temptation would hardly be so blatant; the sage has deliberately created a dramatic scenario. The youth is warned to beware of the “smooth” words; the parent is

attempting here to paint evil in its true colours, and to make evident its poisonous speech (Whybray, 1972, p.19).

In verse 15, the father issues a very solemn warning to his son that he should not walk in their (criminals) way. The reason for this stern warning to the young person is given in verse 16. He should not listen to their call, because they are out to shed blood.

Various commentators like Toy (1899, pp.17-18) and Murphy (1998, p.10) concur as to the obscurity of verse 17. Toy (1899, p.17) connects verse 17 to verse 18. He sees verse 17 is fixed by its relation to verse 18. However, Murphy (1998, P.10) connects verse 17 to both verses 16 and 18. The ambiguity of the verse also rests on its meaning and reference. Two meanings are possible. The trap fails because the bird sees it and avoids it, or the bird sees the net and foolishly plunges into it. This brings us to the question; to whom is the verse addressed? There is consensus among scholars that the verse is addressed to the wicked or murderers. Murderers mentioned in verse 16 and 18, and not to the son (Murphy, 1998, p.10; Wallke, 2004, p.195). Whybray (1994, p.41) outlines the interpretation of verse 17 as follows “it is the murderers who, even though they must know according to generally received wisdom that “sinners” come to a bad end and, like the stupid bird are caught.” These words continue to instil in the heart of the young person the fear of following in the footsteps of the wicked because they will be trapped like a stupid bird that foolishly rushes to its own destruction.

But in verse 18, there is an irony. The designs of the wicked are turned against them, their own evil brings them down. Toy (1899, p.18) defines this irony as follows, “their criminal procedure begun for their profit turns out to be a plot against themselves; they over reach themselves and become the executors of their own doom.” This is also well said in 2 Peter 2:3 “In their greed these teachers will exploit you with stories they have made up. Their condemnation has long been hanging over them, and their destruction has not been sleeping.” Through these words the parent is warning his child that being

part of wicked plans, one is plotting against one's own life. Thus, he is encouraged to remain committed to instructions from his parents, because they have the promise of a good future life.

Verse 19 is nothing else but an emphasis of verse 18. The parent instructs the child that those who make large profits at the expense of a human life are doing it at their own peril. The young person is advised to love human life more than money. If human life is taken for money sake, it is, therefore the price of blood (Waltke, 2004, p.197). In fact robbery and murder bring destruction on the perpetrators and they must therefore be avoided.

When this instruction as a whole is analysed, it reveals that children as they grow up, are to make decisions on the direction that their lives are to take. However, a parent realises that his son is young, inexperienced and easily seduced. He is faced with temptations and traps in the choice he has to make. There are evil men that are working very hard to win his companionship. They want to work with him to fulfil their own sinful intentions in life. Thus the instruction teaches parents to be caring and compassionate in urging their children to avoid dangers of the gang (sinners). The quality of the relationship our children make with others will affect others' lives and themselves.

The young people are inexperienced and easily seduced. They are faced with temptations and traps in the choice they make. There are evil people that are working very hard to win their companionship they want to work with them to fulfil their own sinful intentions in life. Thus a parent has a unique responsibility for the child's development of ethical character and to foster the right moral stance in the face of inducements to sin. The parent has a duty to warn the child that if he join sinners, he is certain of his destruction. Alternatively, if the child adheres to his instructions, that will bring honour in his life. Parents are here reminded that their children are faced with

various pressures as they grow up and it is the responsibility of parents to develop a strong ethical character in their children. Children will then be able to evade sinful enticements from wicked men in life and from their peer groups in particular. Parents should make time to sit down with their children in order to teach them moral standards. The Israelite parent considered this instruction crucial for quality of child brought up and in turn the impact it had on the quality of the community.

The book of Proverbs 1-9 takes the parental instruction of children to be of significance in determining the moral fabric of the traditional Israel society. It will be worthy to explore further on what other parental aspects the book of Proverbs 1-9 considers essential for the proper functioning of the society. This will provide a basis upon which Christian and traditional Gusii community teaching and practices on parenting can be compared with the aim of developing an integrated strategy that can address the increased anti social ills in Gusii community and beyond.

### **2.3 Further Instructions in Proverbs 1-9**

As noted early, the parental instructions in Proverbs 1-9 are ten. The study intensively analysed the first instruction in the preceding section. The major concern of this section is to highlight the remaining nine instructions that will be supporting the major instruction when analysing the emerging themes of parenting from our text under consideration. This further instructions can be appreciated under the highlights given below:-

#### **2.3.1 Instruction II: Proverbs 2:1-22**

The main intent of this instruction is to provide the young person with encouragement to pay attention to parental instructions (vv.1-2). The young person is encouraged to be patient in his learning of the parental instructions, which seem wearisome at the beginning, but to work through them in order to arrive at lasting satisfaction, joy and

happiness (Fox, 2000, p.132). This instruction highlights the child's important role in the learning process (vv.3-4). Learning begins with the acquisition of the parental instructions and culminates in thought and analysis, the parent also has to walk with the child patiently, showing him the dangers that are before him. This instruction reminds us that for the parent to inculcate instructions of life in the heart of the young person, he needs time with him, good knowledge of the child and the pressures that the child is facing outside.

In this instruction also there is a close co-operation between parents, God, and the child himself in the shaping of moral character, which provides reliable guidance and protection throughout his life (Fox, 2000, p.133).

Two dangers face the young person in life: (1) Wicked men who may use the young person to achieve their goals in life (vv.12-15). For example there are many young people who are used by older people to sell drugs. (2) There are seductive women who may seduce a young person to sexual immorality (vv.16-18). If a young person bows to the pressures, he will destroy his life (v.19)). Parental instructions help the young person to overcome these pressures (vv.20-22). It is therefore, important that parents have good knowledge of these pressures and how young people can overcome them. That is why it is very crucial for parents to be trained on how to guide their young ones on how to navigate the pressures of life. To equip parents with quality parenting skills shall be a paramount contribution of the Church on shaping morality in the community.

### **2.3.2 Instruction III: Proverbs 3:1-12**

This instruction teaches that there cannot be any separation between wisdom and piety. Wisdom has to do with one's relationship with God. Piety is the apparent theme of this instruction (vv. 4-9). It teaches humility, faith in God, fulfilment of cultic duties and loving submission to divine discipline (Fox, 2000, p.154). These are important themes

in the shaping of the young person's attitude and moral character. Parents should be aware that in nurturing their children, they should not neglect their children's relationship with God. A relationship with God is foundational to all of life.

A dualistic worldview that propagates the exclusion of God in parenting is totally rejected in Proverbs 3:1-12. The goal of parenting is to bring up Godly men and women who may be doctors, farmers, pastors or engineers (Adei, 1991, p.34). Parents are to raise their children for the glory of God. They are to become God's instruments in realizing his plan for salvation of the whole world. This has to happen in all spheres of life. This reaffirms the thesis of this study that the Christian stands at a right chance of equipping parents with quality parenting skills. These skills will empower parents raise up children who fear God and committed to display good moral behaviour in the society. This provides relevant teaching for comparison of the Christian and traditional Gusii teaching and practices on parenting with an aim of developing a comprehensive strategy of equipping parents with quality parenting skills.

### **2.3.3 Instruction IV: Proverbs 3:21-35**

This instruction starts by promising favour, life and security to those who find wisdom in their life (vv.21-26). The intention of the instruction is to teach that social relationships are to be cultivated in the nurturing of the young person. A person cannot have a successful life if he has distorted relationships with other people. A young person is instructed here that he should exercise fair and generous treatment of other people (vv.27-31). Parents too are reminded of the importance of social ethics in the nurturing of their children. If children are not nurtured in building skills for social relationship, we cannot have communities in which we can experience healthy development and prosperity. Society is a web of relationships. Adei (1991, p.49) writes "the art of learning to live in society and to respect other persons as well as to establish relationships at home, at Church, at school and later in life at work constitutes an

important part of living.” This is what is lacking in our world because the home is failing to nurture children in this regard.

#### **2.3.4 Instruction V: Proverbs 4:1-9**

This instruction is unique in the sense that it is ascribed to the grandfather. This ascription strengthens the authority of the exhortation (vv.3-4). It is a clear demonstration that wisdom instruction in the book of Proverbs took place from one generation to another generation. It is a tradition that existed and developed for a long period of time before it was collected, compiled and presented in a literary form. If the present generation has a heart for the future generation, then it has to double its efforts in imparting wisdom, understanding and knowledge in its children. The survival of the coming generation depends on what the present generation does. This brings into focus the important role that a family plays in shaping and nurturing of the future generation. (Wilson 1997, p.11) says “Children should view the home as not simply the place where they eat and sleep, but where they are taught and shaped.” The family does this as a way of building a strong foundation upon which the future generation can be built (Aitken, 1986, p.54). Hence, the father is able to tell his child that what he is teaching him, he had received from his father.

#### **2.3.5 Instruction VI: Proverbs 4:10-19**

The main message of this instruction is to choose the right path and avoid the evil one (Fox, 2000, p.183). This instruction has a special virtue to impart to the young person. This virtue is the power of choice and its ultimate consequences. The young person has to be instructed to understand that the success or failure of life greatly depends on the exercise of the power of choice. Cultivating the capacity to make right choices in life is critical in determining the quality of life of the individual and the community (vv.13-15). The paths of the wicked and the evil doers are to be avoided, because these paths are addictive (vv.17-18). The wicked cannot sleep unless they have done wrong (v.16).



Once tasted, wickedness becomes one's stable food. That entire one gains, he gains through wickedness and violence (Farmer, 1991, p.39). The son is encouraged to obey the directives of his parents. His parents taught him the path of the righteous, which gets brighter and brighter as they travel along it.

This instruction cautions parents about the great danger that young people are facing. Wicked people are out to win young people. Their way appears to be attractive in the mind of a young person. Therefore parents are to work with young people knowing that it is not easy for them to follow the righteous way. Parents are to guide their children to make the choices that are righteous and profitable for the proper functioning of the society.

### **2.3.6 Instruction VII: Proverbs 4:20-27**

This instruction envisages a single path in which the young person is to walk, i.e. the path of wisdom (vv.20-23). The instruction admonishes the young person to have determination in what he wants to accomplish in life. Its major purpose is to instruct the young person to develop a goal in life and pursue it. The young person is called to singleness of mind and purpose in life. He should have ideas that he cherishes in life and which he is prepared to die for (v.25).

He has to walk straight in this way, without turning either side, as there are temptations. Parts of the human body are used here to instil in the mind of the young person that an inner sense of straightness is to permeate all his thoughts, words, and actions.

Ambiguity in moral character is discouraged. The young person is encouraged to incorporate in his life a sense of being straight forward and unequivocal. This instruction spells out that a young person has responsibility to fulfil in the process of moral character formation.

### **2.3.7 Instruction VIII: Proverbs 5:1-23**

This instruction deals with the most serious temptation that young people meet in life, i.e. sex (vv.3-8). The young person is taught in this instruction on how to behave sexually (vv.9-14). The instruction brings in a third character, which is the wife of the young person(v.15). If her husband appreciates her, she is the best protection from the seductive woman. Van Leeuwen (1997:71) says “if males heeded the parental advice to be faithful in marriage and to avoid illicit liaisons, female prostitution and adultery would obviously cease.”

The central contrast of the wisdom is between the wrong women (verses 15-19). The foreign woman is depicted here as a danger from outside. She takes away the man’s strength and resources, whereas the wife is depicted as a security from inside. We therefore, learn here that adultery can lead to the loss of health, family wealth, reputation and become the cause of bitter regret. The losses can be beyond recovery, whereas the remedy is one’s love to his wife and be gladdened by her beauty.

In this instruction, we learn a very significant tradition that openness of the parent to his son about sexual matters is essential. Sexual education should not be left to the children to learn from other sources than home. Parents should not shy to explain to their children what sex is all about. The parent should have passion for the child’s wellbeing. They should be aware of the dangers facing their children when not prepared well in sexual matters.

### **2.3.8 Instruction IX: Proverbs 6:20-35**

The central theme of this instruction is the inevitability of the adulterer’s punishment (Fox, 2000, p.237). The young person is taught here to avoid illicit sexual relations because it will reduce his life to nothing. The young person is warned to keep away

from another man's wife, because he will not be able to endure the wrath of the aggrieved husband (vv.26-35).

There is no mention here of ethical or religious motives for avoiding this sin; practical consequences are the basis of this instruction. It is important for the young person to know the practical consequences of an illicit sexual relationship. He should know that he cannot evade the punishment for adultery although it is the most secret of sins.

This should form part of the parent's education to their children in the formation of their moral character. Young persons are to be warned of the fatal consequences of taking another man's wife, and encouraged to remain faithful to their own wives. As we are taught in Proverbs 5, a parent who does not address this important issue is doing great disservice to his own children.

### **2.3.9 Instruction X: Proverbs 7:1-27**

In the last parental instruction, the young person is urged to embrace wisdom as his sister (v.4). He has to protect wisdom as apple of his eye (v.2). Wisdom is important for his survival. Wisdom will help him not to succumb to the seduction of an adulteress. Wisdom will give him courage to flee from temptation as Joseph did. He who undermines the call of wisdom will die like an animal destined for slaughter (v.5).

This instruction reminds parents that they are important pillars in the lives of their children. It is their responsibility to arm the children with the necessary weapons to fight against the enemies of their precious life. There are temptations that face every child and it is the duty of the parent to help the child to overcome those temptations.

In this instruction, a parent is very clear to his child about the sexual temptations in life. He explains to his child how they will come and how he has to avoid them (vv.6-27).

His openness about sexual matters to his child is to be emulated by all parents who care for the future of their children.

#### **2.4 Emerging Themes Extracted from the Textual Analysis of Proverbs 1:8-19**

This section deals with extracting the emerging themes from the textual analysis of Proverbs 1:8-19 on parenting. These themes are extracted for the purposes of ascertaining how the teaching of parental instructions in Proverbs 1:8-19 informs the Christian and relevant to the traditional Gusii teachings and practices on parenting. The main aim is to provide a basis upon which the comparison of Christian and traditional Gusii teaching and practices on parenting is conducted so that we develop a comprehensive intergrated strategy to address the challenge of increased antisocial ills in Gusii community and beyond.

Extraction of the emerging themes from Proverbs 1:8-19 was done with great sensitivity in order to avoid the imposition of one context upon another. Gusii community was raising children, and they were doing that effectively, long before they embraced Christianity. Listening to the Gusii view of parenting will enhance the deepening of the Biblical understanding of parenting in Gusii Christian families. A strategy on parenting rooted in the parental instructions of Proverbs 1:8-19 and in the Gusii community will be a great boost in addressing the challenge of increased antisocial behaviour.

The following themes were extracted from Proverbs 1:8-19:

1. The contents of parental instructions: This theme deals with the content of the parental instructions. What is it that parental instructions are imparting in the lives of children? Important issues that parents need to discuss with their own children as they grow are discussed here.

2. The parenting styles according to Proverbs 1:8-19. Here looked into the question of parenting styles for parenting according to Proverbs 1:8-19. Parents use different methods in rearing their children. Parenting styles are an important element of any parenting, because it determines the children's outcome and social behaviour displayed in the community.

3. The goal of parental instructions. Here the focus is on the reason behind the parental instructions in Proverbs 1:8-19. What is it that the parental instructions in Proverbs 1:8-19 want to produce in the life of a child? The parental instructions help the child to live as a responsible adult before God and in the community. Adei (1991, p.39) in his discussion on the goals of parenting ask two questions that help in understanding what is discussed under this theme. "What is the highest ideal for parenting? What should be our goal as parents in bringing up our children?"

#### **2.4.1 The Contents of the Parental Instructions in Proverbs 1:8-19**

This theme deals with what parents are to teach their children by way of nurturing them. The content of any instructional system is crucial because it determines the expected outcome upon which the life of the community is built. It is, therefore, important that we examine on a continuous basis the content of our instruction for our children. The content that we give to our children does not only determine the future of their individual lives, it also determines the future of the entire community. What is given to children in the form of a body of knowledge will shape the moral and mental aspects of their lives.

Hence it is important for us to examine here the content of parental instructions. It will then be possible for us to know what we are to teach our children in our endeavours to reduce antisocial ills in Gusii community and beyond.

From the textual analysis of parental instructions in Proverbs 1:8-19, it is revealed that the content to be taught the children contain three essential elements. The first element relates to the child's relationship with God (Prov. 1:10; 3:5-9). The second element entails the child's social relationships with other human beings (Prov. 1:11-19; 3:21-35). The last element comprises the pressures and temptations that young people face in life (Prov. 1:8-19).

#### **2.4.1.1 The Child's Relationship With God**

There is a noticeable emphasis in the parental instructions on one's relationship with God. A relationship with God is the foundation upon which one can understand oneself and one's own world. One finds this concept at the beginning of the book (1:7) and it serves as an introduction to the entire book. This refers to the primacy of the fear of Yahweh in the acquisition of wisdom. It, therefore, means that the fear of Yahweh is the one true foundation of the wisdom we must teach our children (MacArthur, 1998, p.78). We can conclude, therefore, that whatever education we give to our children is to be built on the foundation of the fear of the Lord.

However, the question that we need to look at is the meaning of the concept of the fear of the Lord. Gerhard von Rad made a valuable contribution by giving us a clear definition of this concept. Von Rad (1972, p.66) defines the fear of the Lord as obedience to the divine will, as the commitment to God. Von Rad sees a polemic intention in the repetition of the phrase in the book of Proverbs. There are various foundations upon which parenting for children can be found, but not all of them are helpful in the promotion of the wellbeing of children and of the community. There is a particular foundation upon which parenting in Israel has to be built. That foundation is the fear of Yahweh. Von Rad (1972, pp.67-68) sees the meaning of the phrase as follows:

.....there lies behind the statement an awareness of the fact that the search for knowledge can go wrong, not as a result of individual, erroneous judgements or of mistakes creeping in at different points, but because of one single mistake at the beginning. One becomes competent and expert as far as the orders in life are concerned only if one begins from knowledge about God. To this extent, Israel attributes to the fear of God, to belief in God, a highly important function in respect of human knowledge. She was, in all seriousness, of the opinion that effective knowledge about God is the only thing that puts a man into a right relationship with the objects of his perception that enables him to ask questions more pertinently, to take stock of relationships more effectively and generally to have a better awareness of circumstances.

The basic argument from this quote is that for mankind to understand and explore his world responsibly, understanding and exploration are to be founded on the fear of Yahweh. Fear of Yahweh in the OT is closely associated with Yahweh's worship, which is characterised by obedience to Yahweh's decrees and commandments (Ps. 119:63). The fear of Yahweh also entails appropriate moral conduct (Ex. 1:17, 21; Lev. 25:36, 43) (Van Pelt et al., 1990, p.530).

Parents are, therefore, reminded here to teach their children as creatures who worship, pointing them to the One who alone is worthy of their worship. Children are to be nurtured as creatures made in the image of God, and then they can find fulfilment and happiness only as they know and serve the living God.

Thus one can argue that the primary task of parents is to shepherd their children's hearts that they may have faith in the God who created them. It is upon this understanding that we can comprehend the parental instructions in Proverbs 3:5-9, in which children are enjoined to trust the Lord and not to rely on their own understanding. God is viewed as the source of their life, and without him life is meaningless. Children are also urged to show their trust to the Lord with their wealth. They are not to put their trust on their material wealth. They are given wealth as a means of worship of their true living God. Biblical parenting has to nurture children in such a way that they see God in everything they are and do. The content for Biblical parenting as we see it in the parental instruction in Proverbs 1:8-19, brings a great challenge to Gusi Christian parents.

Teaching children to fear the Lord will go a long way of building good moral values that will finally assist in reducing antisocial behaviour in Gusii community and beyond.

#### **2.4.1.2 The Child's Relationship with other Human Beings**

The child's relationship with other human beings is crucial for our analysis here because it is explicitly mentioned in the parental instructions. This determines the moral direction the society should take. What is experienced in Gusii community is largely founded on the relationship between an individual and society. Shapiro (1999, p.109) argues: "Our moral legacy will be distinguished primarily by the manner in which we have treated others." It is important, therefore, that this crucial topic has to be dealt with while children are growing up, because the quality of their lives is measured by the quality of their relationship with other human beings in the community (Shapiro, 1999, p.109).

What do parental instructions teach us about an individual's relationship to other people in the community? The topic has been thoroughly dealt with in the parental instruction in Proverbs 1:8-19 and further instructions in Proverbs 1-9 (Prov. 1:11-19; 3:21-35; 4:20-27; 6:1-5, 16-19). From Proverbs 1:11-19 we learn that the parent warns the child from the temptation of the gangs to join them in harming others for filthy gain. Proverbs 3:21-35 we learn that children are to be taught to develop willingness within them to help their neighbour and to stand up for their neighbour. They are always to be ready to offer a helping hand when a neighbour is in need. Consequently, a child has to avoid starting fights and planning evil against his or her neighbour. From these parental instructions, we can safely conclude that an individual within the community is expected to live for the wellbeing of other human beings. A child has to find happiness in the happiness of neighbours in the community.



In the following Proverbs (4:20-27; 6: 1-5; 6: 16-19) the child is enjoined to exercise diligence in fulfilling what has been promised to the neighbour. One should willingly fulfil what he promised to do for the neighbour. For good neighbourliness, a child is instructed in these Proverbs to avoid pride, lying, murder, an evil heart, and sowing strife. All these evils, which are to be avoided, have much to do with an individual's relationship with other human beings within the community. We are, therefore, to argue here that it is according to the spirit of these Proverbs that the quality of one's life in the community is not measured by his autonomous being but by what he does unto others. One has to become one's sister's keeper. Community harmony and social cohesion have to be built on the social ethics of an individual (Dunning, 1998, p[.86).

In Proverbs 6:6-11 a child is urged to observe on how the ants work hard, even though they do not have leaders. These instructions teach the child to become hard-working, diligent and productive in his own life. He has to do this not only for his life, but also for other people.

We can conclude, therefore, that according to these parental instructions one has to define one's individuality within the community. Dunning (1998, p.86) argues that this understanding of an individual is built on an understanding of how God created human beings. Being created as male and female and the command to be fruitful and multiply shows that a human being was intended to be a communal being enjoying personal fellowship with his fellow human beings (Dunning, 1998, p.86).

From parental instructions, we can deduce that the child is not expected to strive for good relationships with other community members on the basis of what he can get from the relationship. This relationship is based on the authentic concern for the other person's wellbeing. Neighbours are not to be treated as a means by which one can attain selfish goals. Shapiro (1999, p.118) argues: "It is morally wrong to treat people only as

a means to the satisfaction of our own desires because doing so denies not only their humanity, but our own as well.”

For Gusii Christian parents, instilling these instructions in the lives of their children means nothing else but the application of the golden rule. Parents are to teach their children to value kindness, mercy and compassion (MacArthur, 1998, p.102). Consequently, we will have community of people who have a high regard for human life. In fact, this is how Gusii Christian families can contribute positively in addressing antisocial ills such as crime, corruption and nepotism, which have such as devastating impact on our community. Gusii Christian parents are to view themselves as catalysts of change in their community as they teach their children to respect the human dignity of every person, for we are all created in the image of God.

We are experiencing a high level of crime and juvenile delinquency. For society to deal with these moral questions, we have to come up with concrete ways of establishing a good foundation for families. If Gusii Christian families teach children as they are expected to do, society can better deal with this problem.

How relevant is the teaching of the parental instructions on the relationship of an individual to the community to parents in the Gusii community? Can their teaching be directly applied in the Gusii context?

The parental instructions’ understanding of this relationship has much in common with the Gusii understanding of how an individual relates to the community. In traditional Gusii teaching, the individual has to conform to the social group in order to preserve the unity of human relationships (Kigongo, 2002, p.56). In explaining how an individual relates to the community, Mbiti (1969, p.108) says: “It is only in terms of other people that the individual himself is conscious of his own being, his own duties, his privileges and responsibilities towards himself and toward other people: I am because we are, and

since we are, therefore I am.” This understanding as articulated by Mbiti is contrary to an emphasis on an individual's sense of self, autonomy or being. This is the self that does not place much value on the social relationship (Kigongo, 2002, p.57). The latter understanding of the relationship is contrary to what we learn from the parental instructions. It can, therefore be concluded that the traditional Gusii understanding of this relationship can easily conform to what we learn from the parental instructions.

In conclusion, Gusii Christian parents are to teach their children the importance of being good citizens of their community. They do that by defining their individuality within their community. They are to view themselves as pillars to build the community. A community cannot be what it ought to be without the involvement of individuals. Gusii christian Parents, therefore, are to teach their children to love God and their community.

#### **2.4.1.3 Pressures and Temptations that Children Face as they Grow Up**

Children, as they grow, face many challenges that they need to overcome. From parental instructions, it is clear that parents need to be aware of what their children are going through (Prov. 1:8-19). Consequently, it should be the parents’ concern that children are well-armoured to face the challenges and pressures of life. Parents play an important role in helping their children to face the world of pressures and temptations. There are many negative and powerful forces that are thrown to the children from all angles of life, and it is from home that children are to pick up tools to deal with these external forces or to succumb to them (Adei, 1991, p.13). Parents, as agents of socialisation, play a crucial role on how children acquire a sense of right and wrong (Shaffer et al., 1981, p.83). Groome (2003, p.206) argues: “For it is the ethos of the home, the shared life as a family that is most educational... Parents are to consciously attend to the value system, worldview and self understanding of children that can only be mediated through the whole family.” This is how the role of a parent is depicted in

the parental instructions. It is the role of the parent to attend to issues related to a value system, worldviews and to the self-understanding of a child. Nobody can do this better than parents. However, Gusii community is faced with huge challenges that alienates parents from the education of their children to such an extent that they think it is the responsibility of the school and the church to raise children. President Julius Nyerere (1967, pp.2-3) articulates the cause of this attitude as follows: “The education provided by the colonial government was not designed to prepare young people for the service of their country; instead, it was motivated by a desire to inculcate the values of the colonial society and to train individuals for the service of the colonial state.” So, this is the reality we are dealing with today. Parents are still confused with regard to the role they have to play in the lives of their children.

