








Towards evaluating the contributions of Youth Mentoring in enhancing National Development

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ABSTRACT

This study assesses the contributions of youth mentoring to improving national development. Using a phenomenological research design, pragmatist philosophy, and purposive sampling technique, fourteen participants from four Classical Pentecostal Churches, including The Apostolic Church – Ghana, Christ Apostolic Church International, Assemblies of God, Ghana, and The Church of Pentecost, were available for interview. In responding to the question, “What are the contributions of youth mentoring in enhancing national development?” participants reveal that, by stimulating and developing the creativity, innovation, and competence of young people, youth mentoring contributes to the development of a nation’s economy, society, and religion. For the economy, it promotes the following: the production of goods, services, or products to reduce pressure on the local currency; the creation of jobs to reduce the unemployment rate; and investments to boost the economy, among others. For society, youth mentoring promotes prosperity, inclusion, and peace, enabling others to thrive and resulting in more resilient, interconnected communities. It also encourages coexistence, helping reduce conflict and violence, among other benefits. In religion, it promotes religious culture and beliefs, and the transmission of faith to younger generations, including producing capable leaders able to promote inter- and intra-religious dialogue and/or tolerance, among others.

Keywords: Mentoring, Youth, Youth mentoring, Development, Nation, National Development, Economy, Society, and Religion.

INTRODUCTION

In simple terms, youth mentoring can be explained as the pairing of a young person (upcoming leader or mentee) with a mature or experienced person (mentor) where the latter serves as a trainer, teacher, guardian, motivator, encourager, or supporter to the former. It can also be explained as the process by which mentors

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PUBLICATION HISTORY - Received : 7th January, 2026 | Accepted: 8th March, 2026 | Published: 29th April, 2026.

TO CITE THIS ARTICLE - Sarpong, Richard Thomas, Francis Appiah-Kubi, Peter Addai-Mensah, Emmanuel Kojo Ennin Antwi, and Jonathan Edward Tetteh Kuwornu-Adjaottor. “Towards Evaluating the Contributions of Youth Mentoring in Enhancing National Development.” *E-Journal of Religious and Theological Studies* 12, no.3 (2026): 77- 94. <https://doi.org/10.38159/erats.20261231>

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help mentees identify and nurture skills, talents, or gifts for various purposes.¹ Others mention that the availability of mentees and the accessibility of mentors are some of the most crucial factors contributing to the effectiveness of youth mentoring, irrespective of the society.²

In Western societies, such as those in North America and Europe, the concept of youth mentoring has garnered considerable interest and acceptance. As a result, the concept is incorporated into national development practices and policies.³ Supporting these initiatives, several governments still maintain those supportive relationships—whether formed through programs or more informal connections—between young people and non-parental adults, which are essential assets to optimal youth development. Although young mentoring still lags behind practice and strategy, its maturity cannot be discounted in various disciplines, including psychology, education, human development, social work, and public health. Other societies around the world have also given youth mentoring considerable prominence.⁴

In Africa, youth mentoring can be traced to customary community customs where elders offered knowledge, wisdom, skills, and guidance that were crucial to the development of young people and the survival of the community.⁵ Over time, as societies became more urbanized and modernized, this informal mentoring—which also became crucial in imparting cultural values, social conventions, and survival skills—transitioned and became more structured or formal. The emergence of formal mentoring in most African societies was also due to educational changes, economic difficulties, global influence, and technological developments that challenged established communal institutions.⁶

LITERATURE REVIEW

From biblical and secular perspectives, mentoring and youth concepts are briefly discussed. Again, the concept of national development and the contributions of youth mentoring to its enhancement are summarized.

Mentoring

Mentoring has a long history that goes back to Greek mythology. According to Homer and Robert Fagles, the term originated with an important character in Homer's *The Odyssey*.⁷ Mentor, the son of Alcimus and Asopis, met the Ithacan king Odysseus and was entrusted with teaching Telemachus. When Odysseus went out to fight in the Trojan War for more than twenty years, he left his family—Telemachus, his son, and his wife, Penelope—to be cared for by Mentor. Mentor then acted as a guide and father figure. A close examination of epic poetry reveals that Mentor did not excel in his role as a guide or counselor to Telemachus.⁸ Some reasons may include his lack of preparation, mutual relationship, and inadequate interest. Later, Athena played the role of a mentor in Telemachus' life, a title that became associated with wisdom and trust.⁹