According to parental instructions in Proverbs 1:8-19, parents are to play an important role in helping their children to face the world that is full of pressures and temptations. Parents have to give their children instruments to deal with the temptations of this world. Thus, children are enjoined to pay attention to the teachings of their parents (Prov. 1:8; 2:1). Nzimande (1987, p.42) argues: “The major family responsibility is to socialize its new members and help them to integrate with social systems adequately.” This can only take place properly if the family unit were functioning normally. The continuation of society is assured only in well-functioning families

According to parental instructions, there are two groups of people that the young person has to be helped by parents to avoid in life. These are the people who bring temptations into the young person’s life. In these instructions, the child is taught how to deal with these people. The first group is of the evil men, who delight in doing evil and rejoice in the perverseness of evil (Prov. 2:1-22). Their delight is in bringing destruction into someone’s life (Prov. 4:10-19; 1:8-19). What does this group bring to the young person? In Proverbs 1:8-19, this group encourages young people to acquire their

livelihood by stealing from other people. They do not mind murdering people in order to acquire their possessions. In Proverbs 2:12 the evil man/woman is portrayed as the one who brings crookedness and perversity into the life of the young person. The young person is encouraged to live by a lie. There is no truth in their speech (Fox, 1994, p.240). If the child succumbs to the pressures that these people bring to bear, his or her life will be miserable. The child will fail to serve as an instrument to bring social cohesion and unity in the community (Bland, 1998, p.228). Consequently, he will bring chaos and misery into the community.

The second group that needs to be avoided by a young person through the help of the parents is the group of immoral women or adulteresses. The young man is warned against the evil women in Proverbs 5:1-5, 6:20-35, and 7:1-27. In all these Scriptural texts, these women are characterised as women whose lips drip with honey, whose speech is smoother than oil (Prov. 5:3; 6:20; 7:5). This description reveals the seductive nature of the adulterous woman. It should, therefore, be clear to a young man and to his parents in particular that they are faced with a monstrous danger out there. It will not be easy for a young man to resist sexual temptations from wicked women. A young man should be well equipped and empowered morally in dealing with this temptation. This moral empowerment has to happen at home, where parents instruct young people how to deal with sexual pressures that they face in their daily experiences.

In these instructions, a young person is also introduced to the consequences and dangers of illicit sex: In Proverbs 5 the parent teaches what will happen if her child follows the steps of the adulterous woman. If the young person follows the wicked woman, the destiny is described as bitter as wormwood, and sharp as a two-edged sword (5:4). She will lead the young person to death (5:5). From Proverbs 5:8-13, it is clear that the young person will pay heavily if he follows that path of the wicked women. The young person will give his honour to strangers, and his years of productivity to the merciless

and to the foreign house (verses 910). In Proverbs 6:20-35 following the path of a wicked woman and having sex with her is described as carrying a fire in one's chest (verse 27) and as walking on burning or hot coals (verse 28). His life will be characterised by wounds, dishonour and disgrace (verse 33). He will experience jealousy and revenge of the woman's husband (verse 34). From this reading, it is clear that fornication can be fatal (McArthur, 1998, p.91). Omartian (1995, p.161) says: "Next to catastrophic injury, death, and eternal death, sexual immorality is the most dreaded for our children." The point that needs to be emphasised here is that sexual sin has devastating consequences on the life of the young person and of the community. Omartian (1995,p.161) argues that there is no way out of sexual immorality without consequences. She mentions social ills such as abortion, out of-wedlock children, infidelity, homosexuality, HIV and AIDS as consequences of sexual sin (Omartian, 1995, p.161). Sexual sin does not affect the young person's physical life, but it also invades his soul. In 1 Peter 2:11 we are urged to abstain from fleshly lusts that war against the soul. The community also suffers a great deal because of the sexual sins of the members of the community.

Parental instructions do not only reveal the seductive nature of the wicked woman and the consequences of the illicit sexual relationship, they also reveal what parents should instruct their children about a sexual relationship. In Proverbs 5:15-20 the young person is instructed to find the pleasure and joy of a sexual relationship within the walls of the marriage covenant. He is instructed to drink water from his own cistern (v. 15), to rejoice in the wife of his youth (verse 18), and to be delighted by her breasts (v. 19). Commenting on this parental instruction, McArthur (1998, p.96) chasten parents to teach their children to channel their youthful passions towards righteous ends. Adei (1991, p.109) sees one of those ends as practising sex within the context of marriage. In other words, young people are to be instructed to reserve their sexual passions for their spouses alone, and to be faithful in marriage. This is what the apostle Paul reminds us

of in 1 Thessalonians 4:3-5: “For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you abstain from sexual immorality, that each one of you know how to control his own body in holiness and honour, not in the passion of lust like the Gentiles who do not know God.” Parents should instil in the lives of their children that sex is a good thing, created by God. However, it cannot be practised anywhere as one wishes; God intended it to be part of a total relationship of love, friendship and romance (Adei, 1991, p.109). Parents are not only to teach this truth by word of mouth, they are to live this truth in their own marriage. Children are to see this truth lived as they grow in the family. Parents are to take it upon their shoulders to teach their children about sexuality and not to wait for the church or the school. From parental instructions, it is clear that it is the responsibility of parents to teach children about sexuality.

From this section, it is clear that parents have a duty towards their children. However, they have to know what they have to instil in children’s lives. Parents need to understand why they are a family and what they need to impart in the lives of children. Families are to know what their children are going through in life in order to appropriately help them.

#### **2.4.2 The Parenting Styles According to Proverbs 1:8-19**

This section deals with the parenting styles that the parental instructions reveal in the book of Proverbs 1:8-19. For parents to achieve their goals in the book of Proverbs, they use certain parenting styles. It is, therefore, important to listen to what parental instructions say about the parenting styles of parenting. Parenting styles discussed here are not imposed from the outside, they emanate from an analysis of the text itself. It is important to listen to the text carefully to find out what parental instructions teach parents about raising children. Thus we can avoid the danger of imposing our parenting styles on the text.

In analysing the text of Proverbs 1:8-19, we discover that the text has several features that are crucial in understanding the parenting styles in the learning process, illustrations, verbs in the imperative mood, the motive clauses and rhetorical questions. These features are helpful in determining the parenting styles that parents employ in teaching their children.

In Proverbs 1:8-19 a parent gives an illustration of the group of wicked men who entice the young man to join them to ambush the innocent. A parent describes clearly to the open ears of the young person the fate of these sinners. The fate of the wicked men will be the fate the young man if he joins them.

In the supporting instruction found in Proverbs 7, we find an illustration of an innocent young man who is seduced by an adulterous woman who leads him to her house to sleep with her. The young man walks innocently in the streets, while the woman lies in wait for him. The young man's fate is described as death. The reason for the illustration is to make a young man realise what is happening in the real world in order to pursue wisdom (Estes, 1997, p.115). Estes (1997, p.116) argues: "The illustrations employ the rhetorical strategy of pathos, for the teacher moves the learner to action by the intentional heightening of emotions." The strategy that a parent uses in these instructions is of being concerned about the future of a young adult, and then comes back to him with pathos if he joins those who have no future. We can, therefore, connect these parental instructions with the command given to parents in the book of Deuteronomy 6 in which parents are to teach their children God's commandments so that they may have a long life in the Promised Land. Their enjoyment of the Promised Land does not depend on what they are doing today, but on what their children will do in the future. It is important for parents to clearly articulate to their children today what will hinder them to stand in the face of all difficulties to testify to what they know (Adei, 1991, p.15). Thus, we can conclude that parents can use examples and stories of



other people in life to illustrate the truth that children need to keep in their hearts. What happens to other children in our community may be used by parents in teaching their children.

We see the next strategy that parents use in the learning process in Proverbs 3:1-12, 4:20-27, and 5:7-23. When we analyse the text of these passages, it is clear that we have commands that are followed by reasons why a child should obey. Let us look at Proverbs 4:20-22:

20. My son be attentive to my words; incline your ear to my saying.

21. Do not let them slip from your eyes; keep them within your heart.

22. For they are life to him who finds them, and a healing to all his flesh.

Here the son is commanded to be attentive and to incline his ears to his father's words and sayings. He should keep them in his heart. The reason given is that the parent's words and sayings are life and a healing to the child. McKane (1970, p.78) sees this arrangement as an indication that there is an intrinsic balance between authority and reasonableness in the parental instructions. Parental instructions are not imposed on children; children are given responsibility to act reasonably. Estes (1997, p.111) argues for this balance as follows: "Rather than demanding compliance based only upon the authority of the teacher, commands bolstered by reasons direct the learner toward right thinking. In doing this, the teacher brings the learner face to face with the issue at hand." Children are taught to think for themselves on how they have to live their lives. In his observation of this parental strategy in the parental instructions, Melchert (1992, p.150) correctly comments that this approach to teaching expects the learner to be the primary actor, not the teacher. The learner must see; the teacher can not do the seeing for the learner. This approach helps us to define the role of the parent in the learning

process. The parent's position is no longer that of an authoritarian expert, but a persuader; one who challenges the learner to think through issues (Estes, 1997, p.115). Paul Tripp (2001, p.128), in his exhortation to parents of teenagers, argues that as parents prepare their children to go out into the darkened, fallen world to live a godly life, it is mandatory that parents make the development of internalised convictions one of their primary goals. Children need a commitment of the heart in doing God's will, regardless of the consequences.

For parents to achieve the goal of developing the internalised convictions, parents need to have time to listen to their children and the world they are living in. Parents are to empower children by not enforcing their own will on them, but rather to give them something to live and die for. Children are to be given space to think through issues that are before them. Thus they will develop a capacity to critically engage the world they are living in. According to these instructions, we can therefore conclude that parents are to furnish children with reasons for the commands they are teaching them. Children are to understand the importance of following a certain direction in their lives. For Gusii Christian parents to succeed in parenting, they are to look back and learn how education took place in the traditional Gusii community. Knowledge was used as a means towards a better life for all in the community.

In Proverbs 1:8-19 it is clear that commands are followed by resultant consequences. The child is commanded to hear the discipline of the father and also not to forsake the teaching of his mother. The resultant consequences are that embracing discipline of the father and the teaching of the mother decorate the life of the child and promote the attractiveness of the child's character.

This is further reinforced in Proverbs 2:1-4 where the child is commanded to run after wisdom and understanding and to search for wisdom as if he is searching for silver or a

hidden treasure. The resultant consequence of the search is an understanding of the fear of the Lord.

In Proverbs 5:1-6 the child is commanded to attend to the father's wisdom and to incline his ears to his understanding. The father's wisdom will save him from the woman whose lips drip with honey and whose end is bitter as wormwood and sharp as a double-edged sword.

What we observe in these instructions is that a parent presents issues and explains what consequences can be expected, while the decision is left with the child (Estes, 1997, p.118). The child has to make a decision regarding his life after all facts have been presented to him. Fox (1994, p.241) says: "This approach enables the teacher to guide the learner through the logical process that will equip him to make wise judgments." It is clear here that the parenting style that parents use is geared toward building the child from within rather than from the outside. Parents are to equip their children to discern on their own what is appropriate and inappropriate, and to stand their ground facing the challenges of life. This approach helps children to own their value judgments and to defend them in the absence of their parents.

Another approach that parental instructions use to instill teaching in the life of a young person is that of coupling commands with rhetorical questions. Rhetorical questions are based on the commands. This is well-illustrated in Proverbs 6:20-35.

In this parental instruction, a young person is commanded to bind his father's commandment to his heart and to tie his mother's teaching around his neck (V20-21). Father's commandment and mother's teaching are to be highly prized as a personal treasure (McKane, 1970, P.327). It is, therefore, argued as a reason for this command that parental wisdom will protect the young person from an evil woman who will seduce him to illicit sexual intimacy (verse 24).

In verses 27-28, the following rhetorical questions can be found: Can a man take fire in his bosom and his clothes not be burned? Can a man walk upon burning charcoal, and his feet not be scorched? Through these rhetorical questions, it is put to a young person that he will not be able to avoid the natural consequences of his actions (Fox, 2000, P.233). He will definitely reap what he has sown in life. In explaining this approach, Estes (1997, P.119) correctly argues that the young person is brought to the place of personal decision. The reality is well-presented before the young person; he has, therefore, to make his own decision on the matter at hand. The young person has to choose whether to act in accord with the obvious answers to the questions or in conscious rejection.

In this approach we learn that in teaching children, parents are to present reality as it is before the face of children. The consequences of children's actions are to be well-articulated by parents. Natural consequences of the child's actions are not to be hidden from his face. He has to know them. He has therefore to come to a personal decision by himself. He should not be forced. He has to be convinced of his course of action and the consequences thereof. This approach calls parents to be open with their children in their instructions so that children may be prepared to take decisions that they understand and that will benefit them.

In conclusion, we can argue that in training children, parents are not to enforce their teaching without proper explanation and grounding to their children. Children are to understand and willingly accept teaching from their parents. Parental instructions are to be taught in such a way that they become a foundation upon which children can build their lives. Parents need time to do this training.

Parents are also to be open to their children about the natural consequences of their actions in life. It should always be clear to children what the result of their actions will be on their own lives and in the community.

### 2.4.3 The Goal of the Parental Instructions in Proverbs 1:8-19

Goals and aims are an important part of the parental instructions in Proverbs 1:8-19. The quality of parenting is measured by the results it produces in the lives of the individuals and in the life of the community. Hence, the parental instructions in Proverbs 1:8-19 are meant to achieve certain goals in the lives of young people. What are the aims of parental instructions? We will answer this question by listening to what the instructions say to us, not by imposing theories from outside the text.

From the following instructions, we can correctly construe that the aim of parental instructions is to build the moral character of the young person.

“For they are a wreath of favour upon your head, and necklaces on your neck” (Prov. 1:9).

“Esteem her, and she will exalt you; embrace her, and she will honour you” (Prov. 4:8).  
 “She will set a garland of grace on your head and present you with a crown of splendour” (Prov. 4:9).

“With all vigilance keep/guard your heart, for the issues of life (are) from it” (Prov. 4:23).

These Proverbs give us a picture of what parental instructions can do for a young person, i.e., what they bring into his or her life. Parental instructions are defined here as a wreath of favour; as a necklace. They are further described as something that will set a garland of grace on one’s head and that will present a young person with a crown of splendour. These are the rewards to those who heed parental instructions (Clifford, 1999, P.38). McKane (1970, P.268) describes the rewards of parental instructions as follows: “Parental instruction embellishes and adorns and promotes an attractiveness of manner and bearing.” From what McKane says, we can, therefore, conclude that parental instructions are essential for the wellbeing of the young person. They decorate

his or her life and promote the attractiveness of his or her character. However, for the young person to enjoy these rewards, he has to guard his heart, because it contains the words from the parents (Clifford, 1999, P.65). This clearly shows that the capacity to live with joy and vigour ultimately comes from within and not from external circumstances (Garrett, 1993, P.88). Concurring with what Garrett has said, Estes (1997, P.69) argues that the heart controls all of life; it is the key to personal success or failure. The young person's future is determined by what is in the heart. Thus, parents are to strive to find and know their children's hearts.

Consequently, we can argue that the goal of parental instructions is not simply the transmission of a body of facts into the mind of the young person, but the development of the moral character of the young person. This moral character or maturity is essential in functioning well in personal disciplines, in interpersonal relationships, in the family, at work and within the community (Estes, 1999, P.69). For the wellbeing of the family and society, we need individuals whose moral character is well-developed. Character development cannot be expected to happen at school, but rather at home. In Gusii community and beyond where moral degeneration is being experienced, parents should be empowered on how to develop the moral character of their children so that we may have good life and safety in society.

Parental instructions are to prepare a young person to live responsibly and competently in this present world. A young person grows into an adult who has to make life liveable in this world. For a young person to live as a responsible adult, he has to acquire competency skills at home. It is, therefore, another goal of parental instructions to instil competence in the young person to live responsibly in the community. Here are some of the parental instructions that indicate to us that indeed competence is one of the skills that a young person needs to have:-“Then you will understand the fear of Yahweh, and you will find the knowledge of the Lord” (Prov. 2:5).

“Then you will understand righteousness, justice and equity every good path” (Prov. 2:9).

“Go to the ant, O sluggards, observe her ways and become wise” (Prov. 6:6).

From these parental instructions it is obvious that education by parents is more than knowledge accumulation. It is a means towards a better understanding of the complex world and how to navigate in that complexity. Knowledge is useful in helping a young person to understand the created world and to cope with human existence (Estes, 1997, P.70). The search for wisdom brings one into a right relationship with Yahweh (Clifford, 1999, P.47). It is in this relationship that the young person gains a critical capacity that helps him or her to discriminate wisely and take well-considered actions (Estes, 1997, P.70). This is the skill that a young person needs in order to live a responsible life, which he can appropriately receive at home.

In Proverbs 2:9 we are told that those who have embraced wisdom by paying attention to parental instructions will understand that their relationship with their neighbours is to be adorned by righteousness and justice. In their relationship with the created order, they will know what is right and just and fair (Garrett, 1993, P.75). Parental instructions give them the power of judgement and perceptive insight. They will be able to judge between right and wrong. The judgement and perceptive insight that one needs as an adult in his relationship with the created order have to be nurtured at home by the parents. This further confirms the vital role that parents play in the life of their children. Children are to learn about righteousness and justice, which are crucial in the socio-economic and political life of every nation, from home. If we undermine the role of the family, we are at the same time undermining the life of the community. In Proverbs 6:6 we learn that parental instructions are essential for the young person’s wellbeing in the world. Parental instructions give him discipline and prudence that are indispensable for his well-being. This parental instruction enjoins the young person to observe the

lifestyle of an ant. The ant is held up as a model of self-discipline and systematic industry (McKane, 1970, P.323). Ants are models of diligence and they work without any supervision of a taskmaster (Garrett, 1993, P.96). Diligence and industriousness are skills that a young person has to learn so that he may be able to become aware of his environment and to harness his world to useful and beneficial ends (McKane, 1970, P.324). Through this skill that a young person has to learn at home, he develops alertness and foresight to anticipate difficulties ahead and make provision against them. We are again reminded that entrepreneurial skills are to be nurtured at home. Home is the centre of the life of every society. It is important, therefore, that we oppose all factors in our society that promote any dysfunctionality of the family. If families are well-prepared for their role in the lives of their children, they will be able to deal with issues of moral erosion that are ravaging the lives of our people.

Another reason for the importance of parental instructions is that they bring protection into the life of a young person. Without parental instruction, the life of a young person can be easily devastated or polluted. The following parental instructions reveal to us what they can do in the life of a young person if they were embraced:-

“For length of days and years of life and peace, they will add to you” (Prov. 3:2).

“And you shall find favour and good reputation in the eyes of God and man” (Prov.3:4).  
It “will be a healing to your flesh and refreshment to your bones” (Prov. 3:8).

“And they will be life to your soul, and grace to your neck” (Prov. 3:22).

“Then you will walk safely on your way, and your foot will not stumble” (Prov. 3:23).

“If you lie down, you will not tremble, and when you lie down your sleep will be sweet” (Prov. 3:24).

“When you walk, it will lead you, when you sleep, it will watch over you, and when you awake, it will commune with you” (Prov. 6:22).



“For the commandment is a lamp, and the teaching is a light, and reproofs of instruction are the way of life” (Prov.6:23).

“To keep you from the evil woman, from the smoothness of the tongue of the foreign woman” (Prov.6:24).

“To preserve you from the adulteress, from the stranger whose words are smooth” (Prov. 7:5).

These parental instructions remind us that a young person as he grows up is faced with challenges and pressures from within himself and from outside. For a young person to overcome these challenges and pressures he needs guidance and wisdom from his parents. A young person cannot survive in this turbulent world without guidance from parents.

The parental guidance that parents give to their children as they grow up is defined as a healing to the flesh and refreshment to the child's bone (Prov. 3:8), and as life to his soul and grace to his neck (Prov. 3:22); and again as a lamp, light and a way of life (Prov. 6:23). Words that are used in these descriptions clearly show that a child cannot thrive without parental guidance. For a young person to enjoy a healthy and happy condition of being and to have inward peace in his life, he has to embrace instructions from his parents (Toy, 1899, P.62). Thus, he will avoid bodily and outward ills in his life. Garrett (1993, P.81) correctly argues that health naturally comes from the peaceful and well-ordered life that has submitted to God. From Proverbs 3:22 we can conclude that parental instructions, if embraced, can benefit a young person with a preservation of life and the attractiveness of character. It is important, therefore, to note that parental instructions are crucial for the entire life of a young person. They are crucial for his physical and spiritual wellbeing. He cannot survive without these instructions from parents. This is how parents should understand their role in the lives of their children.

Thus, parents should not allow anybody or anything to alienate them from the lives of their children.

Parental instructions will also protect a young person from fear and anxiety. Wicked people are always in fear of punishment or revenge from those whom they have wronged or from the authorities. It is not like that to those who have embraced wisdom by listening to parental instructions. They are, therefore, described as people whose feet will not stumble (Prov. 3:23) and whose sleep will be sweet (Prov. 3:24). Wisdom accompanies the young person at all times, protects him from danger, and provides him with worthy and valuable thoughts.

Parental instructions protect a young man from wicked men who entice him to harmful things, and from the wicked woman who seduces him with her smooth words towards an illicit sexual relationship. These are harmful dangers that face the young man as he grows up. If not avoided by listening to his parents, there is a great possibility that a young man can lose his life at a tender age. Avoidance of these dangers also protects a young man from diseases that are killing young people. Consequently, Estes (1997, P.79) argues: "Wisdom, then, has a defensive goal: the protection of the learner from harmful influences that could easily lead to disaster."

## **2.5 Summary**

From the analysis of Proverbs 1:8-19, it is obvious from the texts that the Gusii Christian church today should take parental instructions seriously. They can correct and give guidance to Gusii parents today that are struggling with parenting. For the Christian to address concretely the serious concerns of increased anti-social behaviour in the Gusii community, those lessons that we have learnt from parental instructions are to be taken seriously and taught to Gusii parents. These will guide parents as the foundation upon which learning in the family is to be built. It teaches them how that

learning should take place, what parents should teach their children and the goals that they need to achieve through teaching their children.

These instructions clearly make a point that parenting is not about the accumulation of the body of facts, but about preparing a child to live in this complex world as God intended him to live. For a child to live meaningfully in the community, he has to come to a correct relationship with the creator and other human beings. A child should be guided by the parents to define himself within these relationships and not as an independent individual. This understanding should remind Gusii Christian families to raise their children within the community and for the wellbeing of the community, not for their own individualistic wellbeing as we are experiencing it in Gusii community today.

These parental instructions also remind us of the essential role that a family plays in the life of children. A family is the primary source of the child's education on moral values. Other institutions build on the foundation laid by the family. To empower Gusii families with quality parenting skills to discharge this noble task is paramount. Gusii parents are to reclaim the education of their children if we were to have a community that promotes acceptable moral values, because the child can learn about good moral values at home. Therefore, the study of the text helps us to understand how the Christian in Gusii communities applies these biblical principles in their teaching and practices on parenting. This aids the study to carry out a comparative study of Christian and traditional Gusii teaching and practices on parenting with an aim of developing a comprehensive intergrated parenting strategy to address an increased anti social ills in Gusii community and beyond. Chapter 3 that follows, deals with the Christian and traditional Gusii participants data analysis as they describe their lives and experiences in the teaching and practices of parenting in Gusii community.



## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **COMPARISON OF THE TEACHING AND PRACTICES OF CHRISTIAN AND TRADITIONAL GUSII PARENTIN**

#### **3.0 Introduction**

The concern of this chapter is to address the purpose of the study which is meant to compare the Christian and traditional Gusii teaching and practices of parenting. The aim is to understand the causes of increased antisocial behaviour in Gusii community and what strategy can be developed to address these antisocial ills in the community.

This chapter evaluated the participants data critically by trying to bring out the differences and similarities of their teaching and practices. The major areas of concern in this chapter is to compare the contents of their parental instructions, the parenting style of their parental instructions, and finally the goals of their parental instructions. This comparative study aims to find out the role of parenting on moral development in Gusii community. The ultimate goal is to develop an intergrated parenting strategy that can address the challenge of increased antisocial behaviour in Gusii community and beyond.

#### **3.1 Comparison of the Contents of Parental Instructions**

This section deals with the comparison of what parents teach and practice in Christian and traditional Gusii community in the upbringing of their children. Understanding the contribution of each parental instruction on the moral behaviour displayed by the youth in Gusii community will be of great significance in informing the study the best strategy that can address the challenge of increased antisocial ills. The content of instruction given to children is assumed in this study that it does not only determine the future of their individual lives but also the future of the entire community. Therefore the section endeavours to analyse the participants views on the comparison of Christian and

traditional Gusii content of parental instructions as contained in their respective teaching and practices.

The participants understanding of the content of parental instructions taught by their respective churches is considered essential in this study. This is because it provides a basis of understanding the skills the church equips their adherents with on how to carry out parenting competently in the upbringing of their children in comparison with the traditional Gusii teaching and practice in parenting.

Listening to stories of Christian respondents, all of them seem to have the same opinion that their churches does not have a specific content of parental instructions that is taught to their adherents. SDA RESPONDENT 3 described the content of parental instructions as follows:

My church does not have what it teaches its adherents as the content of parental instructions. I consider parenting as providing my children with everything they need. Parenting is making sure that they feed well. It requires that you ensure they are in good health. It is the responsibility of a parent to take children to church. As a parent you are supposed to train them on how to behave well. Parenting is teaching children about good morals. You are required to take them to church and ensure that they are baptized. It is the duty of a parent to train them on how to behave towards people in the community. Children are supposed to be fed well with balanced diet. It is the responsibility of parents to provide children with clothes (Audio taped interview, December 7th, 2015)

In the analysis of the Christian participants' knowledge of the content of parental instructions taught by their respective churches, all of them indicated that they use their personal experience in the upbringing of their children. They reveal that their Churches do not have a systematic programme of equipping parents with the content of parental instructions aimed at empowering them with quality parenting skills. None of them gave reference to any biblical text as a source of the content of parental instruction that informs his/her church's teaching on parenting. Whereas in our previous study we indicated that first, Proverbs 1:8-19 informs the Christian teaching and practices on parenting. Second that the Christian teaching and practices are mostly based on the

Biblical texts. The participants' analysed data on the content of parental instructions taught by their churches implies that their churches don't have a specific Biblical teaching about the content of parental instruction. If parents are exposed to a specific teaching about parenting, since both the SDA and Roman Catholic church believe that the Bible is the word of God, it could have naturally come out as quotation from the participants analysed data. We can confidently conclude that there is an urgent need for the Gusii Christian to review its programmes and include this primary and crucial aspect of teaching parents the content of parental instructions. They have a wonderful resource at their disposal, the Biblical instructions found in the book of Proverbs that can inform their teaching and practices. This will contribute immensely in addressing the challenge of increased antisocial behaviour in Gusii community and beyond. In comparing the Christian and traditional Gusii teaching and practice on parenting from the Christian respondents perspective, ROMAN CATHOLIC RESPONDENT 1, has the following to say :-

Traditionally the intensive programme of instructing young people commenced at the rite of passage of initiation. The content of instruction provided to the initiates included the traditional Gusii taboos, norms, practices, ceremonies and customs. The medium through which these contents of parental instruction were passed from one generation to the other was through riddles, stories, parables, wise sayings and songs. During the period of initiation, the initiates were separated. The female initiates were put under the care and guidance of the mother and grandmother. The male initiates were put under the care and guidance of the father and grandfather. The initiates stayed in seclusion for a period not less than one month. Here the initiates were taken through life skills and morals required of a responsible parent. The initiates were mature boys and girls who were being prepared for marriage and parenting. Equipping young parents with quality parenting skills was communal. While in the modern Christian we don't have a structured programme of instructing parents on the contents of parenting. Parents use their personal experience in the upbringing of children. There is need for the Christian to develop a structured programme of teaching parents on how they should bring up their children (Audio taped interview, December 4<sup>th</sup>, 2015).

According to her, traditional Gusii family as compared to modern Christian family, spent most of the time together since there were no schools or churches. The education provided in the family was informal where the elderly served as instructors and children

were the students. The major content of parental instruction the children received was to empower them on how to function morally in the society. Children were considered a special investment where quality time was spent on training them the life skills necessary for a cohesive society. Parents and caregivers had quality time with children for guidance and instruction. While in the modern Christian family, children spend most of their time in school. Most parents are out for work. Parents have limited time of instructing their children on the life skills. The Church has no systematic programme for equipping parents with skills necessary for parenting. Neither do they have what can be referred to as the SDA nor Roman Catholic church content of parental instruction.

Unlike the Christian teaching and practice on parenting, the traditional Gusii community had a systematic programme of instructing young people on how to be responsible young parents. She describes the traditional Gusii community programme of empowering parents with quality parenting skills as a life cycle process. While she describes the Christian way of parenting as lacking a systematic programme of equipping parents with the contents of parental instruction. ROMAN CATHOLIC RESPONDENT 3 introduces another aspect of comparison about the content of parental instructions of the Christian and traditional Gusii teaching and practices on parenting as follows:-

I stayed in my grandmother's house. She instructed us on what we are supposed to do and what we are not supposed to do. The content of instruction was heavily loaded. She taught us that premarital sex was bad. She instructed us against engaging in pre-marital sex with our sisters. She called incest as "*Chimuma*." Also killing somebody was '*Chimuma*' according to Gusii community. "*Chimuma*" is a strong Gusii word that described what was prohibited and in the event you committed it you were declared an outcast and under a curse. As we grew up, we were taken through initiation. Initiation was a rite of passage marking a transition from childhood to manhood or womanhood. During initiation, the boys were separated from girls. The elderly men, fathers and grandfathers instructed the male initiates on the moral behaviour required of man and father. During initiation the boys were being taught about having respect, to be brave, hardworking and behave as a man and father. The ceremonies of initiation had a purpose of instruction. Some of these ceremonies included keeping the fire burning for the four weeks the initiates were in



seclusion. The initiates were told that if the fire goes off, they will not bear children. The content of instruction was to train the initiates about moral values such as patience, hard work, caring and perseverance. There was grass that was planted outside the house of the initiates. The initiates watered it to ensure that it does not dry up. It was meant to train the young man about patience. There was also a ceremony that was performed when the initiates were ready to go out of seclusion. This is where a certain type of instrument was played from a hidden place. The instrument made a strange sound like that of a hyena. The initiates were instructed to cover themselves fully. When the instrument was played, the initiates were deceived that the a hyena is attacking them. This was meant to teach the initiates that as man and father, you should be brave. The girl initiates were guided by the grandmothers and mother. This was thorough instruction on the requirements of a good mother, wife and mature woman in the society. While my church has never taught me what I can refer to as the Catholic content of parental instruction. The church should come up with a systematic programme to ensure that children are nurtured in a way that they can be fit socially, so that they can be acceptable and live as civilized people in the society. It requires continued guidance and counselling of children. (Audio taped interview, December 8th, 2015).

ROMAN CATHOLIC RESPONDENT 3 provides a detailed description what the initiates were instructed on while in seclusion. All that served one purpose of developing good morals in the initiate. The traditional Gusii community thorough training of parents on content of instruction might have contributed greatly to good moral behaviour in Gusii community. The Christians need to come up with the contents of parental instructions that parents should be taken through with the purpose of empowering them to carry out the most important task in life of parenting competently.

The contents of parental instructions as taught by traditional Gusii community is considered intergral in this study because it serves as a basis upon which a comparative study of Christian and traditional Gusii teaching and practices on parenting was conducted from the traditional Gusii respondents perspective. TRADITIONAL GUSII RESPONDENT 1 described his understanding of the contents of traditional Gusii parental instructions as follows:

The traditionl Gusii contents of instruction comprised of the taboos, customs, norms and practices of the Gusii community. These norms and practices aimed at bringing up a child who participates in the development of the community. Parenting also encompassed providing your children with food, shelter and clothing. By our time, school was not mandatory but as an assistant chief, I had

been exposed to the benefits of education. I took all my twenty one children to school. Parenting also required that they go to the grandparents to be instructed on the taboos and customs that were considered to be “*Chinsoni*.” *Chinsoni* is a Kisii word which meant information that cannot be shared by the father or mother to the child. This information was solely shared by the grandparents. In our days, the child stayed in the grandparents’ house. The grown-up boys stayed at “*Gesarate*” with the elders. When ready for marriage, he built his own house in preparation for marriage (Audio taped interview, December 9<sup>th</sup>, 2015).

According to him, parenting has two major contents. These contents include instructing children on the norms, taboos, customs and practices of traditional Gusii community and secondly providing them with the physical needs. The major reasons for passing on the taboos, customs, norms and practices of the Gusii community was to empower the child to participate in the community development. Community development does not necessarily mean material prosperity but it includes also social growth. Social behaviour therefore had a significant position in Gusii teaching and practices. He seems to indicate that the single most subject that Gusii community emphasised was moral development. It is like the Gusii community believed that any development and success in life depended on good moral behaviour. TRADITIONAL GUSII RESPONDENT 3’s understanding of the contents of traditional Gusii teaching and practices of parenting introduces another important dimension :-

It was the duty of the parent to ensure that the child has understood how to relate with relatives and community members with a lot of respect. The child should be instructed on all the requirements of the community. The nature of children brought up determines the respect you will be accorded in the community. In our days, if your children participated in unacceptable community behaviour, your family was isolated from participating in the special social events of the community. To avoid isolation, the parents were highly committed on ensuring that their children are instructed on good moral behaviour (Audio taped interview, December 11<sup>th</sup>).

According to her, she understands that as a parent you must dedicate your time in instructing your children on good moral behaviour. Good moral behaviour was accompanied with great respect to the elders, relatives and community members. She also understands that parenting is to provide children with basic needs. TRADITIONAL

GUSII RESPONDENT 3 introduces another aspect of parenting. This aspect is the fact that the nature of children brought up had a significance on ones standing in the community. The aspect of reward seems to have had a special position in traditional Gusii parenting. This might have contributed as a motivation for the community to commit their lives on ensuring that children were taught and encouraged to embrace good moral behaviour in the society.

The following information is the comparison of the content of parental instructions of the Christian and traditional Gusii teaching and practices of parenting from the traditional Gusii participants' perspective. TRADITIONAL GUSII RESPONDENT 2 was baptized to the SDA faith in 1998. He compared the contents of Christian and traditional Gusii parental instructions as follows:-

My church has no programme with clearly defined content on what they teach parents on parenting skills. Christian parents have granted children a lot of freedom. Parents gave children a lot of respect without training them about respect. They insist on loving children without taking control over them. When they go to school and acquire formal education, parents assume that they have acquired life skills. The children are left alone and make choices that are anti-social. Alcohol and substance abuse started to be tolerated. Children interact freely without guidance from elders. Girls and boys are allowed to make choices of marriage partners without guidance. Children are left to attend social gatherings without supervision by elders. The Churches does not provide a framework of protecting children from anti-social ills. The young couples are not trained by the church on parenting skills. While traditional Gusii contents of instruction was very clear. It comprised of the taboos, customs, norms and practices of the Gusii community. These norms and practices aimed at bringing up a child who participates in the development of the community. Parenting also required that children go to the grandparents to be instructed on the taboos and customs that were considered to be "**Chinsoni**." **Chinsoni** is a Kisii word which meant information that cannot be shared by the father or mother to the child. This information was solely shared by the grandparents. In our days, the child stayed in the grandparents' house. The grown-up boys stayed at "**Gesarate**" with the elders. When ready for marriage, he built his own house in preparation for marriage (Audio taped interview, December 9<sup>th</sup>, 2015).

According to him, traditional Gusii parenting had two major contents. These contents include instructing children on the norms, taboos, customs and practices of traditional Gusii community and secondly instructing parents on how to provide children with the

physical needs. The major reasons for passing on the taboos, customs, norms and practices of the Gusii community was to empower the child to participate in the community development. Community development does not necessarily mean material prosperity but it includes also social growth. Social behaviour therefore had a significant position in Gusii teaching and practices. The Christian should come up with a systematic programme of equipping parents with parental skills. He seems to indicate that the best way children can acquire moral development is through empowering parents with quality parenting skills.

### **3.2 Comparison of the Parenting Styles among the Christian and Traditional Gusii Teaching and Practices**

This section deals with a comparison of the strategies that parents use in the Christian and traditional Gusii teaching and practice of bringing up their children. This was necessary for the study because it provided a basis upon which behaviours and strategies that can be used to control and socialise children that are able to display good morals in Gusii community and beyond was developed.

According to SDA RESPONDENT 2 the teaching and practice of parenting style in her church is minimal. Her church does not have a structured systematic programme designed to train parents on the Christian parenting style. In describing the teaching and practices of parenting in her Church, SDA RESPONDENT 2 says;

We don't have a systematic programme designed to equip parents with the parenting styles. We normally have family life programmes organized once in a year during the camp meetings. It is at this occasion that something about parenting may be mentioned. Usually, facilitator/coordinators of the programme are not professionals, but lay people who have gone through the experience of parenting. During this occasional family life programme, they encourage parents to carry out guidance and counselling to their children. Unfortunately, there are no professional counselling skills that are given to the parent (Audio taped interview, December 4<sup>th</sup>, 2015).

According to her, there is no structured systematic programme that parents are taken through as the Seventh-Day Adventist church parenting style. Occasionally during the camp meetings which usually come once in a year is when something about parenting is casually handled. Mostly, the guests who facilitate during the camp meetings are not professionals on the area of parenting. They rely on their personal experience of parenting.

According to her, SDA church does not have a specific teaching about parenting style that parents are exposed to as a unique SDA teaching and practice on parenting. She implies that the SDA church does not have a well designed programme that parents should be taught on how to parent well. There is no parenting style that can be specifically identified as the Christian teaching and practice on parenting. This is challenging since there is no basis for measuring whether the parents are meeting the expectations of bringing up morally acceptable children in the community.

ROMAN CATHOLIC RESPONDENT 1's understanding of parenting style in his Church sheds light on the Roman Catholic church's teaching and practice on parenting as follows:-

In my church, there is no programme that is designed specifically to instruct parents on parenting style. We do not have what we can call that this is the teaching and practice of parenting in my church. It is only the teachers of children who are taken through training on how to teach children in the church. It is the children teachers that guide and instruct children during the Sunday PMC programme. PMC is the programme where children below 14 years are put aside for their instruction in church on Sunday. There is no programme in my church of training parents on parenting style. The training is offered occasionally during preaching, where the priest can talk on some areas about parenting (Audio taped interview, December, 6th, 2015).

According to him, his church does not have a specific parenting style that members are exposed to. In his church, parenting is occasionally handled by the priest during the time of preaching. He implies that even this occasional mention on parenting by the priest is not a designed curriculum. Which simply means that there is no specific

parenting style taught by the Roman Catholic church. ROMAN CATHOLIC RESPONDENT 1, says that his church has a structured programme that instructs children on spiritual growth by children teachers. However, his church does not have a program of equipping parents with parenting styles apart from a casual reference of parenting by the priest during his preaching.

This may describe the reason why there is a paradox in the Gusii community by having the majority being Christian adherents and yet antisocial ills being on the increase. The church seems to neglect the core function of instructing parents on the parenting styles which is a key determinant of addressing moral development. To address the challenge of moral erosion, the church needs to review its programmes and give empowering parents with quality parenting skills a priority. This will equip their adherents with the necessary competence of parenting well and hence addressing antisocial behaviour in Gusii community.

The above analysed data on the parenting styles as taught by the Christians provide a basis upon which we can compare the Christian and traditional Gusii parenting styles as presented from the Christian participants' perspective. SDA RESPONDENT 1's comparison of the Christian and traditional Gusii parenting styles is as follows:-

My church doesn't have a structured systematic programme designed to train parents on the Christian parenting styles. We normally have family life programmes organized once in a year during the camp meetings. It is at this occasion that something about parenting may be mentioned. Usually the facilitator/coordinators of the programme are not professionals, but lay people who have gone through the experience of parenting. During this occasional family life programme, they encourage parents to carry out guidance and counselling to their children. While traditionally after the initiates came out of seclusion, the male initiates went to "*Gesarate*." *Gesarate* is a Gusii terminology which refers to a place where the adult men used to stay with their livestock. The initiates were taught about the norms, customs and practices of the Gusii community. Here they went through a thorough training on how to provide for the family and bring up responsible children. The female initiates remained with the mothers at the homestead and they took them through a thorough training about taking care of the home, children and husband (Audio taped interview, December 4<sup>th</sup>, 2015).

This nature of traditional teaching and practice where the male initiates went to *Gesarate* and the female initiates remained at the homestead for instruction and practical application of what they learnt can provide a basis of understanding traditional parenting style. She says that “Traditional instruction of the initiates involved theory and practice. This way of instruction gives an individual the opportunity to develop competence and ability to face life challenges” (Audio taped interview, December 4<sup>th</sup>, 2015). The parenting style that guides a child to develop the ability and competence of facing life challenges is authoritative. Her description of traditional parenting therefore can imply that it was majorly authoritative. It seems that this style of parenting was highly developed and embraced in traditional Gusii community.

In comparison with the Christian parenting style in Gusii, she says “there is no structured systematic programme that parents are taken through as a Seventh-Day Adventist church parenting style. Occasionally during the camp meetings which usually come once in a year is when something about parenting is casually handled” (Audio taped interview, December 4<sup>th</sup>, 2015). The argument simply means that her church does not teach its members the parenting style systematically, consistently, extensively and comprehensively.

Traditional Gusii teaching and practice on parenting styles from the Christian respondents perspective seems to be systematic. It was based on empowering the potential parents to develop the capacity to bring up young children with good moral values. That means that traditional Gusii community spent much time to assist potential parents to develop the ability of bringing up morally upright children. This description on how traditional Gusii community ensured that their teaching and practice was implemented clearly reveals that it was systematically structured. Teaching potential parents on parenting skills was actually the most important aspect of traditional Gusii

community. This can provide the reason why antisocial behaviour was contained in traditional Gusii community. It further reveals that Christian teaching and practice on parenting style does not have a consistent structure apart from casual instruction. This casual instruction is done by non-professionals. It is usually conducted once in a year during the camp meetings which run for one week. Which may explain why anti social behaviour in Gusii community is on the increase. It is essential that we work on a strategy that intergrates the positive traditional and Christian parenting styles aimed at addressing the challenge of increased antisocial ills in Gusii community and beyond.

SDA RESPONDENT 3 comparison of Christian and traditional teaching and practice on parenting style is in the following words:

The SDA Church does not have a programme of training parents on parenting styles while traditionally the Gusii community had a systematically structured programme of equipping young parents with parental skills. In the SDA church, The programme that exists and fully developed is the children and youth ministries departments. These departments instructs children on their spiritual development. The children department has Sabbath school classes on every Sabbath for different age groups. Every class has qualified teachers who take the kids through instructions specifically designed and appropriate to the age group. These instructions are meant to mould the child in their spiritual growth. The youth department also has Sabbath school classes on every Sabbath. In these classes, they are also classified into groups depending on their age. Programmes are designed that are appropriate to the age group. In addition to Sabbath school classes, the youth have other club meetings that train them about life skills and spiritual development. The challenge of these programmes is that they take place once in a week and within a few minutes. The church does not have a systematic programme of instructing parents with quality parenting skills. This could have helped parents to acquire skills that will enable them to continue with instruction of children throughout the week before they come back to church the next Sabbath. Parents are occasionally instructed on parenting skills during the camp meetings. These camp meetings come once in a year. Even during these camp meetings, family life seminar handled is not designed to solely deal with parenting. It is during this time that parenting is mentioned. There is a serious gap in the SDA church on equipping parents with quality parenting skills. But in traditional Gusii community instruction of parenting style commenced at initiation. The male initiates went to Gesarate and the female initiates remained at the homestead. The parents, grand parents, and village elders took the initiative to instruct potential parents on the theory and practice of parenting. This process of instruction was done communally in a consistent, extensive, comprehensive and systematic way. All members of the community participated in the moral development of children (Audio taped interview, December, 5th 2015).



According to her, having been brought up in the SDA background, she was never taught in Church on how to do parenting. When she was married, they gave birth to children and started bringing them up using their personal experience (Audio taped interview, December, 5th 2015). She implies that the church does not have a well designed programme that parents should be taught on how to parent well. There is no parenting style that can be specifically indentified as the SDA teaching and practice on parenting. This is challenging since there is no basis for measuring weather the parents are meeting the expectations of bringing up morally acceptable children in the community.

While traditionally parents were exposed to the theory and practice of parenting well. The strategy that was used in traditional Gusii community is participatory. The female initiates while at the homestead participated in carrying out the roles of the mother at home with the mother, grandmother and the elderly women. The male iniates at *Gesarate* participated in carrying out the roles of the father with the father, grandfather and the village elders (Audio taped interview, December, 5th 2015). This strategy where the learner is guided to understand and apply what he or she learns describes the parenting style we discussed in chapter one known as authoritative parenting style. Therefore in the analysis of SDA respondent 3 comparison of Christian and traditional teaching and practices on parenting style, we can conclude that the Christian parenting style is not clearly defined while traditional Gusii parenting style was authoritative.

The conclusion from this analysis is that the church should design a systematic programme of equipping young parents with parenting styles. Traditional Gusii community was able to control immoral behaviour because of continuous instruction provided for young parents on how to parent well. With the breakdown of traditional Gusii family structure, the church should take up the responsibility of instructing young parents on parenting. This is due to the fact that the church has the capacity of reaching many people as a social institution.

ROMAN CATHOLIC RESPONDENT 2 comparison of Christian and traditional Gusii teaching and practices on parenting styles introduces an important aspect as follows:-

Traditionally boys were taught by grandfathers on how to provide for the family. They were instructed on how to bring up children with good moral behaviour. The girls were taught by the grandmothers. The grandmother acted as a teacher to the girls who were mature for marriage. The girl stayed with the grandmother. She could teach them on what to do as a good mother. She was to teach them on good moral behaviour. They were given proper training on how to behave after marriage, treat the husband and be good parents. The boys stayed with the elders, fathers and grandfathers at *Gesarate* who took them through the theory and practice of the requirements of a father and husband. These instructions centered on the norms, ceremonies, practices and taboos of the traditional Gusii community. The medium through which these teachings were passed down from one generation to another was through riddles, parables, wise sayings, songs, folk stories and proverbs. While my church does not have a programme designed specifically to equip parents with parenting style. In the Roman Catholic church, members are grouped according to the gender roles such as fathers and mothers. Also we have children and youth groups. It is at these groups that occasionally instructions are conducted on how to be responsible in the society. In these groups we cover a wide range of teachings including some parenting skills. We don't have a structured programme that takes the parents through a systematic teaching on the parenting skills (Audio taped interview, December 7th, 2015).

In the analysis of ROMAN CATHOLIC RESPONDENT 2 data, She introduces an important aspect in traditional Gusii parenting. This aspect she introduces is the medium through which the instruction were passed from one generation to another. These medium of instruction were the riddles, parables, wise sayings, songs, folk stories and proverbs. They served as a vehicle through which knowledge was passed. The medium of instruction provided the opportunity for potential parents to exercise tact and wisdom to get deep meaning of them. It means that potential parents were given an opportunity to see, do and think for themselves. The instructors acted as guides for the potential parents.

The church seems to neglect the core function of instructing parents on parenting style which is a key determinant of addressing moral development. To address the challenge of moral erosion, the church needs to review its programmes and give empowering parents with parenting style a priority. This will equip their adherents with the

necessary competence of parenting well and hence addressing antisocial behaviour in Gusii community. Traditional Gusii teaching and practice that were good should be incorporated with the Christian teaching and practice about parenting for better child outcomes.

The comparison of Christian and traditional Gusii teaching and practices of parenting styles in the traditional Gusii participants' perspective follows. But the comparison, it is necessary we interrogate the traditional Gusii respondents on their parenting styles.

TRADITIONAL GUSII RESPONDENT 1 has a rich experience on the traditional Gusii teaching and practices on parenting styles. With such many children, he created time to talk and share with his children what was expected of them. He has the following to say:

My knowledge of parenting style was acquired from the training I received from my father and grandparents. The same parenting style that I received from my father and grandparents, I applied it in the upbringing of my children. The requirement of instruction depended on the age of the child. Those that were very young were under the instruction of the mother and grandparents. They were instructed on how to behave before the elders. As the father, you start instructing them about relatives, clan relations and how to relate to them. The father and mother instructed the child on the gender roles. The emphasis of instruction was centered on hard work, respect and discipline. Children were instructed depending on the age, the roles expected of them. For girls, these included but not limited to the upkeep of the house, farming, going to the market, taking care of the young siblings and cooking. The boys were instructed on how to take care of the livestock, farming, providing protection to the community against enemies and wild animals, hunting, building and fencing. This training was elaborate. At the age of initiation, the children were separated. The female initiates stayed at the grand parents' house and the male initiates stayed in a special house constructed for them. In this house of the male initiates, it was only elderly men and grandparents that were allowed to interact with them. The initiates remained in seclusion for one month. It is during this time that the initiates received intensive training on the customs, taboos, practices, norms and ceremonies of traditional Gusii community. Initiation was a rite of passage from childhood to parenthood. Initiates were boys and girls mature for marriage. The instruction granted to them during initiation was to equip them with quality parenting skills. After the initiates came out of seclusion, they were considered people of great respect. The close relatives were requested to search for the young man a good wife. Girls stayed in the grandmothers' house and the boys went to "*Gesarate*." At the appropriate period of marriage, the boy built the house and moved from "*Gesarate*" to go and get married. Traditional Gusii community had an elaborate wedding ceremony that prepared the bride and bridegroom for parenthood. Parenting was a life cycle

process that traditional Gusii community took very serious. The whole community participated in parenting. The child was considered a communal person (Audio taped interview, December 9<sup>th</sup>, 2015).

The above detailed description of parenting indicates that it was a life cycle process. It commenced at childbirth and continued throughout the life time. Since there were no formal schools, the home served as the informal school. The major area of instruction was acquisition of the life skills. Parents and elders had quality time of instructing the young ones on all areas of life skills. The whole community was actively involved in the well being of the communal child. Parents took quality time in explaining and encouraging the child on the moral requirements of the community. Traditional Gusii teaching and practices on parenting was comprehensive and all inclusive. The whole community participated in this noble and important task of bringing up an all round human being able to function properly in the community. This served as a great boost of controlling antisocial behaviour in the community.

The Gusii norms, customs, taboos and practices had a deeper meaning that were meant to train young people on good moral behaviour. These teaching and practices ensured that the members of the community had good moral behaviour. Those who violated the community norms, taboos, customs and practices received a severe punishment. These traditions protected the community against the breakdown of moral behaviour. The traditions prohibited young people from engaging in antisocial acts. Generally, parenting was regarded as a communal responsibility.

In traditional Gusii community, there were medium through which children were instructed which includes the riddles, Proverbs, stories, songs, and parables. This has a similarity on how traditional Israel instructed their children. In our previous study on the book of Proverbs 1:8-19, we discovered that traditional Israel employed same forms of speech in the instruction of children as the traditional Gusii community did. This formed a major part of instruction of children. The formation of character requires

a lot of skill and tact to be achieved successfully. It is essential that modern Gusii Christian society learn from traditional Israel and traditional Gusii way of instruction of children and adjust accordingly if antisocial behaviour has to be addressed.

Parenting was a core responsibility of the parents, grandparents, relatives and the whole community. The behaviour exhibited by children in the community was a major interest of everybody in the clan. They understood that in the event children misbehaved, it had a negative effect on the family, clan and the whole community.

This elaborate journey of parenting and instruction on parenting skills as presented by traditional parenting participants might be the reason why anti social behaviour was controlled in traditional Gusii community. The parents and elders took the young people through the theory and practice of parenting. The children were taught what was expected of them and guided to doing it. The issue of absentee parents in the life of the child was not existing. That can provide a basis to argue that the traditional Gusii parenting style was not authoritarian nor neglecting or permissive. Since traditional Gusii parents tend to be more open in instructing the young people on the theory of parenting and available to help the child to put what he/she is instructed on into practice, then we can confidently conclude as Maccoby and Martin(1983) that this was authoritative parenting.