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- ¹ Linda Phillips-Jones, *Skills for Successful Mentoring: Competencies of Outstanding Mentors and Mentees* (CCC/The Mentoring Group, 2003); Trena T Anastasia, Rebecca L Skinner, and Samantha E Mundhenk, "Youth Mentoring: Program and Mentor Best Practices.," *Journal of Family & Consumer Sciences* 104, no. 2 (2012); Victor F Peretomode and Peter Ikoya, "Mentorship: A Strategic Technique for Achieving Excellence, Manpower Development and Nation Building," *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences* 10, no. 2 (2019); Kathy E Kram, *Mentoring at Work: Developmental Relationships in Organizational Life*. (University Press of America, 1988).
- ² Phillips-Jones, *Skills for Successful Mentoring: Competencies of Outstanding Mentors and Mentees*; R.M. Lerner, *The Good Teen: Rescuing Adolescence from the Myths of the Storm and Stress Years* (New York, NY: Stonesong Press, 2007).
- ³ David L DuBois et al., "How Effective Are Mentoring Programs for Youth? A Systematic Assessment of the Evidence," *Psychological Science in the Public Interest* 12, no. 2 (2011): 57–91.
- ⁴ Peter C Scales, *Other People's Kids: Social Expectations and American Adults? Involvement with Children and Adolescents*, vol. 2 (Springer Science & Business Media, 2012).
- ⁵ M. Bradbourne, "African Youth Mentorship Network," *Sons of Hierarchies*, 2017. <https://sonsofhierarchies.com/2017/10/24/african-youth-mentorship-network>.
- ⁶ Bradbourne, "African Youth Mentorship Network."
- ⁷ Homer, Robert Fagles, and Bernard Knox, *The Odyssey* (Penguin Books, 1997).
- ⁸ Andy Roberts, "Homer's Mentor: Duties Fulfilled or Misconstrued," *History of Education Journal* 39, no. 4 (1999): 81–90.
- ⁹ Roberts, "Homer's Mentor: Duties Fulfilled or Misconstrued."

In the 1750s, Lord Chesterfield used the word ‘mentor’ in his letter to his child, which read, “These are resolutions which you must form, and steadily execute for yourself, whenever you lose the friendly care and assistance of your mentor.”¹⁰ Again, within that same year, it was first used and defined in the English dictionary as an experienced and trusted advisor.¹¹ However, in modern dictionaries, the meaning of a mentor is similar to that of earlier times. In most cases, a mentor is a more seasoned person who provides guidance and support over time to a less experienced person.¹² A reciprocal and collaborative relationship that aims to enhance skills and knowledge often occurs between a more experienced person and a less experienced one; this is called mentoring.¹³ In recent times, mentoring is described with a catchphrase that goes, “I do it, you watch, we do it together, the next time we do it as a team, and then be ready to do it yourself over again.”¹⁴ There are two major types of mentoring, namely formal and Informal. However, other types may fall under formal or informal, including one-on-one, collaborative, peer, reverse, and online. Empowering and equipping are the two main approaches to mentoring.

Moreover, the concept of mentoring is not explicitly stated in the Bible. However, several biblical examples describe its practice and nature. The practice and nature of mentoring as described in the Bible are passages that depict how older or more experienced individuals developed younger or inexperienced ones. For instance, from the Old Testament, the following mentoring relationship exists – Jethro and Moses (Exo. 2: 16-22; 4:18 & 18:8-21); Moses and Joshua (Ex. 17:8-13; 24:13; 32:17-18; 33:11; Num. 11:28-29; 13:1-16; 14:6-8 & 32:28-29); Naomi and Ruth (Ruth 1:1-6, 14-17; 2:22-23; 3:1-5 & 4:13); Eli and Samuel (1 Sam. 1:24-28; 2:11, 26; 3:1, 4-18); Samuel, Saul, and David (Samuel 9:1-27; 10:1-8, 17-24; 13:1-14; 15:30-31 & 16:2-13; 19:18-19); and Elijah and Elisha (1 Kings 19:19-21 & 2 Kings. 2:1-14).¹⁵

From the narration of the mentor-mentee relationships in the Old Testament, the following can be deduced. First, the informal, one-on-one, and reverse types of mentoring are mostly adopted. Second, the empowering and equipping mentoring approaches are also used. Third, most mentoring relationships are successful due to the roles or functions of the mentors and mentees. Some mentors’ functions included educating, encouraging, divine, guiding, role modeling, delegating, and collaborating with mentees; introducing mentees to prominent personalities; and improving mentees’ exposure and visibility. Again, some mentee functions also included openness, loyalty, submission, obedience, and respect for mentors. Lastly, each mentoring relationship is unique, complicated, and characteristically distinct.

On the other hand, mentoring relationship from the New Testament include Jesus and his disciples (Matt. 8:23; 9:10; 17:1; 26:14-16, 48-49; 27:5; Mk. 6:1; 8:29; Lk. 9:22 & Jn. 17:5, 13, 19), Barnabas and Paul (Acts 4:36; 9:26-27, 30; 11:25 & 15:36-41), Barnabas and John Mark (Acts 13:13; 15:36-39), Paul and Silas (Acts 15:36-40; 16:16-24), Paul and Timothy (Acts 16:1-2; 1 Tim. 1:3 & 1 Cor. 4:17), and Priscilla and Aquila & Apollos (Acts 18:19, 24-26). Summarizing the mentoring relationship in the New Testament shows that mentors mostly adopted a one-on-one approach. But Jesus is seen adopting collaborative or group mentoring to develop his disciples and/or followers (mentees). But Jesus is seen adopting collaborative or group mentoring to develop his disciples and/or followers (mentees). As mentor-mentee relationships traverse different stages, mentors alternate between empowering and equipping mentoring approaches. Mentors perform unique roles, including ensuring and enhancing the spiritual and moral development of mentees and improving the knowledge, skill sets, talents, or gifts of mentees to promote life, education, or

¹⁰ Honoria, *The Female Mentor* (Farmington Hills: Gale ECCO Print Editions, 2010), 6.

¹¹ A.R. Ferreres, “A Brief History of Mentoring,” *Trans Am Clin Climatol Assoc*, 1995, 1–13.

¹² A. S. Hornby, *Oxford Advanced Learners’ Dictionary of Current English* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001),731

¹³ R. Fairman, *Biblical Examination of Leadership and Principle* (U.S.A.: Mann Corps, 2010),15.

¹⁴ S.M. Ojelabi, *The Language of Education: A Dictionary of Education* (Ibadan: Positive Presence Publishers, 2009); Nathan H. Chiroma and Anita Cloete, “Mentoring as a Supportive Pedagogy in Theological Training,” *HTS Teologiese Studies / Theological Studies* 71, no. 3 (March 11, 2015), <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v71i3.2695>.

¹⁵ J. Vedral, *A Literary Survey of the Bible. Plainfield* (New Jersey: Logos International, 1973),4.

career transition, while mentees also perform roles including submitting, respecting, and following mentors and actively participating in the relationship, among others.¹⁶

Youth

Although the concept of youth or adolescence has been of significant interest among disciplines in the social sciences, including sociology, criminology, psychology, educational studies, cultural studies, and media studies, it did not exist as a distinct category before the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.¹⁷ Childhood and adulthood were considered the only states of being at the time. However, due to modernity, the ongoing process of “constructing” youth was influenced by factors including educational reforms that occurred in North America and Europe; initiation of state intervention; guideline of working conditions, especially about child labor; restructuring of criminal justice systems; acknowledgment of leisure as a unique aspect of youth experiences; breakdown of vertical traditional forms of social control; and the subsequent rise of new horizontal socializing agencies.¹⁸

In defining youth, Krishnan and others say youth are a collection of people transitioning from childhood to maturity and approaching adulthood, distinguished by a certain learning style.¹⁹ Kehily and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) also state that youth are people who grow up and become more self-sufficient or move from childhood to adulthood; and individuals who serve as cultural identifiers, share a specific role, and possess distinct responsibilities, traditions, and relationships, respectively.²⁰ From chronology (age), law, policy, sociology, biology, and psychology, youth can also be defined. For instance, in relation to age, youth are young people from the teens to twenty-five (25) years, sometimes even thirty-five (35) years. According to scholars, youth are young people between fifteen (15) and twenty-four (24) years, sixteen (16) and thirty (30) years, thirteen (13) and thirty-five (35) years, or eighteen (18) and thirty-five (35) years.²¹ The youths can also be related to intellectual abilities and general development, as they can perform various tasks in society.²²