Traditional Gusii respondents describes traditional teaching and practices on parenting as being communal. The parents, grandparents, relatives and people of the clan ensured that the children of the community did the right thing. If any community member found the child doing something wrong he/she should correct the behaviour instantly. The child was taught to accept correction from the elders of the village. The instructions on the moral behaviour expected of a child to grow up as a responsible citizen was emphasized by whoever a child came into contact. Those children who were born in poor homes were provided for by the relatives who were able. Orphans were taken care

of by their relatives. The brothers or sisters' children were considered as your own children.

It was a disgrace to the community in traditional Gusii community to bring up children who displayed bad moral behaviour. The family roots were considered in every choice that was made. If somebody wanted a partner for marriage, the relatives and community members inquired about the behaviour of a particular family or community. There is need for modern Gusii Christian society to study on how they can integrate the positive aspects of traditional Gusii teaching and practices of parenting style.

TRADITIONAL GUSII RESPONDENT 4 comparison of Christian and traditional Gusii teaching and practices on parenting styles is as follows:-

In traditional Gusii community, the requirement of instruction depended on the age of the child. Those that were very young were under the instruction of the mother and father and thereafter the grandparents and village elders were involved when they had matured. They were instructed on how to behave before the elders. The father and mother instructed the child on the gender roles. The emphasis of instruction was centered on hard work, respect and discipline. Children were instructed depending on the age group, the roles expected of them. For girls, these included but not limited to the upkeep of the house, farming, going to the market, taking care of the young siblings and cooking. The boys were instructed on how to take care of the livestock, farming, providing protection to the Community against enemies and wild animals, hunting, building and fencing. This training was elaborate. At the age of initiation, the children were separated. The female initiates stayed at the grand parents' house and the male initiates stayed in a special house constructed for them. In this house of the male initiates, it was only elderly men and grandparents that were allowed to interact with them. The initiates remained in seclusion for one month. It is during this time that the initiates received intensive training on the customs, taboos, practices, norms and ceremonies of the traditional Gusii community. Initiation was a rite of passage from childhood to parenthood. Initiates were boys and girls mature for marriage. The instruction granted to them during initiation was to equip them with parenting styles. After the initiates came out of seclusion, they were considered people of great respect. The close relatives were requested to search for the young man a good wife. Girls stayed in the grandmothers' house and the boys went to "*Gesarate*." At the appropriate period of marriage, the boy built the house and moved from "*Gesarate*" to go and get married. Parenting was a life cycle process that traditional Gusii community took very serious. The whole community participated in parenting. The child was considered a communal person. While my church has no clearly defined parenting style that members are trained on how to bring up their children. Christian parents have granted children a lot of freedom. Parents gave children a lot of respect without training them about respect. Children interact freely

without guidance from elders. Children are left to attend social gatherings without supervision of elders. The young couples are not adequately trained by the Church on parenting styles (Audio taped interview, December 9<sup>th</sup>, 2015).

TRADITIONAL GUSII RESPONDENT 4 description of Christian parenting style has the characteristics of permissive parenting style. Based on Maccoby and Martin's study conducted on 1983, he describes permissive parenting style as being low in demandingness but high in responsiveness. This fits well with the above description that TRADITIONAL GUSII RESPONDENT 4 presents. Since all Christian participants' said that the church's teaching on the Christian teaching and practice on parenting is non-existent or minimal, Then we may agree that TRADITIONAL GUSII RESPONDENT 4's presentation provides a basis upon which we can understand the parenting style practised by the Christians in the upbringing of children.

TRADITIONAL GUSII RESPONDENT 4 seems to provide the reason why there is a breakdown of morality in Gusii community. He describes the breakdown of morality in Gusii community to have been caused by the freedom granted to children. Parents trusted children because of education without proper parenting instruction on life skills. It has led to increased anti-social behaviour. He emphasizes that parents should be empowered with quality parenting skills. They require parenting skills that will enable them instruct their children on life skills. It is the responsibility of parents to educate children on good morals. Children should understand that as much as they have been educated, they are inexperienced on the issues of life. Parents should take time to bring up responsible children.

The difference between the Christian and traditional Gusii teaching of parenting is on freedom. He says that Christianity grants children a lot of freedom which traditional Gusii community never granted them. He observes that traditionally children were not granted freedom to drink alcohol, have unsupervised socialization of boys and girls, and attending social meetings in the absence of grown-ups. Traditionally, parenting was

communal but in the modern days, parenting is individualistic. The child can misbehave in the presence of the elders. In modern time, orphans are left to suffer and yet there are relatives and community members who are able to take care of them as their own children. Traditionally, the child belonged to the community. If parents were dead, children were brought up by relatives and community members (Audio taped interview, December 9<sup>th</sup>, 2015).

This can lead to a conclusion that there is need for parents to be equipped with parenting skills if the challenge of anti-social ills has to be addressed. The rate at which the Gusii community is declining on morality is high. Concerted efforts should be made by the church to address the challenge. This is purely centred on instructing parents on how to bring up children with good morals.

The elaborate journey of traditional Gusii parenting style as opposed to modern Christian parenting style might be the reason why anti social behaviour was controlled in traditional Gusii community. The parents and elders took the young people through the theory and practice of parenting. Children were taught what was expected of them and guided to doing it. That can provide a basis to argue that traditional Gusii parenting style was authoritative parenting. Since the Christian does not have a programme of instructing parents on the parenting style, it is difficult to describe the Christian parenting style.

There is a marked difference between Christian and traditional teaching and practices on parenting. Traditionally, much time was spent on ensuring that children are taught on good moral behaviour while in the modern society, much time is spent on instructing children on academics. The aspect of reward and collection based on moral behaviour has died off and replaced by reward on academic achievement.



### **3.3 Comparison of the Goals of Parental Instructions of the Christian and Traditional Gusii Parenting**

The purpose of this section is to compare the goals of parental instructions among the Christian and traditional Gusii teaching and practices on parenting. The goals and aims are very important part of this study. They provide a basis upon which the quality of each parenting is measured. The results parenting styles produces in the lives of individuals in the community measures the quality of parenting. Therefore by comparing the goals parental instructions meant to achieve among the Christian and traditional Gusii parenting informed this study on the best way to intergrate the positive aspects of each parental instruction for quality parenting in Gusii society.

Understanding from the Christian participants on what the Christian in Gusii community aims to achieve in equipping their adherents with quality parenting skills is crucial in assisting the researcher compare how Christian and traditional Gusii community parenting contribute towards the moral behaviour displayed in the community. The following is the knowledge on how the Christian ensures that the expected results of parental instructions are measured.

On the area of SDA RESPONDENT 1's church ensuring that what the church teaches about parenting achieves the expected goals, she poses a question; "How can they expect certain results on what they don't teach or have?" (Audio taped interview, December, 4<sup>th</sup>, 2015).

According to her, the SDA church does not have a structured program of equipping their adherents with quality parenting skills. Nor does the church have what can be called the SDA instruction of parenting style. Therefore there is no goal that the parenting style expects to achieve.

According to SDA RESPONDENT 2, the SDA church does not have a framework which ensures that what is taught in church about parenting produces in the lives of the young ones the expected goals of good moral behaviour. He claims that nobody makes a follow up to ensure that even what is casually taught during camp meetings achieved its intended purpose. After the camp meetings, members go to their homes and nobody ensures that what the parents were taught is put into practice.

SDA RESPONDENT 3 wishes that the church as a social institution which took over from traditional Gusii community could design a programme of equipping parents with quality parenting skills aiming at empowering parents to help the youth build the good moral character. These are her sentiments:

In the current modern society, it is no longer viable for traditional Gusii community to continue instructing young parents with quality parenting skills. This is because of the breakdown of traditional Gusii community structure as an institution. The modern trends have changed the traditional Gusii community family structure. Traditional Gusii community families no longer stay together. This is due to people moving from their ancestral homes in search of jobs. The children are always out in school. Other people have moved from ancestral homes and settled in places where they have bought land. Business has also made people move from their ancestral homes. Equally rural-urban immigration has led to the breakdown of traditional Gusii communal life. The church seems to have taken over as the social institution where people in a particular setting fellowship together as a community of believers. It is timely that the church as a social institution takes over the traditional Gusii community's responsibility of equipping parents with quality parenting skills (Audio taped interview, December 5th, 2015).

Her argument is that the church should come up with a program of equipping parents with quality parenting skills. The role that was carried out by traditional Gusii community should be carried out by the Christian today. Neglecting this duty leads to incompetent parenting with a resultant effect of increased antisocial ills. Development of moral character of the young person should take a central focus in the Christianity if increased antisocial ills needs to be tackled effectively.

ROMAN CATHOLIC RESPONDENT 1 says that his church doesn't have a defined goal to achieve on parental instruction since they have no systematic programme of equipping parents with quality parenting skills. There is no specific teaching and practice of parenting in his church. The members use their personal experience in the upbringing of their children. He strongly feels that the church has absconded its major role. The major role of the church is to ensure that their adherents have acceptable moral behaviour as described in each community. The building blocks of any community is its children. The church then needs to come up with clear instructions on how parents can be empowered for quality parenting.

ROMAN CATHOLIC RESPONDENT 2 says that since there is no systematic teaching and practice on parenting in her church,

Moral formation of children is based on the spiritual instruction of children by the children teachers. The church ensures that children are taught on their spiritual growth. But for parents, there is no specific skills taught to be ensured that the expected results have been achieved. I think there is need for my church to design a programme specifically meant to instruct parents on parenting style. The same training the children teachers of the church go through need to be passed on to parents so that they can carry them out at home (Audio taped interview, December 7<sup>th</sup>, 2015).

Her sentiments are that the church should come up with a program of equipping parents with quality parenting skills. This will empower parents to carry out the responsibility of parenting competently at home. According to her, the church seems to have a structured programme on how to instruct children on spiritual matters. There seems to be a gap that is significant on addressing moral erosion in any community. This gap is the church's neglect of its primary role which is to empower parents with necessary skills of bringing up morally responsible children which will subsequently address the challenge of antisocial ills in Gusii community.

ROMAN CATHOLIC RESPONDENT 3 says that the Roman Catholic Church does not have a plan of making a follow up to ensure that what has been taught by the church

about parenting achieves specific goals of moral development. He has the following to say about the goal of the teaching and practice of parenting in his church:

The church teaches and imparts knowledge. Other than repeating it every time and reminding the Christians during the holy mass and during any occasion where gatherings are held for teaching, I think that is what they do. The priest notes where things are going wrong and tell the Christians to desist. Always the priest insists that members should follow the teachings of Christ. Every family is encouraged to follow the example of the holy family. The holy family according to Roman Catholic Church is the family of Jesus with His parents Mary and John (Audio taped interview, December 8<sup>th</sup>, 2015).

According to him, it is crucial for the church to design a program of equipping parents with quality parenting skills. After designing the program and instructing the parents on quality parenting skills, it is also important to ensure that this skills are put into practice at home. This will greatly assist to address the challenge of increased antisocial ills in Gusii community.

According to the Christian participants, the Christian church in Gusii does not have a programme of ensuring that its adherents who are parents are empowered with quality parenting skills. They have the same argument that the church is the appropriate institution that should take over the traditional Gusii responsibility of instructing parents on the strategies of bringing up morally upright children. The church needs to come up with a strategy of empowering parents with parenting style to be competent in this noble task of parenting. Proper parenting key to addressing antisocial ills in Gusii community. Parenting skills are essential for the well being of the young person. They can prepare the young person to live responsibly and competently in the community. This will have an ultimate resultant effect of addressing the challenge of increased antisocial ills in the community

In comparing the Christian and traditional Gusii parenting goals as presented from the Christian participants' perspective. SDA RESPONDENT 1 says that:-

Traditionally the mother in-law had a responsibility to instruct the daughter in law on how to take care of a new born child. During delivery, the daughter in law moved to her mother in-law's house. The mother in law taught her on how to breastfeed the child. She gave her the instruction on how to bring up the child. The goal of this traditional Gusii parental instructions was to empower parents to carry out parenting successfully. While my church has no framework upon which the goals of parenting can be measured. Since my church does not instruct us on parenting, then they have no basis of measuring the achievement of Christian parenting (Audio taped interview, December 4<sup>th</sup>, 2015).

According to her, the SDA church does not have a structured program of equipping their adherents with quality parenting skills as compared to traditional Gusii community parenting. Nor does the church have what can be called the SDA instruction of parenting style. Therefore there is no clearly defined goal that the SDA parental instructions expects to achieve.

Much of the parenting skills she is using are what she received from her parents and grandparents. She concludes that there is need for the SDA Church to design a structured systematic programme to equip parents with quality parenting skills. This will empower parents with necessary skills to help them prepare young people to live responsibly and competently in the community.

SDA RESPONDENT 2's comparison of the goals of parental instructions among Christian and traditional Gusii teaching and practices on parenting is as follows:-

In traditional Gusii community, it was the responsibility of the mother in law to teach the young woman on how to bring up the baby, how to breast feed and the kind of food she is supposed to feed the child. The grandmother and the mother in law had a role to play in the upbringing of the child. The young mother and father consistently received the instructions from the father, mother, grandparents and elderly people on how to bring up the child. When the child was mature enough, ripe for marriage, he/she went through initiation and the process of initiating the child to parenthood commenced. The aim of such process of instruction was to ensure that the young parent is equipped with skills of nurturing the child. Traditionally the child belonged to the community. It was understood to be a communal responsibility to bring up responsible children for the posterity of the community. The goal was to nurture good morals in the community. While my church expects that we bring up responsible, God fearing and morally upright children, they don't have a structured systematic programme of equipping parents with quality parenting skills. Therefore there is

no clearly defined framework of measuring the achievements of the SDA parental instructions (Audio taped interview, December 4<sup>th</sup>, 2015).

SDA RESPONDENT 2 appreciates the fact that there are some similarities in traditional Gusii parenting and Christian parenting. He sees these similarities in the areas of expectation of the display of good moral behaviour in the community. The difference is that traditional Gusii community teaching and practice had a clearly defined process upon which the goals of parental instructions were measured. While his church does not have a framework which ensures that what is taught in church about parenting produces in the lives of the young ones the expected goals of good moral behaviour. He says that nobody makes a follow up to ensure that even what is casually taught during camp meetings achieved its intended purpose. After the camp meetings, members go to their homes and nobody ensures that what the parents were taught is put into practice.

He concludes that Christianity has taken over as a social institution. It is at the church that people meet as a community of believers. The quality of the church and community depends on the quality of children that are brought up in its environs. As much as the church has designed a systematic programme of instructing children on morals, it should develop a systematic programme of equipping parents with quality parenting skills.

SDA RESPONDENT 3's comparison of the goals of parental instructions of Christian and traditional Gusii teaching and practices on parenting is as follows:-

In traditional Gusii community, the grandparents and parents instructed the young parents the skills of parenting. The Gusii people placed a great value on the upbringing of children. The child did not belong to the individual but the whole community. The goal of the extensive process of traditional Gusii parental instruction was to produce a morally upright child. The ultimate aim was to preserve the posterity of the community. In the event the child of a certain community misbehaved, she/he brought shame and embarrassment to that particular family and community at large. That is why traditional Gusii people dedicated the instruction of parents as a life cycle process. It commenced

at child birth and continued to old age. When a young woman was due to deliver, she moved to her mother in law's house. The mother in law instructed the daughter in-law on how to breast feed and take care of the child. While my church doesn't have a well designed programme that parents should be taught on how to parent well. This is challenging since there is no basis for measuring whether the parents are meeting the expectations of bringing up morally acceptable children in the community (Audio taped interview, December 5th, 2015).

She describes the traditional Gusii teaching and practice of parenting as being systematic. It was based on empowering the potential parents to develop the capacity to bring up young children with good moral values. While her understanding of the goal of parental instructions as taught by her church reveals that the Christian has not taken this crucial area seriously.

She concludes that the church as a social institution which took over from traditional Gusii community should design a programme of equipping parents with quality parenting skills aiming at empowering parents to help the youth build the good moral character. The role that was carried out by traditional Gusii community should be carried out by the Christian today. Neglecting this duty leads to incompetent parenting with a resultant effect of increased antisocial ills. Development of moral character of young people should take a central position in the Gusii Christian if increased antisocial ills needs to be tackled effectively.

ROMAN CATHOLIC RESPONDENT 1's comparison of the goals of parental instructions among Christian and traditional Gusii teaching and practices on parenting is as follows:-

In traditional Gusii community, the goal of parental instruction was to empower parents on how to be good mothers, take care of children and their roles as parents. The girls were taught by their mother and grandmothers. The boys were taught by the elders, fathers and grandfathers on how to provide for the family with basic needs such as food and shelter. The teachings were heavily loaded with the expected moral behaviour and the consequences of going against them. While my church has no defined goal to achieve on parental instruction since they have no systematic programme of equipping parents with quality parenting skills. There is no specific teaching and practice of parenting in my church. The

members use their personal experience in the upbringing of their children (Audio taped interview, December 6th, 2015)

He says that traditionally, parenting was a communal responsibility. Children were regarded as a communal property. They were guided to respect relatives, elders in the community, their fellow children and those in authority. In the modern Christian, parenting skills are taught casually without a systematic programme. This might be the reason why there are increased antisocial ills in Gusii community. He further says that parents play a central role on weaving the moral fabric of children. He concludes that the church should come up with a programme of systematically teaching the church members the parental instructions (Audio taped interview, December 6<sup>th</sup>, 2015). The major role of the church is to ensure that their adherents have acceptable moral behaviour as described in each community. The building blocks of any community is its children. The church to achieve this goal, then it should invest in the empowerment of parents to carry out parenting competently.

ROMAN CATHOLIC RESPONDENT 2's comparison of the goals of parental instructions of Christian and traditional Gusii teaching and practices on parenting is as follows:-

Traditionally the goal of parental instructions was to empower parents on how to bring up children with good moral behaviour. The whole process that commenced at childbirth and continued throughout the lifetime served one major goal of preserving the posterity of the community. In traditional Gusii community, the expectant mother was instructed by the mother in-law and grandmother on how to care herself during pregnancy. After childbirth, the child was taken care of by the mother in-law, grandmother, brothers and sisters. The grandmother and grandfather acted as instructors of young parents. They consistently kept instructing the young parents on the skills of parenting. After the child grew up and was mature, they went through initiation ceremony. The initiates were mature boys and girls about to get married. The initiation ceremony was meant to be a rite of passage. In this rite of passage there were taboos, norms, customs and ceremonies the initiates were instructed on. The goal of these was basically meant to equip the initiates with parenting skills. The traditional Gusii community had a systematic structure of instructing young parents with quality parenting skills. While my church doesn't have what it teaches its adherents as the goal of parental instructions. Members use personal



experience in the upbringing of their children (Audio taped interview, December 7<sup>th</sup>, 2015).

Her church does not have a structured program that empowers parents with the goals parenting. There is need for the Christian to design a systematic programme meant to equip parents with parenting skills. This will contribute towards nurturing good moral behaviour exhibited in the church and the community. Training parents on parenting skills should be given a priority in the Christian church.

The difference between the goal of parental instructions among the traditional Gusii and Christian teaching and practice on parenting is that, “Traditionally teaching on parenting skills was thorough and lifetime process that was clearly structured while the Christian teaching on parenting skills is shallow and unstructured.” (Audio taped interview, December 7<sup>th</sup>, 2015).

ROMAN CATHOLIC RESPONDENT 3’s comparison of the goals of parental instructions among Christian and traditional Gusii teaching and practices on parenting is as follows:-

In traditional Gusii community, young parents were systematically taught about parenting by the grandparents and parents commencing at the rite of passage known as initiation. The ceremonies of initiation had a purpose of instruction. The purpose of instruction was to train the initiates about moral values such as patience, hard work, caring and perseverance. The aim of initiation was to provide an opportunity for the intensive training of the initiates on the parental skills. The ultimate goal was to prepare parents who can competently carry out parenting aimed at developing good moral behaviour among children. The grand parents took the opportunity to teach the female and male initiates good morals. Nurturing good morals was the goal of parental instructions in traditional Gusii community. The whole community dedicated their energies in ensuring that every potential parent has been adequately prepared to carry out this important function of parenting. While my church doesn’t have a systematic program of equipping parents with parenting skills. My church has no framework upon which they can evaluate their goal of parental instructions apart from a casual reference of parenting by the priest during his preaching. My church seems to neglect the core function of instructing parents whose major goal is addressing moral development (Audio taped interview, December 8<sup>th</sup>, 2015).

The analysis of ROMAN CATHOLIC RESPONDENT 3 data on the comparison of traditional Gusii and Christian teaching and practices on parenting reveals that traditionally initiates were instructed about parenting skills while in seclusion and after seclusion. The goal of the instruction was to develop good morals in the initiate. The traditional Gusii community's thorough training of parents on what to teach children might have contributed greatly to good moral behaviour in Gusii community. While the Christian does not have a structured programme that defines the goals of parenting. The Christian's emphasis is on moral development but it has no framework that deals specifically and systematically in equipping parents with parenting skills. The Christian church needs to come up with a framework of parental instructions upon which its goals can be evaluated.

Understanding from the traditional Gusii participants how the community ensured that they achieved the purpose expected of the traditional Gusii teaching and practices of parenting is crucial for comparing it with how Christian and traditional Gusii community measures the results their teaching and practices produces in the lives of the individual and in the life of the community. The following is the knowledge of the traditional Gusii community participants about the goals of traditional Gusii community parental instructions.

TRADITIONAL GUSII RESPONDENT 1 said that the goals of parental instructions of traditional Gusii community ensured that young people were instructed on how to carry out parenting. This is how he described it:

The mature girls were separated from the mature boys. This was after initiation. The mature girls remained with the mother and grandmother at the homestead. The mature boys stayed with the elders at "**Gesarate**." The girls were instructed by the mothers and grandmothers on their gender roles. They received instructions on what is required of them as a mother and wife. They received intensive training on the norms, taboos, customs and practices of the Gusii community. They were adequately equipped to understand their role of bringing up children and taking care of the husband. The mature boys while at **Gesarate** were also instructed on the roles of a husband and father. At **Gesarate** the

mature boys were taken through practical training on how to protect the livestock and the community against wild animals and aggressive communities. In this communal resident “*Gesarate*”, the elders initiated the mature boys to a communal life. The initiate was trained that he belonged to the whole community. It is at this communal resident “*Gesarate*” that mature boys were trained on how to acquire property. They received an intensive training on how to do farming. They were at this level required to buy their own livestock in preparation for marriage. He was instructed that what he acquired did not belong to him alone but the whole community. He received the training on the taboos, norms, customs and practices of Gusii community. As he continued with instruction, relatives were informed to search a wife for the young man. When elders were satisfied that he is mature enough for marriage, the boy was instructed to build his own house. Then an elaborate wedding ceremony was carried out for the young couple. When the young couples gave birth, the daughter in-law moved to the mother in-law’s house. The man went back to “*Gesarate*.” The mother in-law instructed the daughter in-law on how to take care of the child. The young man was instructed at “*Gesarate*” on parenting skills. Equipping young parents on parenting skills was elaborate in traditional Gusii community (Audio taped interview, December 9<sup>th</sup>, 2015).

Based on TRADITIONAL GUSII RESPONDENT 1’s description of the goals of traditional Gusii community, we can conclude that Traditional Gusii community had a structured systematic programme which ensured that parents were empowered with quality parenting skills. We can say that in traditional Gusii community there were two informal schools of instruction of young parents. These schools include, first the homestead as a school for potential mothers and secondly, *Gesarate* as the school for potential fathers. The elderly women, mothers and grandmothers were the instructors at the homestead while the potential mothers were the students. The grandfathers, fathers and elderly men were the insructors at *Gesarate* while potential fathers were the students and labourers. The major area of instruction in both schools was parenting. The community ensured that young parents were well equipped on carrying out the task of parenting. Parenting and empowering of parents on parenting skills was the central goal in traditional Gusii community.

According to TRADITIONAL GUSII RESPONDENT 1, the community ensured that parents have been empowered to carry out the duty of parenting. The major instructors were the parents, grandparents and the community elders. Children were considered

special pillars of the community. The whole community was interested of the moral development of the child.

TRADITIONAL GUSII RESPONDENT 2 says that traditional Gusii community was highly committed in ensuring that the goals of parental instructions of traditional Gusii community were achieved. This are her sentiments:-

The girls were taught by the mother and grandmother. The boys were taught by the father, grandfather and elders. The mature boys and girls went through a process of initiation to manhood and womanhood respectively. The process of initiation was purely meant to equip the girls and boys who were mature for marriage with parenting skills. It was a rite of passage in preparation for marriage and parenthood. The norms, customs, taboos, ceremonies and practices that accompanied initiation were lessons on parenting skills. The female initiates were under the guidance of the mother and grandmother. The male initiates were under the guidance of the father, grandfather and elders. The initiates were put under seclusion for a period not less than four weeks. During this period several ceremonies were carried out. These ceremonies had a specific behavioural virtue to teach the initiates. These ceremonies included ensuring that fire kept burning throughout the seclusion period. It signified that when you become a parent, you should provide for your family through patience and hard work. The second ceremony was the grass that was planted and the initiates watered it throughout the period of seclusion. It was meant to train the initiates that as you ensure that grass does not dry up, also ensure that your children grow up like grass by patiently training them on good moral behaviour. The third ceremony was a certain instrument that was played from a hidden place. It produced a sound like that of a hyena. The initiates were deceived that a hyena is going to attack and swallow them. This ceremony was meant to equip the initiates with the skill of being brave. As parents, it requires braveness to protect the family from any danger that they may encounter. The period of initiation was purely meant for the instruction of young people on the parenting skills. After initiation, the male initiates went to “*Gesarate*” and the female initiates remained at the homestead with the mother and grandmother. At “*Gesarate*” the male initiates received an intensive training on how to bring up the family. It is at “*Gesarate*” that the young men were prepared for marriage and parenthood. The female initiates while at the homestead were taught by the mother and grandmother on the roles of motherhood. When the elders at “*Gesarate*” were satisfied that the young man was ripe for marriage, relatives were requested to search for him a partner for marriage. The young man was instructed to go and build his house ready for marriage. The traditional Gusii community had an elaborate wedding ceremony. The wedding was conducted. When the young woman was about to give birth, she moved to the mother in-law’s house. The mother in-law instructed her on how to carry out parenthood. Traditional Gusii community had an elaborate process of equipping young people on parenthood (Audio taped interview, December, 10<sup>th</sup>, 2015).