The concept of youth is used differently in the Bible. In the Old Testament, words such as *na'ar* (masculine) or *na'raa* (feminine), *alma*, *betulah*, *bahur*, and *yeled* (masculine) or *yaldah* (feminine) are used. For instance, *na'ar* was used to refer to Joseph when he demonstrated youthful authority and the duty to search for his brothers.²³ It was used for David when he showed youthful exuberance and idealism, wanting to fight Goliath at the ages of fourteen and sixteen (1 Samuel 17).²⁴ Again, in Jeremiah chapter one verse six, *na'ar* was used when Jeremiah objected to God's call and described himself as a child or too young. According to the law, less powerful women were also known as *na'ara* (Num. 30:3-5).²⁵ In other instances, males who were considered strong or physically capable of fathering a child, and females who were virgins,

¹⁶ Fazel E Freeks and George A Lotter, "Possible 'mentoring' and Discipleship in the New Testament - A Proposal," *Journal for Christian Scholarship*, *Tydskrif Vir Christelike Wetenskap* 50, no. 3 (2014): 191-212.

¹⁷ Alan France, *Understanding Youth in Late Modernity* (McGraw-Hill Education (UK), 2007), 2.

¹⁸ C. Wallace and S. Kovacheva, *Changing Times, Changing Lives: The Construction and Deconstruction of Youth in East and West Europe* (London: Macmillan, 1998), 14.

¹⁹ S.R.G. Krishnan and V. Sethuramalingam, "Who Are the Youth? – The Search for a Comprehensive Definition," *Impact Factor* 3, no. 5 (2017): 1–5; Francis Chigunta et al., "Being 'Real' about Youth Entrepreneurship in Eastern and Southern Africa," *SEED Working Paper* 72 (2005): 1–105.

²⁰ M.J. Kehily, *Understanding Youth: Perspectives, Identities and Practices* (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 2007).

²¹ P. Frimpong-Manso, *Fire from the North: The Origins, Growth, Development, and Influence of Assemblies of God* (Tema: Digibooks, 2018); Marina Galstyan, "Re-Conceptualising Youth: Theoretical Overview," *Journal of Sociology: Bulletin of Yerevan University* 13, no. 2 (36) (2022): 22–27.

²² P. Mizen, *The Changing State of Youth* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004); Talcott Parsons, "Age and Sex in the Social Structure of the United States," *American Sociological Review*, 1942, 604–16; S.N. Eisenstadt, *From Generation to Generation: Age Groups and Social Structure* (Glencoe, IL: Free Press, 1956).

²³ John Van Seters, "The Joseph Story—Some Basic Observations," *Egypt, Israel, and the Ancient Mediterranean World: Studies in Honor of Donald B. Redford*, 2004, 361–88. See also, Gen. 37:17.

²⁴ New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology & Exegesis, *NIDOTTE*, s. v. "Na'ar."

²⁵ *NIDOTTE*, s. v. "Na'ar."

nulliparous, or expectant mothers, were referred to as *'alma* (Genesis 24:43-44).²⁶ Although young people who were considered very religious and exuberant were also referred to as *'alma*. On the other hand, the word *bethulah* was used for a virgin woman. For instance, it was used for the virgin Esther after she was made queen before the age of twenty.²⁷ The word can also be used to describe a woman's sexual and marital status and age. The word *bahur* described a robust or vigorous young man, and also a young woman who had passed puberty but was still not married.²⁸ The word was also used for young people who were chosen, good, or youthful. In yet another case, the word, *yeled* or *yaldah*, was used for persons between infancy and young single adulthood.²⁹ Some personalities in the Old Testament described as *yeled* are Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah (Dan 1:4).³⁰

The New Testament also provides glimmers of a biblical concept of youth. Some of the words used by New Testament writers to describe them included *pais*, *parthenos*, and *neaniskos*. The word *pais* was often used to refer to a young person under fifteen years, even though it is believed that age is not always relevant.³¹ For example, it is used for the young boy who brought five loaves and two fish to Jesus (Jn. 6:9) and to Jairus' twelve-year-old daughter being raised from death by Jesus (Mk. 5:41). Jesus was called *pais*, which described him as an ideal or perfect young man.³² Again, the word *parthenos* (virgin) or *parthenia* (virgins) was used to describe the sexual and marital status of young women.³³ *Parthenos* was also mostly used to refer to a young woman who is neither an adult nor single.³⁴ On the other hand, *Neaniskos* typically referred to a youth or young man who is extremely brave, powerful, devoted, or intelligent.³⁵

National Development

Defining the phrase "national development" is vague. However, in overcoming this challenge, national development will be explained by separating and explaining the words "national" and development." Despite its frequent use, the term "development" lacks a recognized meaning. Abrha and Weldeyohans define it as the gathering of human capital with its efficient quality for economic advancement.³⁶ Todaro and Smith also define the term as the process of enhancing people's standard of living, sense of self-worth, and independence to promote the quality of all human lives and capacities.³⁷ An interpretation of the first definition of development appears to reveal an overlooked reality: that all development aims to uplift people and improve their circumstances, and that economic conditions are created for them. However, the second definition effectively establishes humans as the topic, objective, and purpose for growth rather than its object, demonstrating an attempt to improve them not because of what may be obtained from them but simply because they are human.

On the contrary, the word "National" is an adjective of "nation." Despite its complexity, understanding the definition of "national" is a prerequisite for comprehending the adjective "nation." Moreover, the definition of a country is difficult because it can be interpreted differently from three different viewpoints: politics, psychology, and culture. For instance, a country is characterized from a cultural point

²⁶ NIDOTTE, s. v. "Alumim."

²⁷ František Štěch, "Who Are Youth in Theological Perspective?," *Journal of Youth and Theology* 15, no. 2 (2016): 124–45.

²⁸ NIDOTTE, s. v. "Bahur."

²⁹ NIDOTTE, s. v. "Yeled."

³⁰ J.E. Goldingay, *Word Biblical Commentary*, vol. 30 (Dallas: Word Books, 1989).24.

³¹ New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology and Exegesis, NIDONTTE, 2nd ed., s. v. "Pais."

³² N. Geldenhuys, *Commentary on the Gospel of Luke: The English Text with Introduction, Exposition, and Notes* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 129.

³³ NIDONTTE, 2nd ed., s. v. "Parathenos."

³⁴ V. P. Hamilton, *New International Commentary on the Old Testament: The Book of Genesis: Chapters 18-50* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 355.

³⁵ W.L. Lane, *The Gospel According to Mark: The English Text with Introduction, Exposition and Notes* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), 527.

³⁶ T. G. Abrha and B. T. Weldeyohans, "The Role of Human Capital in Economic Development: A Theoretical Analysis," *Journal of Human Resource Management* 13, no. 2 (2025): 30.

³⁷ Michael P. Todaro and Stephen C. Smith, *Economic Development* (Pearson Education, 2009), 9.

of view as a collection of people who have a common identity and who either have or aspire to political self-determination. The cultural component of a country requires that its citizens share certain cultural elements, including language, attire, values, manners, customs, crafts, mores, and history. In other instances, the political viewpoint demands self-determination, while the psychological definition emphasizes the awareness of these possessions and the social identity that they impose on all possessors.³⁸

Given that national development acknowledges the significance of culture, politics, and psychology in shaping a country, it is comparable to that of a state or nation. This means that a nation may be defined in the same way as a country. Accordingly, a nation is a region that is clearly defined, acknowledged by other countries as a state, governed by a government that has the authority to decide on its own internal and foreign policies and laws, and a certain people inhabiting that region for all time.³⁹ According to this interpretation, the adjective “national” can refer to something that is owned or possessed by a nation. In simple terms, national development, then, is the development owned by a country. The sectors in which development occurs in a country are many. In the following section, development in the economy, society, and religion is briefly examined.