He introduces another dimension on how traditional Gusii community ensured that the goals of traditional Gusii parental instructions were achieved. This dimension according

to him were several ceremonies that were carried out when the initiates were in seclusion for a period not less than four weeks. Each ceremony had a specific behavioural virtue that was intended to be instilled in the lives of the initiates. These virtues were all meant to equip potential parents with positive moral behaviour. This can support the argument made early in this study that traditional Gusii parenting style was not permissive nor neglecting or authoritarian, but it was authoritative. This is because several strategies were employed on making potential parents understand and embrace quality parenting skills and practice it in the upbringing of their children.

Ceremonies as presented by TRADITIONAL GUSII RESPONDENT 2 were not the end result by themselves but the medium through which potential parents were to learn quality parenting skills. Each ceremony presented the virtue expected of the potential parent. The potential parent did the interpretation for himself or herself about the quality expected of him/her as a parent. This style of presenting the facts as they are in an open manner using different strategies and guiding the child to make a right decision is a description of authoritative style of parenting.

He emphasizes that after marriage, the young couples were not supposed to leave the homestead immediately. They continued to receive guidance on how to conduct themselves as a family. The mother instructed the daughter-in-law on the practical aspect of parenthood. The father instructed the young man on how to behave now that he is a married man.

TRADITIONAL GUSII RESPONDENT 3 has the following to say on the goals of parental instructions of traditional Gusii community as follows:-

The goal of parental instructions of traditional Gusii community was to teach young people about parenting. The process of teaching young people about parenting commenced at initiation. Initiation was a very important rite of passage. The initiates were mature boys and girls that were about to get married. It was required that before they were married, they should undergo a thorough training on parenthood. That is why the initiates were put under seclusion for a

period not less than four weeks. During this period, the initiates stayed in a special house constructed for them. The female initiates were under the instruction of the mother, grandmother and mature women. The male initiates were under the guidance of grandparents, father and elders of the community. The whole process of initiation was to prepare the initiates for parenthood. The initiates were instructed on the taboos, customs, norms, and practices of the Gusii community. These taboos, customs, norms and practices were lessons on good moral behaviour. They encompassed the benefits of acquiring good moral behaviour and the consequences of ignoring the moral requirements in the community. Ceremonies that were conducted during initiation process were meant to instruct the initiates on the moral behaviour required of a good parent. Among these ceremonies includes, a piece of stick the female initiate was to carry throughout the period of seclusion. The stick was a symbol of a child. It meant that when you give birth to a child, you should never at any given time forget her/him. It was a lesson that the major responsibility in one's life is to take care of the child. To feed, clothe, bathe, and instruct children is a core responsibility of a parent. The ceremonies of taking vows also took place. The vows were not supposed to be disclosed. It was meant to instruct the young woman that she must keep her family matters confidential. The ceremony of keeping fire burning throughout the period of seclusion was meant to instruct the initiate on hard work, patience and taking care of the family patiently. The ceremony of the instrument that was played which sounded like a hyena was to instruct the initiates on braveness. After the initiates came out of seclusion, the female initiates stayed at the homestead with the mother and grandmother. The male initiates went to "**Gesarate**" where the elders and young men stayed with the livestock. The homestead was a school of young women who were about to get married. The mother, grandmothers, and elderly women served as instructors. Here the young women were trained on their gender roles and the moral requirements of a wife and mother. They received a thorough training on how to take care of children and the husband. "**Gesarate**" was a school for young men. The elders served as instructors and young men served as workers taking care of the livestock and farming. Here at "**Gesarate**" the young men were instructed on the moral requirements of a good father and parent. Parenthood was an important lesson that was taught. When the elders were satisfied that the young man is ripe for marriage, he was instructed to go and build the house ready for marriage. Relatives were requested to search the lady for the man to marry. When the lady was found, an elaborate wedding ceremony was conducted. After the wedding, the young couples were to stay at the parents' homestead for a period of time. This was to allow the father in-law and mother in-law an opportunity to instruct them about parenting. After the daughter in-law gave birth, she moved to the mother in-law's house for further instruction on how to bring up the new born baby. Instruction on parenting was a life cycle process (Audio taped interview, December 11<sup>th</sup>, 2015).

She also introduces another strategy that traditional Gusii community used in achieving the desired goals of empowering potential parents with quality parenting skills. This strategy was where the initiates took vows during the time they were completing the period of seclusion. The vows were not supposed to be disclosed. This was meant to instruct the initiates that family matters should be kept confidential. Confidentiality is

one of the important behavioural virtue which can protect the society against several evils that we witness in the Gusii community today. Social evils such gossip, fighting, hatred, anger, violence, jealousy and even murder may be minimised if the virtue of confidentiality was to be cultivated and embraced among children.

She says that traditional Gusii community invested much of their time ensuring that children have acquired good morals. Every member of the community was committed in the moral development of the child. It took a whole village to bring up a child.

TRADITIONAL GUSII RESPONDENT 4 has the following to say on the goals of parental instructions of traditional Gusii community:-

Instructing parents on quality parenting skills was the single most goal of traditional Gusii teaching and practice on parenting. The ultimate goal was to produce a generation that passes on a well developed moral character to preserve the community's posterity. Instructing parents on quality parenting skills was a life cycle process in traditional Gusii community. When young couples were about to give birth, the daughter in-law moved to the mother in-law's house. After giving birth, the mother in-law instructed her on how to breastfeed, bathe, clothe and care for the child. She also instructed the daughter in-law on the herbal medicine of the common diseases that may attack the child. She also instructed her on the foods to eat so that she can regain from the challenges of childbirth and have enough milk to breastfeed the child. The mother in-law and grandmother continued to instruct the mother on how to carry out parenting. The father and elders continued to instruct the son on how to bring up the child. When the children grew up and were mature for marriage, they went through a rite of passage. This rite of passage was initiation. The female initiates were put under the guidance of the mother, grandmother and elderly women of the community. The male initiates were put under the instruction of the father, grandfather and elders of the community. Several ceremonies were carried out during initiation. The ceremonies were basically lessons meant to impart the initiates with parenting skills. They imparted the virtues of hard work, patience, braveness, self-control and many others. After the initiates came out of seclusion, the male initiates went to "**Gesarate**" and the female initiates remained at the homestead. **Gesarate** served as the school for young men who were about to get married while the homestead served as the school for young women who were about to get married. At *Gesarate*, the elders served as instructors while the young men were students and labourers. Elders instructed the young men on parenting skills. The young men took care of the livestock and ploughing the farms. They received all the instructions expected to be carried out by father, husband and head of the family. The young women equally back at the homestead received the instruction of parenting skills from the mother and elderly women. They received the instructions on what is expected of them as the mother, wife and home makers. They carried out all the home chores and the roles of women at home. During this period of instruction,

relatives were requested to search for the young man a suitable partner for marriage. When the elders were satisfied that the young man was ripe for marriage, the elders instructed him to go and build a house in preparation for marriage. Traditional Gusii community had an elaborate wedding ceremony. The young couples wedded. After marriage they were not allowed to move to their homestead immediately. They remained in the father's homestead for a while for practical instruction on parenting skills. It is after the father and mother were satisfied that the young family is mature enough to stand alone, that were allowed to move to their homestead. Instructing parents on parenting skills in Gusii community was a life cycle process (Audio taped interview, December 12<sup>th</sup>, 2015).

The programme of instructing parents on parenting skills, according to her is a life cycle process. She agrees with the other respondents that traditionally the community ensured that parents have been instructed on the required parenting skills. The whole community was actively involved in the instruction of children. This may explain the reason why antisocial ills were controlled in traditional Gusii community.

Traditional Gusii respondents conclude that traditional Gusii community had an extensive structured systematic programme which ensured that potential parents were equipped with quality parenting skills.

In comparing the Christian church and traditional Gusii parenting goals as presented from the traditional Gusii participants' perspective, TRADITIONAL GUSII RESPONDENT 1's comparison of the goals of parental instructions of Christian and traditional Gusii teaching and practices on parenting is as follows:-

In traditional Gusii community parental instruction was centred on the taboos, customs, norms and practices of the Gusii community. These norms and practices' goal was to equip a child who participates in the moral development of the community. Parenting also required that children go to the grandparents to be instructed on the taboos and customs that were considered to be "**Chinsoni.**" **Chinsoni** is a Kisii word which meant information that cannot be shared by the father or mother to the child. The goal of this thorough instruction was to ensure that the child brought up in the community participated fully in the community to bring order and harmony. Morally functioning society was considered basic in traditional Gusii community. The traditional Gusii community understood that to achieve this goal, young potential parents should be equipped with quality parenting skills. While my church does not have clearly defined framework of parental instructions that members are trained on how to bring up their children. This makes it complicated to evaluate the goals



of Christian parental instructions. The Christian's major emphasis is on moral development but unfortunately they have not developed a systematic programme to address it. The foundation of moral development is equipping parents to carry out parenting competently. There is need for the Christian church to develop a systematic programme of equipping parents with quality parenting skills (Audio taped interview, December 9<sup>th</sup>, 2015).

He recognizes the fact that there are similarities between Christian and traditional Gusii teaching and practice on parenting. He says that both of them emphasize on respect and love. The difference between the Christian and traditional Gusii teaching of parenting is that the traditional Gusii community had a framework upon which parental goals can be evaluated while the Christian doesn't have a framework.

He concludes that there is need for the Christian church to equip parents with quality parenting skills if the challenge of anti-social ills has to be addressed. The rate at which the Gusii community is declining on morality is high. Concerted efforts should be made by the Christian church to address the challenge. This is purely centred on instructing parents on how to bring up children with good morals.

TRADITIONAL GUSII RESPONDENT 2's comparison of the goals of parental instructions of Christian and traditional Gusii teaching and practices on parenting is as follows:-

My church does not have a systematic programme of equipping parents with quality parenting skills. Of course there is some kind of teaching on the behaviour of young people. But I don't think they have a framework upon which parenting skills can be evaluated. This makes it complicated to identify the goals of parental instructions in the modern Christian. While traditionally, the goals of parental instructions were clearly defined and encompassed in the taboos, norms, ceremonies, and practices. The goal was to train a child on the basics of the society. It was required that children understand the practices of Gusii society. Children were taught on the moral requirements acceptable in the community. Ensuring that children practice what they are instructed was a major component of parenting (Audio taped interview, December 10<sup>th</sup>, 2015).

The understanding of the goals of traditional Gusii parental instructions according to him touches on two major areas. These areas include, training children on the basics of

the society, and secondly guiding them on the moral requirements acceptable in the community. The traditional Gusii community seems to have given careful attention to ensuring that what was taught about moral behaviour was put into practice. According to him, the Christian church does not have clearly defined systematic programme of equipping parents with quality parental skills. Therefore we don't have a framework upon which we can evaluate the goals of parental instructions in the Christian teaching and practice on parenting.

He concludes that we may not do parenting exactly as the traditional way but we can come up with a plan to redeem the current generation from total disintegration. The church as a social institution should come up with a strategy of equipping parents with quality parenting skills; the church is the major social institution that can address morality in the community.

TRADITIONAL GUSII RESPONDENT 3's comparison of the goals of parental instructions among Christian and traditional Gusii teaching and practices on parenting is as follows:-

Traditionally the goal of parental instructions comprised of instructing the child on the taboos, customs, norms and practices of the Gusii Community. It encompassed taking care of the child so that he/she is fit. Parenting also was to instruct the child on good moral behaviour. It was the duty of the parent to ensure that the child has understood how to relate with relatives and community members with a lot of respect. The child was instructed on all the requirements of the community. The nature of children brought up determined the respect you will be accorded in the community. In our days, if your children participated in unacceptable community behaviour, your family was isolated from participating in the special social events of the community. To avoid isolation, the parents were highly committed on ensuring that their children are instructed on good moral behaviour. The grandparents and parents ensured that children were inculcated with proper moral behaviour. When the child became mature and about to get married, they went through a rite of passage of initiation. Initiation was a rite of passage meant to instruct the initiates on the requirements of parenthood. It was a rite of passage meant to prepare the mature boys and girls to manhood and womanhood respectively. While in the Christian, there is no framework of parental instructions. The Christian does not have a programme of equipping parents with quality parenting skills. The Christian replaced the traditional Gusii community as a social institution but did not take up the major task of the traditional Gusii community of empowering parents with quality

parenting skills. This means that we have no basis upon which we can evaluate the goals of parental instructions in the Christian teaching and practices (Audio taped interview, December 11<sup>th</sup>, 2015).

According to her, the Christian Church does not have a programme of equipping parents with quality parenting skills as compared to traditional Gusii teaching and practice on parenting. The analysed data of TRADITIONAL GUSII RESPONDENT 3 reveals that the major goal of traditional Gusii parenting was the formation of character which required a lot of skill and tact to be achieved successfully. The traditional Gusii community seemed to have taken seriously the empowerment of parents with skills on how to carry the important function of parenting competently. The Christian seems to lack a specific strategy that it trains their adherents on the upbringing of their children. Implying that it is not easy to evaluate the goals of its parental instructions.

Traditional Gusii respondents have the same understanding of the goals of traditional Gusii parental instructions. This can lead to a conclusion that parenting was central in traditional Gusii community to the extent that almost all community members clearly understood what it meant to achieve in the community. The central goal of traditional Gusii parental instructions was to raise up morally upright generation. This may be the reason why antisocial behaviour was in control in traditional Gusii community. Equipping parents with quality parenting skills should take a central position in any social institution. The church as a social institution that replaced the traditional Gusii community as a social institution should develop a systematic programme of equipping parents with quality parental skills.

### **3.4 Summary**

Information that emerged from the narratives of Christian teaching and practice on parenting participants indicate that the empowerment of parents with quality parenting skills by the church is minimal. The participants observed that their churches do not

have a structured systematic programme designed for equipping parents with quality parenting skills. The participants expressed their feelings that the Christian church has a special position as a social institution to address the need of empowering parents with quality parenting skills. They felt that the Christian church can teach parents in their communities to model parental skills and guide their children on moral development leading to a quality society.

The participants have a strong conviction that equipping parents with quality parenting skills will be a great step forward in reducing anti-social ills. They recognized the fact that families are the basic unit of society. The family provides the best environment for meeting a child's development needs. The participants felt that the church is the social institution that took over from the traditional Gusii community. The major role of the traditional Gusii community which was equipping parents with quality parenting skills can be carried out by the church. The church should empower parents to provide care and protection. This will help the children learn how to interact with other people, discover their role as morally upright citizens and contribute positively for the communal development.

The participants of Christian parenting strongly felt that the integration of some traditional Gusii parenting teaching and practices with Christian teaching and practice is essential if increased anti-social ills will be addressed. This will provide a positive parenting focusing on interventions that empower the child to acquire good morals in the Community.

The participants also indicated that supporting family capacity to provide the children with the essentials of life should be addressed by the Christian church. This will assist to build a protective and caring environment for children. The church has an important role to play in equipping parents with quality parenting skills.

The participants of traditional Gusii teaching and practices on parenting recognized the fact that equipping parents with quality parenting skills was a life cycle process. Traditionally, the Gusii community addressed the concerns of moral development of children communally. Parenting was approached in a wholistic manner. The participants described traditional parenting as a communal responsibility. The entire community participated in the development of the individual into an all-round moral agent, able to positively contribute to the growth and stability of the society. The grandparents, parents, brothers, sisters, uncles, aunts, elders and relatives ensured that a child born in their midst is well trained, fed, protected and cared for.

The young couples and parents underwent several stages of training on parenting. The process of equipping parents with quality parenting skills commenced at initiation and continued throughout the period of parenting. Initiation was a crucial rite of passage in traditional Gusii community. From the perspective of the participants, initiation served a special purpose in equipping young people with quality parenting skills. It was a ceremony that marked a transition from childhood to parenthood. It was at this rite of passage that young people were initiated to womanhood or manhood. Mature boys and girls were prepared at this stage for an important role in life. The participants described how the initiates were equipped with moral virtues essential for parents. This was done through special ceremonies conducted during the period of initiation and while the initiates were in seclusion.

The participants described how traditional Gusii community ensured that the quality parenting skills instructed were implemented. This was done by putting the initiates in seclusion for at least four weeks under the guidance of experienced elders, grandparents and parents. Secondly by taking the male initiates to “*Gesarate*” for further training on parenting under the guidance of the elders, grandfathers and fathers. The female initiates remained in the homestead for further training under the tutorship of mother,

grandmother and experienced elderly women. Thirdly, after marriage, and during delivery, the daughter in-law moved to the mother in-law's house for further guidance on parenting. The young husband went back to "**Gesarate**" for practical training on how to bring up the child. The young couples were not allowed to move from the parents homestead immediately after marriage and delivery. They continued to stay in the homestead for further guidance on parenting until such a time that the parents were satisfied that they have attained the parenting skills necessary to help them stand alone. At this level, they were allowed to establish their own homestead.

The process of equipping parents with quality parenting skills in traditional Gusii community was systematically structured. Instructions on parenting were designed in a manner that it matched with the appropriate stage of parenting. The participants described that parenting lessons passed on from one generation to the other was through taboos, norms, customs and practices of the Gusii community. The taboos, customs, norms and practices were embedded in the Proverbs, riddles, wise sayings, parables, stories, narratives and songs. The ceremonies that were carried out provided an environment of cementing the communal relationship.

Traditional Gusii participants viewed modern parenting as providing children with a lot of freedom. That freedom granted to children puts them at risk of misbehaviour in the society. They suggest that close supervision and monitoring should be provided for the inexperienced young people. The modern way of parenting which seems to encourage individualism can be mitigated by the Christian church as a community of believers. The Christian church can provide an environment that supports parents on taking care and protecting children. Moral development is the core purpose for existence of the church. This purpose can be achieved by equipping the caregivers. The quality of child care and protection will determine the quality of the church and the society. Chapter 4

that follows, deals the factors contributing to pressures on parenting in Gusii community.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO PRESSURES ON PARENTING

#### 4.0 Introduction

This chapter deals with the participants' views on the factors contributing to pressures on parenting in Gusii community. The participants describe how these factors contributing to pressures on parenting have led to increased anti-social behaviour in Gusii community. The participants gave the suggestions on how the pressures can be mitigated. As noted earlier in literature review, this research recognizes that there are factors that contribute to pressures on parenting in Gusii community that leads to increased anti-social ills in the society. But the single most determinant of the moral behaviour displayed in the community depends on parenting.

This information helped the researcher to understand and examine the factors that exert pressure on parenting among children in Gusii community. In this chapter data collected was analysed based on the topic. Each factor contributing to pressures on parenting in Gusii community as presented by the collected data from participants was analysed. Knowledge on these factors helped to provide a framework for the proposed integrated strategy of equipping parents with quality parenting skills.

#### 4.1 Work-Family Conflict

The participants recognized work-family conflict as one of the factors contributing to pressures on parenting leading to increased anti-social ills. TRADITIONAL GUSII RESPONDENT 2 describes work-family conflict as follows:

The parents have no time to instruct their children. Because of the economic conditions, parents stay apart due to employment. One of the parents remains with the children. Even the parent who remains with the children is so busy in the workplace and therefore has no time to instruct children (Audio taped interview, December 10<sup>th</sup>, 2015).



Setting time aside to instruct children is essential. The family is the primary institution of instructing children. The family separation poses a great challenge on parenting. At the same time, parents are busy with work on the expense of not getting time to instruct children. ROMAN CATHOLIC RESPONDENT 2 says:

Nowadays the parents are busy in the workplace. They have no time to instruct their children. Even those that are not in formal employment, they spend most of their time doing their work and do not spend time to train their children. There is this kind of boarding schools. Because of work constraints, most parents take children to boarding schools as early as standard three. The children have been left to teachers. Parents have avoided their responsibility of training children morally, spiritually and socially. During holidays, when children are at home, most parents are at the workplace (Audio taped interview, December 7<sup>th</sup>, 2015).

Work-family conflict is a real challenge to parenting. Finding a balance between work and instructing children is a factor that needs to be addressed. Resources are needed to provide the family with the basic needs. Work is essential as a source of income. But balancing between work and instruction of children should be worked on. The role of each parent in the instruction of children is important. Separation of parents because of work makes parenting complicated.

SDA RESPONDENT 3 introduces a new dimension of the work-family conflict on parenting as follows:

The working class parents have no time of instructing their children. They leave their children under the care and guidance of maids. A maid will not train your child on moral values. The only thing a maid can do for your children is to feed, clothe and bathe them. There is a vacuum created of instructing children on good morals. The child imitates the behaviour of the maid. They lack the attachment of love with their parents (Audio taped interview, December 5<sup>th</sup>, 2015).

This a very important fact on work family conflict as it relates to parenting. Most maids mishandle the children who are left under their care. This mistreatment of children from the caregivers exposes children to harsh realities at an early age. Due to such hard conditions, some children undergo, they contribute to increased anti-social behaviour.

TRADITIONAL GUSII RESPONDENT 1 says that due to the modern trends of economic demands, it is not easy to address the pressure of work family conflict. But he has the following advice to these parents:

The money and property you struggle to acquire is for the benefit of bringing up children. The first and most important thing you leave behind when you are long gone is not the estate but the nature of the family brought up. Parents should try as much as possible to be available in guiding and instructing children on life skills. As a good parent, you must make deliberate efforts of creating quality time of instructing children. The greatest sacrifice you can make in life is setting time aside for training your child in good moral behaviour. The time we have with our children is very short. This short period with your children determines the nature of citizens you are producing to the community. Parents should plan in such a manner that they will be available for the training of children on good morals (Audio taped interview, December 9<sup>th</sup>, 2015).

Work family-conflict is a real challenge in causing pressures on parenting. As we develop an integrated strategy of parenting skills, the pressures of work-family conflict need to be tackled. Employees should make the working conditions to be family friendly. Dysfunctional families cause breakdown of morality in the Community.

#### **4.2 Poverty**

The population density in Gusii community is very high. The residents depend much on small scale farming because of scarcity of land. Land has been subdivided to the level that it can't sustain the family on the provision of basic needs. The level of poverty index is high. SDA RESPONDENT 1 says:

In my surrounding community, majority of the families are very poor. They are not able to provide good shelter, food, clothing, education and health needs. Families are usually large with an average of seven children. Because of scarcity of resources, most children undertake menial jobs in the rich neighbourhood. Due to these poverty challenges, children are not guided properly. This leads to children engaging in anti-social ills such as stealing, premarital sex, unhealthy abortion, prostitution, drug and substance abuse. Poverty has made peoples' lives much harder and it excludes them from life chances that are essential (Audio taped interview, December 4<sup>th</sup>, 2015).

The financial difficulty causes a lot of stress to parents in the provision of basic needs. Most children from poor background are likely to get married at an early age. The early

marriages extend generational poverty. The multiple stresses arising from living in poverty affects parenting. TRADITIONAL GUSII RESPONDENT 1 has the following to say:

Poverty poses a challenge to parents on providing children with the basic needs. Children from poor families are denied opportunities that others take for granted. Because of poverty, children fail to access education. Poverty exposes children to a lot of temptations. Some are easily influenced because of economic conditions to be recruited into anti-social behaviour. Poverty can serve as motivating factor to engage in premarital sex, drug and substance abuse, stealing and many other social ills. Because of a high level of corruption, and nepotism, children from poor families cannot be able to access employment opportunities. Parents are rendered powerless on providing the needs of children because of poverty (Audio taped interview, December 9<sup>th</sup>, 2015).

Poverty can also cause severe strain in relationships between husband and wife. This strain can be projected to children who expect parents to be their role models. Strained spousal relationships, brings feelings of depression and increase family dysfunction. The family dysfunction in turn leads to less effective parenting which involves lack of control over the child's behaviour, lack of warmth and support and display of hostility by parents to children. TRADITIONAL GUSII RESPONDENT 3 commenting on this, she says:

Poverty can be a source of aggression at family levels. Because of struggle over limited resources, this may lead to inter-parental and family conflicts. It leads to the family members being hostile to one another. That hostility leads to the child's decreased self-esteem. When self-esteem of children is low, it may lead to drug and substance abuse, stealing and crime and other social ills. Poverty also contributes to parents neglecting their families. There are many families in Gusii community where either the father or mother disappear and leave the children suffering and unattended. Neglected families lack control over the child's behaviour. Children brought up in such environment lack warmth and support. Such stress impairs the health and development of children. Children are left to struggle alone to meet the basic needs such as food, accommodation, clothing, health care, and education. The challenge of poverty causes the children to have feelings of powerless and decreased self-esteem in the society. The circumstances leads the children to involve themselves in drug and substance abuse, stealing, mental health problems, suicide, premarital sex, prostitution, and several other social ills (Audio taped interview, December 11<sup>th</sup>, 2015).

To empower families so that they can access basic needs for their children will be a step forward of addressing the anti-social behaviour in Gusii community. TRADITIONAL GUSII RESPONDENT 4 suggests the way of mitigating the problem as follows:

Traditional Gusii community viewed parenting as a communal responsibility. This can be strengthened even in the modern and Christian society in Gusii community. The extended family members who are able should take up the responsibility to provide for the children of their relatives who are in need. The effect of social ills committed by children because of poverty affects the surrounding community. The crimes of stealing, drug and substance abuse, prostitution and others affect the whole society. It will be better if it will be controlled by empowering these disadvantaged children. The church as a social institution should take up the challenge by mobilizing members to assist and encourage relatives to attend these children from disadvantaged families. The church and relatives also can assist these children to access assistance from the government and other charitable organizations. It is a social responsibility of the church and relatives to ensure that no child is neglected on accessing the basic needs of life (Audio taped interview, December 12<sup>th</sup>, 2015).

Poverty is a real challenge that causes pressure on parenting. It blocks the ways of parents to perform the role of good parenting. It places heavy demands on parents' capacity to manage every day pressures under severe financial strain. The traditional teaching and practice on parenting as a communal responsibility aspect should be incorporated in the modern parenting to mitigate the challenge of poverty.