Economic Development

In the development discourse, economic development is so significant that it is assumed to be the sole face of national development. However, according to Vatavu et. al., this is an incorrect understanding of national development, as it has several faces.⁴⁰ A country’s economic development may be influenced by the tangible advancements made by its citizens. Since wealth distribution is a key factor in determining the material well-being of a country’s population, economic development focuses on examining how wealth is allocated among its citizens.⁴¹ According to Gielski, a country is considered impoverished if wealth is concentrated in the hands of a small number of its citizens.⁴² This indicates that a higher proportion of people in this society lack access to necessities such as clothing, food, education, and good health. In contrast, he says that a nation is considered prosperous when its wealth is dispersed equally across its many regions.⁴³ In pursuit of wealth and commitment to improving the lives of their people, a country’s economic development must increase per capita income, create jobs, invent, improve, and/or sustain new and existing products, goods, or services, and improve education.⁴⁴ However, since such development is not an automatic process, deliberate planning and policy by the national government and/or other organized institutions must not be overlooked.⁴⁵

Societal Development

For a country to thrive, social development is essential. Social development may refer to the extent to which a nation promotes the potential, dignity, and well-being of its citizens, including making sure that development reaches every facet of society. While economic expansion creates wealth and infrastructure, social development lays the groundwork for sustainability, prosperity, and peace. Mohan and Sharma suggest that a country’s social development is the process through which its citizens and communities maximize their

³⁸ C.H. Wellman, “Nationalism and Secession,” in *A Companion to Applied Ethics*, ed. R.G. Frey and C.H. Wellman (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2003), 268.

³⁹ P.J. Anderson, *The Global Politics of Power, Justice and Death: An Introduction to International Relations* (London and New York: Routledge, 1996), 2.

⁴⁰ Sorana Vatavu et al., “The Impact of Entrepreneurship on Economic Development through Government Policies and Citizens’ Attitudes,” *Economic Research-Ekonomska Istraživanja* 35, no. 1 (2022): 1605.

⁴¹ E. Gielski, “The Concentration of Wealth: Examining the Growing Economic Divide,” *Journal of Global Economics* 5, no. 12 (2024).

⁴² Gielski, “The Concentration of Wealth: Examining the Growing Economic Divide.”

⁴³ Gielski, “The Concentration of Wealth: Examining the Growing Economic Divide.”

⁴⁴ Gwang-Nam Rim and Chol-Ju An, “Economic Strength of a Country and Its Assessing Method,” in *The Palgrave Handbook of Global Social Problems* (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2022), 1–21, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-68127-2_244-1.

⁴⁵ Marwa Khouya and Abdelhay Benabdelhadi, “Good Governance and Its Impact on Economic Development: A Systematic Literature Review,” *International Journal of Accounting, Finance, Auditing, Management and Economics*, 1, no. 1 (2020): 48.

opportunities and gain the ability to manage their own affairs.⁴⁶ Moreover, a nation that invests in its people, particularly the marginalized, builds resilience and unlocks its full potential.⁴⁷

Consequently, the components of social development may be many. Some of them include the following: population and demographics, education and training, health and health services, food systems and nutrition, sanitation and hygiene, employment and decent work, child protection and development, inequality and social security, ageing and functionality, sports and recreation, and migration and development.⁴⁸ Others are water, gender equality, youth development, poverty, and disability-inclusive development.

In summary, the social development in a country may involve strong communities, inclusive social development, societal peace and development, people's well-being, social transformation, and improvement in the quality of life. Equitable distribution of resources, elimination of inequalities, building people's capacity to work continuously for societal welfare, and the process of structural changes may be among others.⁴⁹

Religious Development

There seems to be no agreed-upon definition of religion. This may be due to differences in approach among various disciplines, including theology, sociology, and anthropology.⁵⁰ For instance, doctrines or principles of a theologian may affect their definition and understanding of religion. Because of this, broad distinctions have been drawn between the definitions of religion. Furseth and Repstad mention two major distinctions: substantive and functionalist.⁵¹

From various substantive definitions which concentrate on what religion is, Furseth and Repstad say religion is a system of language and practice that organizes the world in terms of what is deemed holy, with ultimacy, relates people to conditions of existence.⁵² On the other hand, from functionalist definitions, which primarily consider what religion does, religion is also explained as a significant contributor to society, emphasizing its role in maintaining social order, cohesion, and individual well-being.⁵³ It is imperative to add that, in certain instances, the definition of religion is given using both the substantive and functionalist distinctions.

To summarize, the religious development of a country involves having religious organizations such as the church become active participants in civil society. It also involves the church's activity in a variety of development-related areas, including conflict resolution and reconciliation, humanitarian assistance and disaster relief, environmental protection and conservation, politics and social movements, and social welfare and development.⁵⁴ Utilizing the sacred texts and teachings of major religions, such as Christianity, Islam, and Traditionalism, to impart godly values and principles for addressing enduring issues facing humanity, including poverty, inequality, and the distribution of resources, further shows what religious development means.⁵⁵ Tyndale cites other commonly taught religious values to address the challenges of a nation's development,

⁴⁶ Brij Mohan and Prem Sharma, "On Human Oppression and Social Development," *Social Development Issues* 9, no. 1 (1985): 12–23.

⁴⁷ Mohan and Sharma, "On Human Oppression and Social Development," 12.

⁴⁸ James O Midgley, *Social Development: Theory and Practice* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2013), 3.

⁴⁹ Ali Ishag Adam Mohamed et al., "A Critical Analysis of Social Development: Features, Definitions, Dimensions and Frameworks," *Asian Social Science* 16, no. 1 (2020): 14.

⁵⁰ B. Lincoln, *Holy Terrors: Thinking about Religion after September 11* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 3.

⁵¹ I. Furseth and P. Repstad, *An Introduction to the Sociology of Religion: Classical and Contemporary Perspectives* (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2006), 6.

⁵² Furseth and Repstad, *An Introduction to the Sociology of Religion: Classical and Contemporary Perspectives*, 6; J. Haynes, *Religion, Politics and International Relations: Selected Essays* (London: Routledge, 2011), 13.

⁵³ Furseth and Repstad, *An Introduction to the Sociology of Religion*, 6; *Classical and Contemporary Perspectives*; E. Tomalin, *Religions and Development* (New York: Routledge, 2013), 71; C. Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), 3.

⁵⁴ Jenny Lunn, "The Role of Religion, Spirituality and Faith in Development: A Critical Theory Approach," *Third World Quarterly* 30, no. 5 (2009): 943.

⁵⁵ Lunn, "The Role of Religion, Spirituality and Faith in Development," 944.

including charitable and sacrificial giving, respect for fellow humans and other living beings, compassion and assistance for the poor and needy in society, the pursuit of equity and justice, and care for the natural environment, all of which are part of religious development.⁵⁶ The contributions of youth mentoring to improve national development are, however, discussed in the following section.

Contributions of Youth Mentoring to National Development

The success of youth mentoring can contribute to the progress and sustainability of many sectors of a nation, including the economy, society, and religion. To the economy, by stimulating creativity and innovation, and enhancing the leadership skills and competence of young people, it promotes the following: growth of government and private organizations or companies; initiation and development of, or investment in, businesses; increase in employment rate; and investment and spending to boost the economy.⁵⁷ Others include promoting economic change and expansion, decreasing unemployment, and improving international competitiveness by producing a pool of competent young people.⁵⁸

Youth mentoring may contribute to a nation's society in many ways. Some of them are promoting social change and progress, social justice, human rights, and democracy.⁵⁹ Others may include creating a more prosperous and inclusive community.⁶⁰ However, these social contributions of youth mentoring cannot be achieved in a vacuum. Young people must be developed by more experienced or mature leaders to become front-liners or movement leaders.

Illustrating more on religion and society than the economy, the contributions of youth are recognized as enormous. For instance, it promotes religious dialogue and tolerance, and social relationships among people from different backgrounds, by enhancing oneself and belongingness.⁶¹ In another instance, by refining young people's leadership skills to guide, communicate, and strategically solve problems, including shaping beliefs, youth mentoring produces next-generation leaders and change agents for businesses and organizations such as the church.⁶² In yet another instance, it produces morally righteous, visionary young people who increase social pressure and political scrutiny, change the roles of tradition and beliefs, and solve difficult challenges through the development of experienced individuals.⁶³

Additionally, youth mentoring promotes peace and security in society and enhances a sense of responsibility and reasonability among citizens, which helps them diffuse, reconstruct, and reconcile post-conflict or war by improving the behavior and activities of young people through experienced individuals.⁶⁴ Summarizing discussions on youth mentoring and national development, it is highlighted that contributions of youth mentoring to the development of a nation's society, economy, and/or religion are achieved through young people or upcoming leaders (mentees) who are developed by experienced or mature ones (mentors) serving as advocates and role models.⁶⁵ The following section presents the study's methodology.