### **4.3 Drug And Substance Abuse**

Drug and substance abuse is another factor that causes pressure on parenting. Drug and substance abuse affects both parents and children in parenting. TRADITIONAL GUSII RESPONDENT 1 has the following to say:

Many parents in Gusii community are engaged in drug and substance abuse. It is common these days to get both parents husband and wife drinking alcohol. Alcohol has several effects in the human life. Drug and substance abuse affects a person on the physical strength. Parents that engage in drug and substance abuse are unable to work so that they can provide for the family. Secondly, drug and substance abuse drain the family resources. The resources of the family are wasted in buying drugs and alcohol. Thirdly, people who engage in drug and substance abuse spend all their time in drinking alcohol. Parents lack time to work and create wealth and at the same time, they don't have time to instruct children. Parents also set wrong example to children. Parents are expected to be good role models to their children. By engaging in drug and substance abuse, it leads their children to copying their behaviour. The social ill of drug and substance and other ills associated with it are spread in the community (Audio taped interview, December 9<sup>th</sup>, 2015).

Drug and substance abuse is another source of social ills in the Gusii community. People who engage in drug and substance abuse lack self-control, leading to engaging in social ills such as fighting, stealing, premarital and extramarital sex. ROMAN CATHOLIC RESPONDENT 1 is a head teacher of a day primary school. He narrated a real incident that occurred in his school as follows:

Usually, children come to school with packed lunch and drinking water. This particular girl in standard six came with “Chang’aa” in a container pretending that it was drinking water. One of the children came and reported that there is a kid with alcohol. When I went to check, I was surprised that this young girl had alcohol. When I tried to interrogate her, she said that the parents prepare and sell this local liquor. The child has already copied the behaviour from the parents at such a young age. Drugs are available everywhere in this community. The children as young as in standard four are able to recognize a vendor of hard drugs just at the gate of the school. When I was teaching in standard four and asked the students to tell me about the bad drugs they know. They were able to name so many complicated drugs. I was shocked, and tried to inquire how they came to know them. It was a surprise to learn that a woman who pretends to be a vendor of vegetables at the school gate is a drug vendor. Drug and substance abuse is a real challenge in Gusii community (Audio taped interview, December 6<sup>th</sup>, 2015).

The children have been exposed to drug and substance abuse. To protect children against such a social behaviour is difficult. It becomes complicated because children easily access these drugs.

Traditional teaching and practice discouraged people from drug and substance abuse.

TRADITIONAL GUSII RESPONDENT 2 says:

It was a taboo for young people and women to drink alcohol. If a woman or young person was found drinking or drunk in public, there was severe punishment he/she was to receive for the act. All people were discouraged from taking drugs such as bhang. Traditionally, elders were allowed to drink alcohol. This alcohol was not such strong as this of nowadays. The elders drank it in the evening after work. Elders drank it communally. It was illegal for the elderly person to be found drinking with youngsters. What is happening nowadays, where you find children, youths, women and elderly people drinking together was a taboo (Audio taped interview, December 10<sup>th</sup>, 2015).

TRADITIONAL GUSII RESPONDENT 1 says “let us join hands together to carry out the directive of the president to eradicate drug and substance abuse. It takes a concerted

effort to all community members to eradicate drug and substance abuse” (Audio taped interview, 9<sup>th</sup> December, 2015). It also filters down to communal responsibility in the eradication of drug and substance abuse. Unless something is done, drug and substance will lead to the breakdown of morals in Gusii community.

#### **4.4 Modern Technology**

The positive contribution of modern technology to human development is of great importance. In the same measure, it has its share in an increased anti-social behaviour. The exposure that modern technology grants to young children has both advantages and disadvantages. Parents feel that modern technology has exposed children to unhealthy moral behaviour. SDA RESPONDENT 2 describes the contribution of modern technology to moral erosion as follows:

Modern technology plays a significant role in exposing children to influences outside their parents’ control. It makes it hard for the parent to keep children safe and manage the risks they face through what they see, watch and listen to through modern technology. Children are exposed to pornography, criminal incidences, and other social ills. It becomes complicated to be aware of the influences the child is going through due to the interactions with modern technology. Foreign influences are copied by children who are not compatible with our social needs (Audio taped interview, 4<sup>th</sup> December, 2015).

Modern technology has contributed to humanity accessing information that enhances development. It has equally contributed to the efficiency and effectiveness in communication. It has also assisted in almost every field to provide services conveniently. Technology has greatly improved human life. At the same time, it has also contributed to the increased anti-social ills. TRADITIONAL GUSII RESPONDENT 4 says:

Children spend most of their time watching the TV. It is like the TV exalts behaviours that do not educate the young children on good morals. The musicians that appear in the TV especially ladies are a half-naked and others totally naked. The programmes that are aired most of them is like they exalt immorality. Children imitate what they watch on TV, CDS, DVDS, Internet and other social media. This has a serious impact on the moral behaviour of children. Some of the social ills we witness in the Gusii Community have been imitated from what children watch in the social media and TV. As much as

technology has positively contributed to accessing important information conveniently, in the same measure, it has contributed to exposing children to the influences of moral erosion (Audio taped interview, 12<sup>th</sup> December 2015).

TRADITIONAL GUSII RESPONDENT 3 has the following to say on how to mitigate the challenge of modern technology:

Since we are living in the digital period, parents must create time to be with their children. Watching of the TV should be controlled. As much as possible the parents should watch with their children so that they can provide guidance. On the social media, the modern parents should be conversant with it. They should be informed on what is happening in the social media. This will put them in a right position to understand what children may be exposed to through social media and keep guiding them on how best to relate to what they see, hear and watch. The modern parenting must be friendly to children so that children may be free to share with them what they know through social media. Parents should have knowledge about their children access to social media and guide them well (Audio taped interview, 11<sup>th</sup> December, 2015).

Empowering parents to help their children manage the influence of new technology and the commercial world is essential. The church as a social institution should take up this responsibility seriously. Parents should be instructed to acquire skills on how to keep the children safe and manage the risk of modern technology.

#### **4.5 Parental Conflict**

Parental conflict was also noted by participants as the factor contributing to pressures on parenting. When parents are unable to get along well with each other, there is likelihood to project their anxiety, aggression, depression and hostility to the weak ones. In this case, the weak people in their surrounding are the children. The impact of this parental conflict is the development of anti-social behaviour among children. SDA RESPONDENT 1 has the following to say:

Poor parental relationship has a negative impact on the moral behaviour of children. There are several factors that lead to parental conflict such as extra marital sex, drug and substance abuse, money, relatives, incompatible partners and poor communication skills. The parents concentrate on the parental conflict lacking time to instruct children. Children imitate from the parents such anti-social behaviour. Some couples become hostile to one another in the presence of children. It serves as a template, making conflict resolution for children complicated. Children brought up in such an environment are left confused.

They do not understand which side to take. In such a family, the breakdown of moral behaviour is already established. Children lack the warmth and love expected to be provided by parents. Parents in such a family do not become good role models. Such behaviour is passed on from parents to children (Audio taped interview, 4<sup>th</sup> December, 2015).

Parental conflict can degenerate into the dissolution of marriage. The dissolution of marriage is painful to children. Parents may have a way of tolerating this but children find it extremely challenging. ROMAN CATHOLIC RESPONDENT 3 describes the situation as follows:

During divorce, it is the children who are left to suffer. In most cases, children are under the care and guidance of mother. Very few are left under the care and guidance of the father. This factor contributes to a serious pressure on parenting. The single parent struggles alone to meet the social economic demands of bringing up the children with a conscience that another parent is alive. The children are left confused on how to cope with the situation. The situation is not the same as when one parent is dead. When one parent is dead, the children understand that they are orphans. It is indeed stressful where the parent is simply negligent of the parental responsibility. Majority of the children who engage in anti-social behaviour come from divorced families (Audio taped interview, 8<sup>th</sup> December 2015).

The Christian believes that the family is the smallest unit of the church. The church emphasizes on how to live happily within the families. How can the challenge be mitigated? ROMAN CATHOLIC RESPONDENT 2 has the following to say:

The Christian should incorporate the Traditional teaching and practice on parenting as a communal responsibility. Divorced parents should be instructed on how to cope with the situation and bring up morally upright children. The church also should endeavour to provide counselling to the couples with a possibility of uniting these families. In the situation of abusive partners, the church should advice their adherents on how they can access legal assistance for both parents to be responsible in providing children with basic needs of life. It is not good to bring children to the world that you are unable to take care of. Every parent should be responsible in providing children with what is required for them to grow up as responsible citizens (Audio taped interview, 7<sup>th</sup> December 2015).

It is important for parents to be instructed on how to resolve family conflict creatively. This will ensure family stability and reduce anti-social ills in the community.



#### 4.6 Child Abuse

Child abuse is another factor that the participants recognized that contributes to increased anti-social behaviour. Children experience all kinds of abuse ranging from home, neighbourhood, relatives, school, church and social places. Since children are powerless to protect themselves and hold the society accountable for their safety, they suffer silently. There is a price to pay for child abuse. That price is where children grow up and turn the eye either to self, or in revenge indulges in anti-social ills such as killing, suicide, rape, stealing, drug and substance abuse, school dropout, and prostitution. ROMAN CATHOLIC RESPONDENT 1 has the following to say about child abuse as a factor that contributes to increased anti-social ills:

Child abuse has a significant contribution on antisocial behaviour. It ranges from sexual, physical, social and even economic abuse. Children are usually abused by close relatives. Sexual abuse leads to social ills such as unwanted pregnancies, prostitution, early marriages, dropping out of school, drug and substance abuse and STDs. Physical abuse among children is also common. This is usually done by maids who are expected to be care givers. Social abuse can also be recognized in Gusii community. Involving children in social activities that are not age appropriate for them in Gusii community also takes place. In Gusii social activities such as burial ceremonies where drinking of alcohol and inappropriate dancing takes place, children sometimes get involved. In those social activities children end up imitating bad moral behaviours. It is not uncommon to get a parent who drinks alcohol going with children. Even those who make local liquor, involve children. Children get exposed to unbecoming behaviour leading to increased anti-social behaviour. Economic abuse among children is rampant in Gusii community. Because of poverty, children are engaged in child labour. Some children are employed to take care of livestock, serve as child care givers and several other nature of work. Child labour leads to school dropout, drug and substance abuse and other social ills (Audio taped interview, 6<sup>th</sup> December, 2015).

Keeping the child safe is essential if antisocial ills are to be addressed. Child abuse according to TRADITIONAL GUSII RESPONDENT 2 can be addressed as follows:

Traditional teaching and practice of parenting that was considered as communal responsibility should be practiced to curb the challenge of child abuse. Traditionally, children were kept safe from social activities that were not age appropriate. The whole community was interested on the safety of the child. Child labour which takes place because of poverty can be mitigated by able relatives providing for the children of their relatives that are unable. The Christian should stand to speak for the weak. They should provide assistance for the sexually abused children to access legal and medical attention. At the same

time, the church should instruct parents on how to keep safe their children from abuse. Empowering parents on how to create wealth for the provision of basic needs to their children should be addressed by the church. The church equally should train parents on the way to discipline their children without causing physical injury. Protecting children against any abuse should be taken seriously by all (Audio taped interview, 10<sup>th</sup> December, 2015).

Child abuse can be addressed by the whole community. It is a social responsibility to keep the children safe. The church as a social institution should address the challenge by instructing parents and the church on how to protect children.

#### **4.7 Lack of Employment**

In Gusii community, there is scarcity of land. Land is considered in Kisii as a source of livelihood. This is because the Gusii people traditionally depended on farming. That is why they settled on the highlands with plenty of rain. Due to high population density and scarcity of land, Gusii people shifted from farming to investing in education. The Gusii came to believe that education will become the source of livelihood. With the high rate of unemployment majority of the educated youth in Gusii community are idle. Idleness leads to the youth's involvement in anti-social ills such as crime, stealing, drug and substance abuse, prostitution and other social ills. TRADITIONAL GUSII RESPONDENT 1 describes the situation as follows:

There are many youth who went to school but are unemployed. These youths are idle. Some families sold land, cattle and other family assets to take their children to school. They expected that when their children will complete their education, they will be employed and provide assistance to the parents and their siblings. Instead it complicates the situation. It brings a double disadvantage. The limited resources have been sold to fund education and at the same time, the educated children are unemployed. This leads to abject poverty and unemployment. Due to lack of employment and poverty, it leads to depression. The youth get discouraged and start to engage in anti-social ills such as stealing, drug and substance abuse, crime, prostitution, premarital sex, extramarital sex, and other anti-social behaviour. The unemployed parents find it very difficult to provide their children with the basic needs. Unemployment cause severe strain to the family. This strain can even lead to inter-parental conflict. The inter-parental conflicts can degenerate to the level of separation and even divorce. These dysfunctional families complicate parenting. Children find themselves in an awkward situation (Audio taped interview, 9<sup>th</sup> December, 2015).

To access employment equally has become complicated. In these days, employment opportunity is not granted based on competence and qualification. Employment opportunity is granted based on who you are related to. Corruption, tribalism, nepotism, clannism are the major determinants of accessing employment opportunity. ROMAN CATHOLIC RESPONDENT 3 says:

Poverty complicates the situation of families taking children to school. Those who struggle in poverty and take their children to school, it becomes difficult to access employment. Employment is accessed by those who have relatives in the position of granting employment opportunity. Even if you have a competent and highly qualified child, unless you have money to bribe or a relative to assist your child to access employment, they remain unemployed. Corruption, nepotism, clannism and tribalism have become the major challenge of children from poor families accessing employment opportunity. The situation has contributed to enhancing generational poverty. The poor continues to remain poor and the rich retain their position. Children from poor backgrounds find life to be complicated. The complication of accessing basic needs leads them to engage in anti-social ills (Audio taped interview, 8<sup>th</sup> December, 2015).

The challenge of unemployment should be addressed. SDA RESPONDENT 2 provides a suggestion on how to mitigate the challenge:

The church as a social institution should design a programme of empowering parents and the youth on self-reliance. The church can form training groups of parents and youth on job and wealth creation. They can invite professionals who can empower the parents and youths on the knowledge and skills of job creation, self-reliance and creation of wealth. The Gusii community must move away from seeking for employment to creating employment opportunities. There are many opportunities that are unexploited by parents and youths. The peoples' minds should be challenged to be creative. That creativity can provide employment and resources for life sustenance. The church as a social institution should take their position of discouraging corruption, clannism, nepotism and tribalism. They should serve as role models to the society in not condoning corruption, nepotism, clannism and tribalism within their ranks (Audio taped interview, 4<sup>th</sup> December, 2015).

The challenge of unemployment in contributing to pressure on parenting is real. Creativity is the best way out of this pressure. Instructing parents on job and wealth creation is essential. The church as a social institution should be in front line on addressing the challenge. This will be done through empowerment of the adherents on wealth and job creation. At the same time, the church should take up their role of

speaking out for the weak seriously. Holding the government accountable to its citizens is important. The church should speak out on discouraging corruption, nepotism, clannism and tribalism.

#### **4.8 Discipline**

The root cause of bad behaviour is parent deficit in disciplining their children. Most people assume that discipline is the same as punishing. Discipline is misunderstood, misaligned and marginalized. This has led to a crisis, a crisis for parents and a crisis for young people. The increased anti-social behaviour illustrate that the crisis is no longer contained. ROMAN CATHOLIC RESPONDENT 2 describes the situation as follows:

The modern parent is not patient on guiding the child on the right behaviour. The focus in parenting today is on freedom and discovery. Parents are pre-occupied with the non-essentials leaving the essential aspect of disciplining the child to the maids and caregivers. The modern parent is so busy in search of material possession. It is considered unnecessary to set time aside to be with the children for the purpose of guiding them. We don't understand that as each day passes; the fabric of character that the child will display in later life is shewn. Character is formed in each successful day. The mind of the child being young and inexperienced requires the guidance of the parent to develop right behaviour. It requires that good behaviours be rewarded and bad behaviour corrected. If the parent does not have time with the child, when will you note bad behaviour to be corrected and good behaviour to be rewarded? We give a lot of excuses for bad behaviour of our child. Sometimes we blame the maids, the community or modernity but the real problem is lack of responsibility of parents in disciplining our children (Audio taped interview, 7<sup>th</sup> December, 2015).

The idea of absent fathers and mothers has contributed to the lack of discipline in our children. This does not necessarily mean that the children do not have father or mother. It simply means that they are absent in the action of disciplining their children. SDA RESPONDENT 3 has the following to say:

Most parents get married without a proper knowledge of what is required of being a parent. Parents are not adequately prepared on how to carry out parenting. In Gusii community most men are not available to guide the children on the issues of life. Some are drunkards, others go out in search of employment, and others are just idle. The work of disciplining children is solely left under the care of the mother. In some cases, the mother is absent due to employment, business engagements or due to other circumstances. In such situation, either the father is left with children or in most cases they are left alone. Children navigate through life challenges in the absence of parents. With their inexperience, children lack discipline and guidance. Children lack the assistance to learn and manage their own behaviour. Many parents will have

themselves experienced poor parenting, abuse or neglect and will be limited in their understanding of their children's needs (Audio taped interview, 5<sup>th</sup> December, 2015).

The church as a social institution should address the area of equipping parents with skills on child discipline seriously. SDA RESPONDENT 1 says:

Quality parenting and good discipline requires time, patience and love. The church should develop a strategy that offers support to parents on how to carry out child discipline at home. They should be trained on how to disciple children in good behaviour to avoid the extreme of using harsh punishments in tackling the problem when it is too late. The church should support families on the parenting skills at an early stage to prevent them from developing discipline problems. Helping parents to be the best in disciplining and guiding children is basic if anti-social ills have to be contained (Audio taped interview, 4<sup>th</sup> December, 2015).

Discipline is paramount in any area of life. It must begin at an early age. It will never be attained when it is too late. Parents occupy a special position in disciplining the child and guiding them of the right path in life. The church should take the task of empowering parents on disciplining skills seriously.

#### **4.9 Summary**

The participants of both the Christian teaching and practice and traditional teaching and practice on parenting noted that there are several factors that exert pressure on parenting. These factors are social economic issues. Parents in Gusii community are faced with a wide array of severe challenges, for which makes their role of parenting quite complicated. The social-economic factors the participants noted that exert pressure on parenting included: work-family conflict, poverty, drug and substance abuse, modern technology, inter-parental conflicts, child abuse, lack of employment and discipline.

The major task of the parent is to guide the children and encourage them to acquire good moral behaviour. The primary responsibility is to provide children with the basic needs of life. These basic needs of life have come to be understood as to include food,

shelter, clothing, health care, education and recreational activities. The provision of these basic needs directly determine the behaviour adopted and displayed by children. The factors that exert pressure on parenting affect the capacity of parents to provide care, support and protection to children. Some parents are determined to provide quality parenting but because of social-economic factors such as poverty, inter-parental conflict, work-family conflict, child abuse, drug and substance abuse, discipline and lack of employment, they find themselves in a difficult situation. Many families in Gusii community seem to be troubled because of those factors that are exerting pressure on parenting. The parents desire to be responsible, but the ability to provide is hindered by the prevailing social-economic pressures. The strain experienced by parents in such a situation make them feel that they are failing as parents. It becomes complicated for the parent to establish code of ethics, ideas, values and beliefs that are necessary for moral development.

The participants noted that the church as a social institution has a role to play in mitigating the factors that exert pressure on parenting. They said that the church as a community of believers has a responsibility to encourage and mobilize members and relatives to provide for children from poor families. To empower parents and the youth on wealth and job creation will be a way forward in addressing poverty and lack of employment. The church equally has a role of teaching parents on how to handle family conflicts creatively. In some circumstances the church can make it possible for families in conflict to seek guidance and counselling aimed at uniting dysfunctional families. In the area of child and spousal abuse, the church can assist the victims who are powerless to access medical and legal services.

The participants recognized that the church as a social institution can play a central role on equipping parents with quality parenting skills. These parenting skills will empower parents to understand on how to relate to each other as parents. The best way of

disciplining children, how to avoid child abuse, ways of keeping children safe with modern technology and protecting them from drug and substance abuse, partnering with the government to eradicate the abuse of drug and substance is among the major roles the church should participate in. It is also important that the church serves as a role model in all areas of social life. It should shun nepotism, tribalism and clannism within its ranks and beyond. The church should serve the role of being the voice for the weak and disadvantaged. It should speak for the vulnerable when there is injustice practiced against them. It should be the voice for the voiceless. The Christian should be morally upright demonstrating the capacity to propagate moral development in the community. The church can also serve as a role model in moral development. The final chapter contains the summary, conclusions, and recommendations.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 5.0 Introduction

This chapter deals with the summary, conclusions, and recommendations that emerged from the study. The purpose of the study was to conduct a comparative study of Christian and traditional Gusii teaching and practices on parenting with an aim of understanding why there is increased anti-social ills in Gusii community. The goal was to develop an integrated parenting strategy to address the challenge of increased anti-social ills in Gusii community and beyond.

#### 5.1 Summary

This section presents the summary of the whole study. In the first chapter, the background of the problem, statement of the problem, aim of the study, objectives of the study, and limitations of the study were presented. Then followed by the review of literature on the effects of parenting skills and factors exerting pressure on parenting. The chapter also presented the theoretical and conceptual framework of the study. Finally in the first chapter presented the rationale for selecting the two approaches for this study that is Traditional historical criticism for the study of Proverbs 1:8-19 and qualitative approach for collecting data from the Christian and traditional parenting participants. In the discussion of methodology, the details of the participants, data collection, coding, and analysis procedures were presented. The chapter concluded with a description of the reliability, trustworthiness, and ethical considerations of the study.

Chapter 2 analysed the Biblical texts of Proverbs 1:8-19 that deal with parental instruction which is thought to inform the Christian teaching and practices on parenting and its relevance in traditional Gusii teaching and practices on parenting. In the textual analysis of Proverbs 1:8-19, it has been ascertained that the text deals with the parental



instruction from a parent to the child aimed at building a worldview and moral character of the child. Consequently, empowering the child with strategies to enable her/him to live a successful life as an adult. From the form and genre analysis of Proverbs 1-9, it has been confirmed that Proverbs 1-9 is composed of two literary forms, i.e. the instruction genre and as wisdom poem. The two are related but distinct. The focus of this research was on the instruction genre and more particularly as found in Proverbs 1:8-19, which comprises parental instruction in which the child is urged to accept the way of wisdom. This is the foundation upon which the child's success in life is built.

It is a clear teaching of these instruction that a primary source of the child's education in life is the home. This is the Word of the Lord for the Christian in Gusii community. It is the instrument in the hands of the Christian here in Gusii community to reconstruct the family structure that has been devastated. Parenting, as it has been discussed in this study, is the foundation of any society on the face of the earth.

Chapter 3 analysed the data presented by the respondents on the comparison of the teaching and practices of Christian and traditional Gusii parenting. Information that emerged from the narratives of Christian teaching and practice on parenting participants indicate that the empowerment of parents with quality parenting skills by the church is minimal. The participants observed that their churches do not have a structured systematic programme designed for equipping parents with quality parenting skills. The participants expressed their feelings that the Christian church has a special position as a social institution to address the need of empowering parents with quality parenting skills. They felt that the Christian church can teach parents in their communities to model parental skills and guide their children on moral development leading to a quality society.

The participants have a strong conviction that equipping parents with quality parenting skills will be a step forward in reducing anti-social ills. They recognized the fact that

families are the basic unit of society. The family provides the best environment for meeting a child's development needs. The participants felt that the church is the social institution that took over from the traditional Gusii community. The major role of the traditional Gusii community which was equipping parents with quality parenting skills can be carried out by the church. The church should empower parents to provide care and protection. This will help the children learn how to interact with other people, discover their role as morally upright citizens and contribute positively for the communal development.

The participants of traditional Gusii teaching and practices on parenting recognized the fact that equipping parents with quality parenting skills was a life cycle process. Traditionally, the Gusii community addressed the concerns of moral development of children communally. Parenting was approached in a wholistic manner. The participants described traditional parenting as communal. The entire community participated in the development of the individual into an all-round moral agent, able to positively contribute to the growth and stability of the society. The grandparents, parents, brothers, sisters, uncles, aunts, elders and relatives ensured that a child born in their midst is well trained, fed, protected and cared for.

The traditional respondents also indicated that the process of equipping parents with quality parenting skills in traditional Gusii community was systematically structured. Instructions on parenting were designed in a manner that it matched with the appropriate stage of parenting. The participants described that parenting lessons passed on from one generation to the other was through taboos, norms, customs and practices of the Gusii community. The taboos, customs, norms and practices were embedded in the Proverbs, riddles, wise sayings, parables, stories, narratives and songs. The ceremonies that were carried out provided an environment of cementing the communal relationship.

Traditional Gusii participants viewed modern parenting as providing children with a lot of freedom. That freedom granted to children puts them at risk of misbehaviour in the society. They suggest that close supervision and monitoring should be provided for the inexperienced young people. The modern way of parenting which seems to encourage individualism can be mitigated by the Christian church as a community of believers. The Christian church can provide an environment that supports parents on taking care and protecting children. Moral development is the core purpose for existence of the church. This purpose can be achieved by equipping the caregivers. The quality of child care and protection will determine the quality of the church and the society.

Chapter 4 concluded with analysis of the data presented by the respondents on the factors that contribute to pressures on parenting in Gusii community. The participants of both the Christian teaching and practice and traditional teaching and practice on parenting noted that there are several factors that exert pressure on parenting. These factors are social economic issues. Parents in Gusii community are faced with a wide array of severe challenges, for which makes their role of parenting quite complicated. The social-economic factors the participants noted that exert pressure on parenting included: work-family conflict, poverty, drug and substance abuse, modern technology, parental conflicts, child abuse, lack of employment and discipline.

The major task of the parent is to guide the children and encourage them to acquire good moral behaviour. The primary responsibility is to provide children with the basic needs of life. These basic needs of life have come to be understood as to include food, shelter, clothing, health care, education and recreational activities. The provision of these basic needs directly determine the behaviour adopted and displayed by children. The factors that exert pressure on parenting affect the capacity of parents to provide care, support and protection to children. Some parents are determined to provide quality parenting but because of social-economic factors such as poverty, parental conflict,

work-family conflict, child abuse, drug and substance abuse, discipline and lack of employment, they find themselves in a difficult situation. Many families in Gusii community seem to be troubled because of those factors that are exerting pressure on parenting. The parents desire to be responsible, but the ability to provide is hindered by the prevailing social-economic pressures. The strain experienced by parents in such a situation make them feel that they are failing as parents. It becomes complicated for the parent to establish code of ethics, ideas, values and beliefs that are necessary for moral development.

The participants noted that the church as a social institution has a role to play in mitigating the factors that exert pressure on parenting. They said that the church as a community of believers has a responsibility to encourage and mobilize members and relatives to provide for children from poor families. To empower parents and the youth on wealth and job creation will be a way forward in addressing poverty and lack of employment. The church equally has a role of teaching parents on how to handle family conflicts creatively. In some circumstances the church can make it possible for families in conflict to seek guidance and counselling aimed at uniting dysfunctional families. In the area of child and spousal abuse, the church can assist the victims who are powerless to access medical and legal services.

## **5.2 Conclusion**

The central question that should be asked in this conclusion is: What can the Christian church in Gusii community do to address the challenge of increased antisocial behaviour among children in Gusii community. The parental instruction in Proverbs 1:8-19 is an indispensable resource to the Christian church to fulfil her role of parenting. Parental instructions provide Gusii Christian parents with the worldview upon which parental teaching is built. Parents are guided that they should not allow their children to choose whatever they want in life; that there are ethos and principles

that are to be cultivated in the children as they grow up. For these reasons, parental instructions give parents a sense of responsibility regarding the growing up of their children. Children are not to be left on their own. It is a clear teaching of these instruction that a primary source of the child's education is the home. This is the Word of the Lord for the Christian church in Gusii community. It is the instrument in the hands of the Christian church in Gusii community to reconstruct the family structure that has been devastated. Parenting, as it has been discussed in the study, is the foundation of any society on the face of the earth.

Parental instruction in Proverbs 1:8-19 provide parents as well as the Gusii Christian community in general with values and teachings that need to be instilled in the minds and hearts of children. Parents are not left alone in the confused jungle of ideas about parenting. Parents are provided with what they need to teach their children. Proverbs 1:8-19 provides Gusii Christian parents with reasons to endure in the work of parenting. When children are well raised, parents are assured of peace and unity in families and the community. People will respect each other in the community. Parenting becomes a vehicle of addressing antisocial behaviour in the community.

The respondents recognized the fact that equipping parents with quality parenting skills in traditional parenting was a life cycle process with a systematically structured programme. They addressed the concerns of moral development of children communally. The entire community participated in the development of the individual into an all-round moral agent, able to positively contribute to the growth and stability of the society. The grandparents, parents, brothers, sisters, uncles, aunts, elders and relatives ensured that a child born in their midst is well trained, fed, protected and cared for. While the modern parenting seems to be individualistic without a systematically structured programme. That the Christian church do not have a programme of training parents systematically with quality parenting skills. This may describe the reason why

there is a paradox in the Gusii community where majority are Christians and yet there is increased antisocial ill.

They described the life cycle process of traditional parenting to have commenced with the young couples and parents undergoing several stages of training about parenting. The life cycle process of equipping parents with quality parenting skills commenced at initiation and continued throughout the period of parenting. Initiation was a crucial rite of passage in traditional Gusii community. Initiation served a special purpose in equipping young people with quality parenting skills. It was a ceremony that marked a transition from childhood to parenthood. It was at this rite of passage that young people were initiated to womanhood or manhood. Mature boys and girls were prepared at this stage for an important role in life. The participants described how the initiates were equipped with moral virtues essential for parents. This was done through special ceremonies conducted during the period of initiation and while the initiates were in seclusion.

Traditional Gusii community ensured that the quality parenting skills instructed were implemented. This was done by putting the initiates in seclusion for at least four weeks under the guidance of experienced elders, grandparents and parents. Secondly by taking the male initiates to “*Gesarate*” for further training on parenting under the guidance of the elders, grandfathers and fathers. The female initiates remained in the homestead for further training under the tutorship of mother, grandmother and experienced elderly women. Thirdly, after marriage, and during delivery, the daughter in-law moved to the mother in-law’s house for further guidance on parenting. The young husband went back to “*Gesarate*” for practical training on how to bring up the child. The young couples were not allowed to move from the parents homestead immediately after marriage and delivery. They continued to stay in the homestead for further guidance on parenting until such a time that the parents were satisfied that they have attained the parenting

skills necessary to help them stand alone. At this level, they were allowed to establish their own homestead.

Respondents view the church as a social institution that took over from the traditional Gusii community. The major role of the traditional Gusii community which was equipping parents with quality parenting skills can be carried out by the church. The church should empower parents to provide care and protection. This will help the children learn how to interact with other people, discover their role as morally upright citizens and contribute positively for the communal development.

Parenting skills will empower parents to understand on how to relate to each other as parents. The best way of disciplining children, how to avoid child abuse, ways of keeping children safe with modern technology and protecting them from drug and substance abuse, partnering with the government to eradicate the abuse of drug and substance is among the major roles the church should participate in. It is also important that the church serves as a role model in all areas of social life. It should shun nepotism, tribalism and clannism within its ranks and beyond. The church should serve the role of being the voice for the weak and disadvantaged. It should speak for the vulnerable when there is injustice practiced against them. It should be the voice for the voiceless. The Christian church should be morally upright demonstrating the capacity to propagate moral development in the community.

The results of the study emphasized the importance of and the need for the Christian church to equip parents with quality parenting skills with a goal of reducing anti-social ills in Gusii community. Unless the Christian church addresses this important task, the community is headed to a social decay and disintegration. The Christian church in Gusii should consider to implement the recommended integrated parenting strategy to empower parents and salvage the community from social breakdown. Empowering

parents to competently guide children on moral values and provide them with basic needs will go a long way of reducing anti-social ills in Gusii Community and beyond.

### **5.3 Recommendations**

The study of Proverbs 1:8-19 and the participants voices in this study found out the role of parents as integral in determining the quality of the community. It was further recognized that building a morally upright society dependent upon their role as significant contributors to the social behaviour among children. Their parenting skills also serve as a conduit for the prevention of behaviour problems in children which will help curb anti-social ills. This overall theme provides a framework for the sub-themes that became apparent during the course of the study. The sub themes that follow are the recommendations of an integrated strategy of Christian teaching and practices and traditional Gusii community teaching and practices on parenting. The goal is to provide quality parenting skills. This will go a long way to address increased anti-social ills in the community.

Six major themes emerged from the study of the Biblical text of Proverbs 1:8-19 and the analysed data of the participants voices on the recommendations of an integrated strategy of empowering parents. First, the study of Proverbs 1:8-19 reveals that the Gusii Christian consider to adopt and adapt the worldview of the parental instructions in Proverbs. Second, all participants expressed the unwavering consideration that the church takes parenting as a communal responsibility. Third, each participant stressed the need for the church to develop a structured systematic programme for empowering parents. Fourth, participants expressed the importance of the church to develop an alternative rite of passage with the purpose of empowering the youth who are potential parents with parenting skills. Fifth, participants recognized the need for the church to act as a moral agent that can hold the government and other agencies accountable to child care and protection. Lastly, participants expressed the need for contextualization



of the Gusii norms, taboos, customs and practices in the Christian context. The above recommendations are presented as follows:-

### **5.3.1 The Church to Consider to Adopt and Adapt the Worldview of the Parental Instructions in Proverbs 1:8-19**

The Gusii Christian should consider to adopt and adapt the worldview of the parental instructions in Proverbs and in particular Proverbs 1:8-19 in addressing the increased anti social ills in Gusii community.

What characterises the worldview of parental instruction in Proverbs 1:8-19? Parental instruction in Proverbs 1:8-19 does not just speak about parenting as a relationship between parents and children. It is more than that. Parents are to raise their children so that their children may live according to the God-given order in life. It is, therefore, fundamental in the worldview of the parental instructions that Yahweh created the entire universe with a specific order to be embraced.

Proverbs 1:8-19 and the supporting instructions in Proverbs 1-9 show that as a result of this order, there is a predictable relationship between acts and consequences. If a child accepts an invitation of those who want to kill innocent people in order to take their valuables from them, he is accepting an invitation to his own death. There is an order in life with which everybody has to abide. The universe belongs to Yahweh. This is well expressed in the following verses (3:19-20):

19 By wisdom the LORD laid the earth's foundations, by understanding he set the heavens in place;

20 By his knowledge the deeps were divided, and the clouds let drop the dew.

It is clear from these verses that God employed wisdom to lay the foundations of the earth. It is the same wisdom that the parent is urging his child to seek and to find so that he may have a blessed life.

In Proverbs 3:5 a parent urges his child to search for understanding and insight. The search for this understanding and insight is to know the fear of the Lord and to find the knowledge of the Lord. God has created the universe. He sovereignly owns it and determines life within it. Hence, the goal of the parent is to lead the child to God rather than to anyone else.

From Proverbs 2:1-22 it is clear that parents see themselves as instruments in the hands of God to lead children to him. They urge their children to heed their instructions. Their instructions will lead children to a good relationship with God and in turn that relationship will protect them from the wicked men.

Estes (1997, p.25) discusses the implications of the worldview of the parental instructions. He argues that implicit in the assumption that the universe is Yahweh's creation, is the conviction that meaning in human life is found only in relationship to the Creator. Thus a relationship with the Creator becomes the ultimate goal of parenting. Tripp (1995, p.22) argues with regard to parenting: "The child is interacting with the living God. He is either worshipping, serving and growing in understanding of the implications of who God is or he is seeking to make sense of life without a relationship with God." This worldview, therefore, dictates to parents to see their task as to shepherd the child as a creature who worships, pointing her to the One who alone is worthy of her worship. It is in relationship with Yahweh that the child can find fulfilment and happiness in Yahweh's universe.

Another implication that this worldview confronts us with is the fact that as God has created the whole creation, He has control over all creation. The modern dichotomy between secular life and religious faith is foreign to the worldview of parental instructions (Estes, 1997, p.25). From Proverbs 3:1-12 it is clear that the parent is urging the child to receive his teachings, which is God's wisdom. If the child embraces the parent's teachings, she/he will not only build his relationship with God, but she/he

will have fruitful relationships with other human beings and with the natural world. He/she will become prosperous in all areas of life. McKane (1970, p.290) argues that the teachings enable the young person to find his way in life and make a success of life. It can, therefore, be argued that a child's success and development in life is founded on the child's relationship with Yahweh, who is the creator of the universe. This serves as a reminder to Gusii Christian parents that they should never leave God out of their parental responsibilities. They are to raise their children for God's glory, then their children will live meaningful lives in all areas of life.

From Proverbs 3:27-35 and 5:1-23 it is clear that Yahweh watches over activities such as holding back good from a neighbour, plotting against a neighbour, accusing a neighbour with no reason, and the activities of a wicked woman. This omniscient character of Yahweh reveals that all of life is viewed as seamless fabric (Estes, 1997, p.25). Yahweh is sovereignly controlling the universe. He is the head of the world. The world is not driven by accidental forces, but is directed by the order that Yahweh had established at the creation. This is God's will for his creation (Brueggemann, 1972, p.23).

This order is knowable and can be observed as human beings are urged to go and watch the ants in Proverbs 6:6. This order that parents are to help their children discover, is imbedded in God's creation. Failure to act in accordance with God's order in creation is disobedience to God, and amounts to death. The inference that God has put his order in his creation, which needs to be observed and embraced for fruitful life in the world, has huge implications for Gusii Christian parents. Due to colonialism and modernism the Gusii people were robbed of their instruments to understand and investigate the order imbedded in creation. For Gusii children there is a discrepancy between the language of their schooling and the world of their immediate environment in the family and the community. Colonial language became a means of transporting

culture. Ngugi wa Thiongo (1986, p.17) reminds us of this sad truth as follows: “For a colonial child, the harmony existing between the three aspects of language as communication was irrevocably broken. This resulted in the disassociation of the sensibility of that child from his natural and social environment, what we might call colonial alienation. The alienation became reinforced in the teaching of history, geography, music, where bourgeois Europe was always the centre of the universe.” Language is an instrument that we use to understand the world. In order for Gusi Christian parents to face this challenge, they must start to promote the use of their own language in church services and in the education of their children. If we fail to face this challenge, we will continue to rob our children of the means to understand the world from within their own context. How will they become responsible human beings to God and to their communities if they are alienated from their own environment? Another element that is prevalent in the worldview of the parental instruction in Proverbs 1:8-19 is the sense of community. By sense of community we refer to the fact that a child is made aware through teaching that he is living in a community where there are other human beings that he has to take care of. A child is expected to live in such a way that his actions promote the wellbeing of other community members. This is clear in Proverbs 3:21-35 where the child is urged to exercise fair and generous treatment towards his neighbours. Murphy (1998, p.23) argues that verses 27-30 are prohibitions and commands dealing with one’s relationship with neighbours. Garret (1993, p.85) describes neighbours as labourers who have earned their pay, the poor who rightly plead for help or suppliants at the city gates who call for justice. This element of the worldview of parental instructions has grave implications for Christian parenting. Christian parenting’s focus is not solely on the wellbeing and development of an individual, but also on social cohesion. Children are to be raised, of course as individuals, but also raised to become responsible, mature members of the community. Children are to learn from home that they are to define their individuality within the

wider community. Therefore, the members of the family in this wider sense have an obligation to help and to protect one another (De Vaux, 1961, p.21). The advancement of life in the community rests on the shoulders of all individuals in the community.

However, we are to acknowledge that we are living in times in which individualism is a dominant worldview (Wells, 1994, p.204). Parental instruction in Proverbs 1:8-19 affirm our rejection of Rene Descartes' saying: "I think, therefore I exist" (Mbigi, 2005, p.81), and our embrace of the African saying: "I am because we are; and since we are, therefore I am" (Mbiti, 1969, p.108). Mbiti (1969, p.108) further argues: "In traditional life, the individual does not and cannot exist alone except corporately. He owes his existence to other people, including those of past generations and his contemporaries. He is simply part of the whole. The community must therefore make, create or produce the individual, for the individual depends on the corporate group." This should never be interpreted as meaning that one's individuality is not recognised within the community. However, it means that one's individuality is to be realised and interpreted within the community. One's individuality is to serve the good of the entire community. This point was well argued by Tiberondwa (1998, p.5), who says:

Both formally and informally, traditional education prepared the young members of a community for specific responsibilities they were going to shoulder in maturity. It was education for life with all its complexities, aimed at satisfying personal needs, promoting the growth of personal talents and serving the community in which the recipient of that education lived. This way the culture of one generation was transmitted to the succeeding generation.

Thus, we can conclude that Gusii Christian parents should integrate the Biblical teachings of Proverbs 1:8-19 with traditional Gusii worldview to raise their children to play a meaningful role in building the social cohesion of the Gusii community. This will go a long way to addressing antisocial ills in Gusii community and beyond.

### 5.3.2 The Church Consider Parenting as a Communal Responsibility

The church comprises of families and individual members of certain families. It is at the church setting as a social institution that families and individual members of certain families fellowship together. When different families and members of certain families come to the church, they form a community of believers. This community of believers have a common set of believes and goals. The different families and individual members of certain families that congregate together as a community of believers form a special family. In all their programmes and functions, the sense of family is fundamental. It is on this basis that the participants views the church as a social institution that took over from the traditional Gusii community. The traditional Gusii community structure comprised several families with common roots. They had common ancestor, norms, taboos, customs and practices. They considered themselves as of one blood and flesh with a common believe and goal in life. Fundamental to any family is moral development. Participants both of Christian and traditional teaching and practices on parenting recognized the upholding of parenting as a communal responsibility to be a recommendation that can address anti-social ills in Gusii community.

TRADITIONAL GUSII RESPONDENT 3 stated:

What I would hope for is that the church can provide a sense of community of warmth and love. That everyone in the church is interested on the well-being of each other. When people say I can feel part of the church family and I can feel how much the children of the church family are cared for and nurtured and how much the community of believers reaches out to one another, I think that is it. Everybody here knows we are interested on each one's moral behaviour (Taped interview, 11<sup>th</sup> December, 2015).

Interviews with participants, gave evidence that traditional Gusii community participated in the establishment of the individual into an all-round moral agent able to positively contribute to the growth and stability of society. Under the direction of elders, and grandparents, young parents were equipped with quality parental skills. They contributed their experience to support and empower young parents with skills on parenting. The church can take up from here and enrich programmes associated with

life skills. TRADITIONAL GUSII RESPONDENT 1 explained the importance of the church as a community of believers empowering young parents with quality parenting skills on Christian values as follows:

Due to the modern social economic trends, traditional Gusii community structure has disintegrated. It is no longer possible for people with common roots to stay in the same locality. Extended family members are scattered all over the globe. The only social institution that attracts families together is the church. The church can take over the traditional community functions. The major traditional Gusii community function was equipping parents with quality parenting skills. The main aim was to establish the individual on moral development (Taped interview, 9<sup>th</sup> December, 2015).

Since morality is the central tenet of Christian teaching, then the church is the most relevant social institution that can competently address the function of moral development in the society. The church can get professional volunteers that can contribute their time and talent to provide parents with skills on parenting. If the church community will provide this support, it would have contributed positively on addressing the anti-social ills in Gusii community.

The church as a community of believers can also play a role in ministering to the disadvantaged children of their church. Participants discussed on how the church can address the social economic needs of disadvantaged children. The church should consider this as an aspect of addressing anti-social ills in the community. TRADITIONAL GUSII RESPONDENT 2 seems to have given an elaborate explanation on how the church can address it as follows:

The church is a moral agent in any society. It should take its position faithfully and effectively. It should serve as a role model in the community on all moral aspects of life. The church should stand on the forefront on addressing the basic needs of children from poor families. A good Christian religion should find means of alleviating poverty among its adherents and empowering families to provide basic needs to their children. Encouraging and mobilizing able members and relatives to assist needy children should be a communal responsibility of the church. The church should work on strengthening spousal relationships. Improved spousal relationship has an impact on the moral behaviour of children. Instructing parents on how to keep children safe from drug and substance abuse, negative influences of modern technology and child abuse is a communal responsibility of the church. It is an expectation that the church shall serve as a

role model in eradicating corruption, tribalism, clannism and nepotism which is a hindrance for competent and qualified young people accessing employment opportunities. Empowering parents with skills of creating wealth and job opportunities is central to addressing anti-social ills in the community (Taped interview, 10<sup>th</sup> December, 2015).

Professional volunteers who are experts on training parents and the youth on how to exploit available opportunities to create wealth and job opportunities should be sought by the church to offer their services. Empowering poor families and unemployed youth on how to create resources for their daily livelihood is a responsibility that the church can competently address. The church can act as a link to assist the abused children access legal and medical assistance. This is the communal role the church can do to address increased anti-social ills in Gusii community.

The warmth of the church, acceptance and respect offered to each child and family, and creation of the church as a community of believers that feels more like extended family are characteristics that can reduce increased anti-social ills in the community. The cohesiveness of the community is nurtured through empowering members with quality parenting skills. The church's design, support and implementation of programmes of equipping parents with quality parenting skills are fundamental to the quality of the society.

### **5.3.3 The Church to Develop a Structured Systematic Programme for Empowering Parents**

Interview with participants provided insight that the Christian does not have a structured systematic programme designed to empower parents with quality parenting skills. Most of the participants recognized that the church has a structured systematic programme designed to instruct children and the youth in the church on religious matters. The participants said that traditional Gusii community teaching and practice on parenting was a life cycle process. That traditionally, at the heart of the community, SDA RESPONDENT 1 expressed it by saying: "The intensive programme of



instructing parents with quality parenting skills commenced at the rite of passage of initiation” (Taped interview, 4<sup>th</sup> December, 2015). Traditionally there was a clearly designed process of ensuring that parents are equipped with quality parenting skills.

The study recommends an integration of traditional teaching and practices on parenting that was a life cycle process with the Christian teaching and practice on parenting. According to ROMAN CATHOLIC RESPONDENT 2, the church should design a programme that instructs parents on quality parental skills. Her sentiments are:

I think the most important programme the church should design is that of systematically equipping parents with quality parenting skills. I just feel that parents shall be in a good position to instruct children on good morals if they are empowered constantly. The established children and youth department are doing a good work in the spiritual development of children and youth once a week. The whole week, children are under the care of parents. These parents should not be taught occasionally on family life in the church (Taped interview, 7<sup>th</sup> December, 2015).

The church should design a structured systematic programme that equips parents weekly on age appropriate skills on parenting. The empowered parents will carry on the instruction of children and youth within the week before they come back to church on Sunday or Saturday to receive instruction in their department. The vacuum created of instructing children and the youth within the week will be adequately addressed by empowered parents. The traditional Gusii community recognized the fact that children spend most of their time with parents. They dedicated their energies in instructing parents who have a direct influence on children. With the breakdown of traditional Gusii community family structure, the church is the most ideal social institution that took over this noble task.

This programme should be conducted by professionally qualified people on parenting. In the participants’ opinion, the occasional family life seminars conducted in the church is either by the priest, pastor or unprofessional lay people. The church can establish an

in-service training for training of trainers (TOTs). Just like what is done for the children teachers in church. SDA RESPONDENT 2's opinion is:

*Contrary to popular belief that parenting is experienced aspect, I think it is critical that parenting should be taught by professionals. There are many professionals who are church members that can readily offer volunteer services in training TOTS to empower parents (Taped interview, 4<sup>th</sup> December, 2015).*

I think it is a matter of appreciating the fact that there is need to equip parents with parenting skills. Most services in the church are offered on volunteer basis. It requires that the church recognizes and appreciates the role of these professionals who are also church members. The church is enormously endowed with untapped human resource. But obviously they can't offer the support unless a forum is created for them. They recognize that the church is a structured system. Unless a space is created for them to offer their support, then their services are left unutilized. The church comprises of gifted members. The gifted members should be managed by the church system in offering services.

TRADITIONAL GUSII RESPONDENT 4 reinforces the church's role of designing a structured systematic programme to equip parents with quality parenting skills as follows:

*Now I don't know why many other programmes take precedence over empowering parents with quality parental skills. Why spend so much time addressing other things and ignoring the very basic reason of our existence. The church exists to develop good morals in the society (Taped interview, 12<sup>th</sup> December).*

Children are born and raised in the family. The parents are members of the church. They play a key role in determining the moral development among children. Why then, should the church not spend an hour every Sunday or Saturday to empower these key determinants of moral behaviour in the society? The church should take the breakdown of the family as a serious disaster to the society. They will give parents a sense of community, a sense of growing and developing their capacity of parenting well.

According to the participants, key to empowerment of parents with quality parenting skills is the ability to integrate into the church programme the traditional aspect of intensive instruction of parents. The church as a community of believers will make sense as it looks on the amount of time they spend each worship day to empower parents. It is paramount if the Christian empowers parents to nurture children who will be morally upright. Fundamental to the church, is its role to empower parents to parent well.

#### **5.3.4 The Church to Develop an Alternative Rite of Passage**

The fourth recommendation is the Christian's consideration of developing an alternative rite of passage with a purpose of offering potential parents an opportunity of intensive training on parental skills. The participants said that the role of Gusii community elders, grandparents and parents on equipping young potential parents with quality parenting skills commenced at initiation. According to Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English, (2005, p.837), initiation is "the process of officially introducing someone into a club or group, or of introducing a young person to adult life, often with a special ceremony." The English definition agrees with the traditional Gusii understanding of initiation. In the traditional Gusii community initiation was a process of introducing a young person to adult life. It involved both girls and boys who were mature enough for marriage and parenthood. The initiation rite involved some rituals for young boys and girls of marriageable age. Initiation was a practice that involved a series of ceremonies and training of Gusii norms, taboos, customs, and practices. During this time the boys underwent traditional circumcision (a cut of the foreskin) and the girls underwent the cut of the clitoris (FGM). According to ROMAN CATHOLIC RESPONDENT 2, "initiation ceremony was a special rite of passage. Both male and female aged between 15-18 years went through the ceremony. The purpose of the ceremony was to mark a transition from childhood to parenthood" (Taped interview, 7<sup>th</sup> December 2015).

Those who went through the initiation ceremony were considered as mature boys and girls ready for marriage. The initiates were put under seclusion for a period not less than four weeks. Seclusion period provided an opportunity for the initiates to commence the basic training on the skills of parenting. The participants stated that at this period, the basic moral values expected of a parent were instilled. This was passed on through ceremonies which served as practical lessons. Some of the ceremonies that accompanied initiation were presented in chapter 3 as brought forth by the participants. They taught the basic skills of parenting such as bravery, hard work, patience, perseverance and carefulness.

Initiation ceremony provided a special opportunity for potential parents to be adequately prepared for the significant task of parenthood. This is an important concept that can be borrowed from the traditional Gusii community. Initiation ceremony is the preparation accorded to the initiates to learn parenting skills. As we endeavour to eradicate some of the dangerous aspects that accompanied the initiation ceremony such as the “female cut” of the genital organ (FGM), the church should in the same measure work on retaining some of the positive aspects associated with the said ceremony.

ROMAN CATHOLIC RESPONDENT 1 has the following to say:

*I think that Gusii community is suffering due to negligence of preparing potential parents adequately because of throwing away the initiation ceremony in wholesale. I tend to believe that we concentrated on the negative aspects of the initiation ceremony without taking stock of the positive aspects of the ceremony (Taped interview, 6<sup>th</sup> December 2015).*

I think that is one of the areas where Gusii community lost terribly. The repercussions of that is reflected on parents who really don't know their role as parents as they should. Then it produces a whole generation of parents who just do not have a clue on Gusii parenting skills. The church should develop an alternative rite of passage that comprises the positive aspects of traditional Gusii community initiation ceremony to teach the

potential parents on parenting skills. I really think that was one of the biggest things the Gusii community lost.

The Christian recognizes parents as the primary instructors of their children. SDA RESPONDENT 3 discussed the importance of empowering potential parents as follows:

*Our potential parents have no idea of how they should go about parenting in the event they get married and give birth to children. Most of us keep wondering what is expected of us in marriage and parenthood. We end up applying our own personal experiences in parenthood (Taped interview, 5<sup>th</sup> December 2015).*

The church developing an alternative rite of passage that incorporates the Gusii traditional initiation ceremonies that were positive will provide potential parents with the opportunity of systematically receiving parental skills. During this occasion the church can engage the services of professionals who can provide volunteer services on empowering parents with parenting skills.

Participants in this study stressed the significance of the church developing an alternative rite of passage. ROMAN CATHOLIC RESPONDENT 3 discussed the need for the Christian to integrate positive aspects of traditional Gusii community initiation ceremonies as follows:

Offering potential parents with quality parenting skills and developing alternative rite of passage to discourage Female Genital Mutilation should be at the heart of the church. The ceremonies that accompanied this rite of passage to offer practical lessons need to be modified, designed and implemented in the modern Christian context. The church can have a programme that runs for a period not less than four weeks to empower potential parents on the essential skills of parenthood. Experienced and professionals on parenting will be requested to volunteer their services as educators (facilitators). They can build on some subjects relevant to parenthood. All the church potential parents should go through a certain form of certification on parenting. If every potential parent goes through that, the church will comprise of potential parents fully equipped to nurture children who are morally upright (Taped interview, 8<sup>th</sup> December 2015).

To reinforce the concept of equipping potential parents on parenthood is an important foundation for moral development in the community. The church will build a strong foundation that will propel morality of the community to the higher levels. The church shall live up to what is expected of it and serve as a role model in the community.

### **5.3.5 The Need to Adopt and Adapt Some of the Traditional Gusii Norms, Customs, Taboos and Practices in the Christian Context**

The recommendation emerged from the analysed data of the participants that the traditional teaching and practice on parenting style referred parenting as a way of passing on the customs, taboos, norms and practices of the Gusii community. These norms, taboos, customs and practices aimed at bringing up a child who participated positively in the development of the community. During the initiation ceremony, while the initiates were in seclusion, they received intensive training on the customs, taboos, norms and practices of the traditional Gusii community. It was crucial for the initiates to be instructed on the deeper meaning of the traditional Gusii community customs, norms, traditions and practices by the elders, grandparents and parents. These norms, customs, taboos and practices were embedded in the riddles, Proverbs, songs, stories, wise sayings and parables. They served as the medium through which the instructional lessons about moral development were passed on from one generation to the other. These forms of speech had an aspect of entertainment. Children and potential parents enjoyed listening to them as they were narrated by elders, grandparents and parents. The main purpose was not for entertainment, but instruction. They included the desired moral behaviour expected of them to display in the society.

The ideal of moral development, central to the traditional Gusii teaching and practices on parenting, was deeply rooted in the norms, customs, taboos and practices of the community. TRADITIONAL GUSII RESPONDENT 3 spoke on the need to contextualize the traditional Gusii norms, customs, taboos and practices:

I believe that traditional Gusii norms, customs, taboos and practices played a significant role in the moral development of the society. Some aspects of these practices may have become obsolete over time but not everything should be discarded as primitive and barbaric. I strongly believe that there are valuable aspects of traditional Gusii norms, customs, taboos and practices that are relevant to the modern moral development. These can assist to organize and regulate the thinking, feeling and behaviour of people in the society (Taped interview, 6<sup>th</sup> December 2015).

The traditional Gusii norms, taboos, customs and practices themselves are not evil, but probably a composite of how they were presented may have become irrelevant. The church should look for a way to peel out those irrelevant aspects and then expose the positive features that will be essential to enhance moral development in Gusii society. Instead of discarding traditional Gusii norms, taboos, customs and practices wholesome, the church should engage them with care and discernment to safe Gusii society from moral disintegration.

The Christian teachings and practices were not established in a vacuum. They were introduced in an already established society. The Gusii society had already established standards that governed their behaviour. It was not a neutral society. The people on whom the Christian attracted their converts from had deep rooted customs, taboos, norms and practices that shaped their way of life. In fact the people's culture shapes a person's perception of new ideas. The traditional Gusii people should have embraced Christianity in the medium that was readily understood to them. TRADITIONAL GUSII RESPONDENT 2 says:

With the introduction of Christianity the change was not abrupt, but was gradual. Some traditional Gusii community norms, customs, traditions and practices continued to be practiced. I believe the greatest problem that the European missionaries encountered was that they viewed the traditional Gusii norms, taboos, and customs as uncivilized, paganism and backward which were by all means supposed to be uprooted and civilized. Instead of taking time to understand why they practiced them and serve as a medium of evangelization, they engaged themselves in destabilizing the Gusii social systems. My suggestion could have been that the missionaries should have first engaged themselves on understanding their new environment. They should have patiently studied the way of life of the people they wanted to convert. Have full understanding of their customs, norms, taboos and practices. Then systematically engage themselves in meeting their converts in the local form

upholding that which was good and guiding them to eradicate that which was bad (Taped interview, 10<sup>th</sup> December 2015).

TRADITIONAL GUSII RESPONDENT 2's argument makes a lot of sense. The missionaries should have endeavoured to broaden their understanding of traditional Gusii people to include dynamic and flexible ways of dealing with moral issues. They should have been open and able to enrich the positive aspects of the taboos, customs, norms and practices they encountered in the traditional Gusii community. This was to be achieved by seeking to understand the traditional Gusii riddles, parables, songs, stories, Proverbs and wise sayings. Then by adjusting or accommodating these forms of instruction, it could have been possible to adopt and adapt ideas that were already familiar to their cultural setting.

The recommendation of adopting and adapting some of the traditional Gusii norms, customs, taboos and practices in the Christian context is essential in addressing antisocial ills. TRADITIONAL GUSII RESPONDENT 1 says:-

No one ever meets universal Christianity in itself. we ever meet Christianity in a local form and that means a historically, culturally conditioned form. We need not to fear this, when God became man he became historically, culturally conditioned man in a particular place. What he became, we need not fear to be. There is absolutely nothing wrong in having local forms incorporated in Christian way of teaching about moral behaviour in the society. Provided we remember that they are local. The teachings of Christianity remain objectively true in all times and in all places and cultures (Taped interview, 9<sup>th</sup> December, 2015).

In fact the argument is that we receive Christianity wrapped in the baggage of a particular cultural context. Adopting and adapting some of the traditional Gusii norms, customs, taboos and practices matters because we are not eternal timeless and a cultural. Christianity's way of life depends on how it presents eternal truths, live in and relate to the society. How we see things, understand them and present them to others must take into account the evangelization context.



A failure to understand the norms, customs, taboos and practices of the community can actually lead to the breakdown of morality of that particular society. It leads to resistance of new ideas presented. People begin to believe that their cultural ideas are under attack. This action will be unhelpful, because the potential converts will feel that somebody is trying to force a distant culture to their way of life.

SDA RESPONDENT 1 has a special observation on this:

People have different worldviews which in turn impact how they interpret themselves, the world and the things they do. The Gusii people interpret their own moral values in forms of their unique parables, Proverbs, wise saying, songs, riddles and stories. Support should be provided in adopting and adapting some of this form of moral instruction. It will provide an opportunity to equip parents with skills they can readily identify themselves with and relevant to their cultural setting (Taped interview, 4<sup>th</sup> December 2015).

The participants seem to imply that Christianity should display a strong incarnational model. Jesus Christ's incarnation not only took on human flesh, he also accepted a specific cultural context. Shaping the moral behaviour of the society in a way that is most relevant to the culture of the community is important in addressing anti-social behaviour.

ROMAN CATHOLIC RESPONDENT 1's discussion on the process of adopting and adapting some of this traditional Gusii norms, customs, taboos and practices is worthy to note:

Christian moral values should be encoded in forms that are understood by the people. This is an ongoing process of embodying the moral values in an ever changing world. Here the cultural norms, taboos, customs and practices are seen as a vehicle for understanding the acceptable moral requirements of the community (Taped interview, 5<sup>th</sup> December 2015).

When examining these customs, norms, taboos and practices, the church should critically decide what parts to accept, what parts to reject and what parts to adjust that add value to good moral values. I believe this assessment will be beneficial in enriching the church's role in equipping parents with quality parenting skills.

The goal of adopting and adapting some of the traditional Gusii customs, norms, taboos and practices is to create an indigenous expression of local forms of instruction that the community can easily relate to. When the local community think of the moral values as their own not foreign ideas, they can readily embrace and nurture them as their own moral values. The Christian should conduct an honest evaluation, develop an awareness of the history of the customs, taboos, norms and practices and maintain a focus for the purpose of adopting and adapting them. Adopting and adapting them will be an important component of the Christian addressing the breakdown of moral behaviour in Gusii community effectively.

### **5.3.6 The Church to Act as a Moral Agent that can hold the Government and Other Agencies Accountable to Child Care and Protection**

The sixth and last recommendation is that the Christian has a role to invest in child care and protection and at the same time act as a moral agent that can hold the government and other private agencies accountable to child care and protection. ROMAN CATHOLIC RESPONDENT 1 stressed the role of the church to invest in child care and protection as follows:

I think because of the social challenges in the community such as poverty, divorce, separation, single mothers/fathers, orphans, inter-parental conflicts and work-family conflict, children find themselves on the receiving end. These social challenges hit children hardest. In most cases, they find the cost of child care unaffordable. These families find themselves having resources barely sufficient to access the basic needs for child care and protection. Because of the sub-standard economic status of these families, children are suffering from the effects of poverty. The church cannot afford to ignore the economic and social necessity of child care. The church should make deliberate plans to cushion the underprivileged children access to basic necessities of life (Taped interview, 5<sup>th</sup> December 2015).

The church has a significant role to play in responding to the needs of child care for the disadvantaged families. Touching lives of the under privileged members of the community should be the main agenda of the church as a social institution. This will go

a long way to helping reduce anti-social ills such as stealing, drug and substance abuse, early marriages, prostitution and even dropping out of school.

The second role of the church in child care and protection is to hold the government and other agencies accountable. The government must play its proper role in providing child care and protection to those families that are economically challenged. The reluctance of the government to define child care as a public responsibility rather than a purely personal one can be voiced by the church as an important social institution to hold the government accountable.

According to SDA RESPONDENT 2, stability of the nation is founded on the principles of caring and protection of the vulnerable in the community.

I think living in poverty and inability to provide for the powerless, causes the greatest depression in human life. Child care and protection is the most important issues facing the Gusii community and the main driver for anti-social behaviour in the community. The church has a role to play in calling the attention of the government and other social agencies in apparent recognition of this. The government can develop programmes aimed at making child care more affordable for low income families, developing the supply of child care services, and improving the quality of these services (Taped interview, 4<sup>th</sup> December 2015).

In apparent recognition of the need for child care and protection, the government of Kenya has developed some measures of mitigating the challenge by giving a stipend subsidy to orphans, poor, widowed people and the elderly people. Also the government of Kenya has developed low-interest loans for the youth and women. The greatest challenge to this service is the inability of right people accessing these provisions. This is due to the prevailing factors such as corruption, nepotism, clannism, and tribalism among others. Here is where the role of the church as moral agent to hold the government and other social agencies accountable for child care and protection. TRADITIONAL GUSII RESPONDENT 1 discusses this aspect in a clear way:

I think corruption, nepotism, clannism, and tribalism have played a great role in propagating anti-social ills in Gusii community. The services provided for the vulnerable members of the society to cushion them from the challenges of poverty does not reach them. The low interest loans for the youth and women, the government subsidy for the orphans, poor widowed people, and the elderly poor is not accessed by those who deserve it. These resources end up in the pockets of some of those in government positions and their relatives. This complicates the problem more because it is assumed that very low income and children with special needs access these services, where in reality the child care and protection problem is not attacked at all (Taped interview, 9<sup>th</sup> December 2015).

I think the voice of the church needs to be heard here loud and clear. The church as a moral agent that holds the government accountable to child care and protection should push for the creation of systems and structures which ensure that eligible recipients access the funding in a simple, effective and efficient way. These systems and structures should be able to evaluate and identify that those eligible for assistance are accessing it. The systems and structures can be able to provide strong internal controls. The government agencies should carry out monitoring and evaluation while other independent social institutions such as banking facilities handle the distribution of funds to the eligible recipients. Without the assurance of child care, it is all but impossible to have a morally upright society. The church should take their moral role seriously and diligently.

The church equally has a role to play as a moral agent to hold accountable other social agencies. These social agencies include the banking institutions, the private employers and business people. These social agencies should not exploit the public in profit making without participating in the communities' social needs. Addressing the social needs should be part of the goals and objectives of any social agencies. The church stands at a good chance on approaching these agencies to give back to the community assistance to cushion needy families. ROMAN CATHOLIC RESPONDENT 3 stressed these needs as follows:

I believe other social agencies have a crucial social responsibility to impact on the development of social behaviour in their sphere of influence. The role of the

church as a moral agent to hold social institutions accountable to child care and protection is essential. Social agencies may not have the systems and structure of identifying needy cases for assistance. But the church as a social institution that deals with moral development of humanity has the capacity. The church can approach these social agencies to provide child care to the deserving families (Taped interview, 8<sup>th</sup> December 2015).

The social agencies can take part in confronting the issue of child care. The employers most likely if approached by the church as a social institution, they can provide child care assistance to its employees and other underprivileged families in the community. The employers should be family-friendly, sending important message that helping workers balance work and family is good for business.

The social agencies operate within the community setting. The increased anti-social behaviour has a direct effect on their operations. Participating in reducing these anti-social ills will not only be beneficial to the individual families but the community at large and the agencies in particular. Empowering families to mitigate the factors exerting pressures on parenting in Gusii community should be part of the agenda of the social agencies operating at its environs. The church as a social institution can play its moral role of networking these social agencies for this noble task.

The church will not have the moral authority to serve as a moral agent to hold the government and other social agencies accountable for child care unless it serves as a role model. SDA RESPONDENT 3 considers this to be of great importance:

I believe the church will achieve much on its role as a moral agent to hold the government and other social agencies accountable for child care if it serves as a role model. There are occasions where the church has participated in corrupt deals, propagation of tribalism, nepotism and clannism. Internal reorganization and reform should be worked on so that the public can have the confidence of the church to act as a moral agent (Taped interview, 5<sup>th</sup> December 2015).

Shunning all evil deals that can put the church on jeopardy should be addressed by the church diligently and urgently. The church should work on maintaining its glory as the mouthpiece of the community. Their systems and structures should be strengthened to

attract public confidence on their operations. Serving as a role model in all areas of church life is important to its role as a moral agent holding the government and other agencies accountable on child care and protection.

The church can do much in addressing anti-social ills in Gusii community. The transcendental aspect of religion should be reflected in all activities of church life. Having a concern that the government, social agencies and everybody is participating in child care and protection should be one of the agenda of the church. Taking a concerted effort to participate in child care is important in addressing the moral development in the community.

In conclusion this research has contributed on the development of an integrated strategy of Christian and traditional Gusii teachings and practices on parenting that will help Gusii Christian parents improve on their parenting skills. This will help address the challenge of increased antisocial behaviour in Gusii community and beyond.

However, this research did not address all issues that need to be addressed here. It is recommended that further research can be built on this research. The following areas are therefore suggested for further research.

1. Investigation of quality parenting skills that can improve behaviour among children in Gusii community.
2. Evaluation of the Christian parenting skills practiced in parenting in Gusii community.
3. Understanding of the Christian view of parenting among the Gusii people.
4. Historical survey on how parents have been empowered in Christianes in addressing dysfunctionality of families in Gusii community.
5. Developing a structured systematic programme for equipping parents with quality parenting skills.

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## **APPENDICES**

### **Appendix A**

#### Interview schedule for Christian Parenting

##### I. Opening

A. (Establish Rapport) My name is Zablon Nyaenya Ayiera and as a PhD student, I thought it would be a good idea to interview you on the understanding of Christian parenting for my PhD Thesis.

B. (**Purpose**) I would like to ask you some questions about your understating of Christian teaching and practices on parenting, in order to learn more about how Christians equip parents with quality parenting skills in Gusii Community for the purpose of comparing it with traditional teaching and practices on parenting and develop an integrated strategy for quality parenting in Gusii Community.

C. (Motivation) This information will be used to help parents in Gusii Community with quality parenting skills aimed at developing of morality among the youth to reduce antisocial behaviours in the society.

(Transition: Let me begin by asking you some questions about where you fellowship and your family)

##### II Body



A. (Topic) Christian Parenting styles Practiced

1. How long have you been a member of your Church?

2. How many children do you have?

a. Please describe your understanding of parenting and how you practice it in the upbringing of your children

b. Please describe the teaching and practice of parenting in your Church.

c. How does your Church ensure implementation of the teaching and practice on parenting to its membership?

B. Comparison of Christian parenting and Traditional parenting styles

3. a. Please describe your understanding of the traditional teaching and practice about parenting in Gusii Community.

b. please describe the similarities and differences of Christian teaching and practice about traditional teaching and practice about parenting in Gusii Community.

c. Explain what you know about how parents were taught about parenting in traditional Gusii Community?

C. Factors contributing to pressures on parenting leading to antisocial behaviour in Gusii society

4. a. Please describe the factors contributing to pressures on parenting among parents in Gusii Community.

b. Please describe how the pressures on parenting contribute to increased anti-social behaviours among children in Gusii Community.

D. Integrated parenting strategy

5. a. In your opinion, are there valuable traditional teaching and practices about parenting that can be incorporated in the Christian teaching and practice about parenting for quality parenting?

b. Please, can you describe how they can be integrated for quality parenting in Gusii Community?

III Closing

- A. (Summarize): This will contain a summary of the information provided by the interviewee
- B. B (Maintain Rapport) I appreciate the time you took for this interview. Is there anything else you think would be helpful for me to know?
- C. (Action to be taken) I should have all the information I need. Would it be alright to call you if I have any more questions? Thanks again. I look forward for a follow-up interview.

## **Appendix B**

### Interview schedule for Traditional Parenting

#### I. Opening

A. (Establish Rapport) My name is Zablon Nyaenya Ayiera and as a PhD student, I thought it would be a good idea to interview you on the understanding of Christian parenting for my PhD Thesis.

B. (Purpose) I would like to ask you some questions about your understating of traditional parenting, in order to learn more about the traditional teaching and practice on parenting in Gusii Community for the purpose of comparing it with Christian teaching and practices on parenting and develop an integrated strategy for quality parenting in Gusii Community.

C. (Motivation) This information will be used to help parents in Gusii Community with quality parenting skills aimed at developing of morality among the youth to reduce antisocial behaviours in the society.

(Transition: Let me begin by asking you some questions about where you live and your family)

#### II Body

A. (Topic) Traditional Parenting styles Practiced

1. How old are you?

2. How many children do you have?

a. Please describe your understanding of teaching and practices of parenting in the upbringing of your children

- b. Please describe the traditional teaching and practices on parenting that were practiced in traditional Gusii Community by the parents on the upbringing of children
    - c. How did the Gusii Community ensure that people were taught about parenting in traditional Gusii Community?
- B. Comparison of Christian teaching and practices on parenting and Traditional teaching and practices on parenting
  - 3. a. Please describe your understanding of Christian teaching and practice on parenting that is practiced in Gusii Community.
  - b. In your opinion, what are the similarities and differences of Christian teaching and practices on parenting and traditional teaching and practices on parenting in Gusii Community?
- C. Factors contributing to pressures on parenting that lead to increased antisocial ills
  - 4. a. Please describe the factors that have contributed to pressures on parenting in Gusii Community that leads to increased antisocial ills in the society
  - b. Please describe how pressures on parenting have contributed to antisocial behaviours among children in Gusii Community
- D. Integrated parenting strategy
  - 5. a. In your opinion, are there valuable Christian teachings and practices on parenting that can be incorporated in the traditional teaching and practices on parenting for quality parenting?
  - b. Please, can you describe how they can be integrated for quality parenting in Gusii Community?

### III Closing

- A. (Summarize): This will contain a summary of the information provided by the interviewee
- B. B (Maintain Rapport) I appreciate the time you took for this interview. Is there anything else you think would be helpful for me to know?
- C. (Action to be taken) I should have all the information I need. Would it be alright to call you if I have any more questions? Thanks again. I look forward for a follow-up interview.

## **Appendix C**

### Personal information form

Please fill out prior to our first interview. Include as much information that you feel comfortable sharing

1. Name:
2. Family information
  - . When were you born?
  - . Where were you born?
  - . Where have you lived?
  - . When were you married?
  - . How many children do you have?
  - . What is there age bracket?
3. Denominational information
  - . What is your Christian denomination?
  - . When were you converted to your denomination?
  - . What is the name of your church?
  - . How is it structured?
  - . Do you have any leadership role in your church? If any what is it?
4. Educational background
5. Your professional work
6. Your life as a parent

## **Appendix D**

### INFORMED CONSENT FORM

MOI UNIVERSITY

SCHOOL OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY, RELIGION & THEOLOGY

- I. **Heading:** An investigation of church members and senior citizens on Christian and traditional teaching and practice on parenting.
- II. **Investigator:** Zablon Nyaenya Ayiera
- III. **Introduction/purpose:** You are invited to participate in a research study. The purpose of the study is to compare Christian teaching and practice with traditional teaching and practices on parenting, to understand the causes of increased antisocial ills in Gusii community. The aim of the study is to develop an integrated quality parenting strategy to reduce increased antisocial ills in the Gusii community. You are being asked to participate. Participation will require up to two interviews, and one period of listening to the audio taped interview for review of data and confirmation of the accuracy. Each interview will last for a period between one and two hours. All interviews will be carried at a location mutually agreed upon.
- IV. **Procedure:** If you decide to participate, the following information will help you to understand your role.
  1. **What would be required of you in the study?**

The researcher is requesting your participation in up to two interviews and a review of your audio taped interview which will take place in a mutually agreed upon area. The first interview will last between ninety minutes to two hours. The second interview will be to clarify any point in the initial interview and last between one to one and a half hours. A third interview will be scheduled to listen to the audio taped interview for review of data and to confirm the accuracy which will last up to two hours.
  2. **Why might I participate in this study?**

There are no direct benefits from participating in this study; however, studies which describe the lived experiences of parenting may help inform and develop an integrated parenting strategy to address increased

antisocial behaviour in Gusii community and beyond. It will be beneficial to the Christian and its adherents on addressing their core function of moral development. If desired, the researcher will provide you with a copy of the results of this study.

**3.** What will be done with the information that I share during this study?

The results of the interviews will be kept confidential and will be used solely for the purpose of the researcher's study. Your participation in this study is strictly voluntary.

**4.** What types of questions will be asked during the interview?

The researcher has designed a study as an open ended interview so that you can feel free to focus on issues that are personally meaningful in your experience of parenting. The goal of the researcher is to gain information about your experience of being either a Christian parent and/or traditional parent and how you are/ were equipped with quality parenting skills.

- V. **Risks:** In this study, you will not have any more risks than you would in a normal day of life.
- VI. **Benefits:** Participation in this study may not benefit you personally. Overall the study is being conducted to gain information about why there are increased antisocial ills in Gusii community. Understanding the role of the church on equipping parents with quality parenting skills is integral in this study. The aim of the study is to develop an integrated parenting strategy meant to equip parents with quality parenting skills. The goal is to reduce increased anti-social ills in Gusii community and beyond.
- VII. **Voluntary participation and withdrawal:** Participation in research is voluntary. You do not have to be in this study. If you decide to be in the study and change your mind, you have the right to drop out at any time. You may skip questions or stop participating at any time. Whatever you decide, you will not lose any benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.
- VIII. **Confidentiality:** Records will be kept private to the extent allowed by law. Information can be shared with those who make sure the study is done correctly (my supervisors of Moi University). All data will be collected through the use of a digital audio recorder. Tapes will be transcribed and printed. The information you provide and agreed upon with you will be shared. The findings will be summarized and reported in a group form.

- IX. Contact persons: Contact Prof. Emily Choge mobile number **0733991621**, or Prof. Joseph Koech mobile number 0723852466, or Zablon Ayiera **0713033630**. If you have questions about the study.
- X. Signature with copy of consent form to subject: We will give a copy of this consent form to keep.

If you are willing to volunteer for this research and be audio recorded, please sign below

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Participant	Date
Researcher obtaining consent	Date

## Appendix E



### NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION

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2241349, 3310571, 2219420  
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Email: dg@nacosti.go.ke  
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When replying Please quote

9th Floor, Utalii House  
Uhuru Highway  
P. O. Box 30623-00100  
NAIROBI-KENYA

Ref. No. **NACOSTI/P/16/94708/13551**

Date:

**7<sup>th</sup> September, 2016**

Zablon Nyaenya Ayiera  
Moi University  
P.O. Box 3900-30100  
**ELDORET.**

#### RE: RESEARCH AUTHORIZATION

Following your application for authority to carry out research on “*A comparative study of christian parenting and traditional parenting in Gusii Community, Kenya,*” I am pleased to inform you that you have been authorized to undertake research in **Kisii County** for the period ending **6<sup>th</sup> September, 2017.**

You are advised to report to **the County Commissioner and the County Director of Education, Kisii County** before embarking on the research project.

On completion of the research, you are expected to submit **two hard copies and one soft copy in pdf** of the research report/thesis to our office.

  
**BONIFACE WANYAMA**  
**FOR: DIRECTOR-GENERAL/CEO**

Copy to:

The County Commissioner  
Kisii County.

The County Director of Education  
Kisii County.





**CONDITIONS**

1. You must report to the County Commissioner and the County Education Officer of the area before embarking on your research. Failure to do that may lead to the cancellation of your permit.
2. Government Officer will not be interviewed without prior appointment.
3. No questionnaire will be used unless it has been approved.
4. Excavation, filming and collection of biological specimens are subject to further permission from the relevant Government Ministries.
5. You are required to submit at least two(2) hard copies and one (1) soft copy of your final report.
6. The Government of Kenya reserves the right to modify the conditions of this permit including its cancellation without notice.



**REPUBLIC OF KENYA**



**National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation**

**RESEARCH CLEARANCE PERMIT**

**Serial No. A10839**

**CONDITIONS: see back page**