⁵⁶ W. Tyndale, *Faith and Economics in "Development."* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), 3.

⁵⁷ L.A. Daloz, *Mentor: Guiding the Journey of Adult Learners* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Inc. Publishers, 1999), 6; E.A. Klein, *Comprehensive Etymological Dictionary of the English Language* (Amsterdam: Elsevier Publishing Company, 1967), 954.

⁵⁸ David L DuBois et al., "Effectiveness of Mentoring Programs for Youth: A Meta-analytic Review," *American Journal of Community Psychology* 30, no. 2 (2002): 157–97.

⁵⁹ Barry Bozeman and Mary K Feeney, "Toward a Useful Theory of Mentoring: A Conceptual Analysis and Critique," *Administration & Society* 39, no. 6 (2007): 719.

⁶⁰ Ermias G Mamo, *The Maturing Church: An Integrated Approach to Contextualization, Discipleship and Mission* (Langham Publishing, 2017), 30.

⁶¹ Robert J Cramer and Steven Prentice-Dunn, "Caring for the Whole Person: Guidelines for Advancing Undergraduate Mentorship," *College Student Journal* 41, no. 4 (2007): 771.

⁶² T T Anastasia and A I Drever, "A Review of Youth Mentoring Research and Practice: Lessons for Adoption and Adaptation" (WYSAC Technical Report No. CHES-1019). Laramie, WY: Wyoming Survey ..., 2010), 10.

⁶³ J. Barentsen, "Practicing Religious Leadership," in *Routledge Companion to Leadership*, ed. J. Storey et al. (London: Routledge, 2016), 260–77.

⁶⁴ Deborah J Handy, Kathleen Boyce Rodgers, and Tiffany Anne Schwieterman, "Youth Asset Mapping: Showcasing Youth Empowerment and Positive Youth-Adult Partnership," *Journal of Family & Consumer Sciences* 103, no. 1 (2011) 9-10.

⁶⁵ Phillips-Jones, *Skills for Successful Mentoring*, 5.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study adopted a phenomenological research design. It was selected to thoroughly investigate and explain the institutions of youth mentoring among Classical Pentecostal Churches (CPCs) through participants' experiences. Among the major philosophies in the Sciences, including positivism, interpretivism, and critical realism, the study adopted pragmatism.⁶⁶ This philosophy, which underpins the study, helped explain the phenomenon emerging from the study through different ideas and considered the research outcome provisionally accurate due to the dynamism and uncertainties of the geographical area, Kumasi.

Study Sample and Study Area

Twenty-four (24) participants comprising church leaders, youth leaders, and retirees representing adults and/or mentors older than twenty-four (24) years were selected as the sampling frame due to their field and life experiences. While students, apprentices, and employed or unemployed young people representing youth and/or mentees between the formative years of fifteen (15) and twenty-four (24) were also selected due to their inexperience or immaturity.

To provide a better representation and more accurate results, one local assembly was selected from each of the four CPCs chosen. They include The Apostolic Church – Ghana (ACG), Christ Apostolic Church International (CACI), Assemblies of God, Ghana (A/G), and The Church of Pentecost (CoP). Therefore, interviews and a focus group discussion were conducted among four assemblies.

Data Collection Instrument and Procedures

The main instruments used to gather data from the respondents were semi-structured interviews and a focus group discussion. Data gathering, which commenced on 10th July 2024 and ended on 25th September 2024, was on Sundays and Wednesdays to accommodate participants' availability, encouraging open dialogue and participation.

The interview sessions were conducted on a one-on-one basis and at times convenient to each interviewee. A focus group discussion, which included participants from selected churches, was conducted via Zoom Meeting. The English language was used during each interview session. The participants were briefed about the objectives of the study. The interview question guide was asked, and participants provided answers. In some cases, probing questions were used to elicit further explanations of the interviewees' responses.

Ethical considerations also included obtaining informed consent, ensuring confidentiality, and allowing participants to withdraw at any time. Despite logistical challenges such as scheduling conflicts, proactive measures such as flexible scheduling and clear communication were implemented.

Data Analysis Method

Data analysis, according to LeCompte and Schensul, is the method a researcher uses to distill data into a narrative and analyze it.⁶⁷ The information gathered from the interviews was examined using the theme content analysis methods outlined by Bernard and Miles et al., and manifest and interpretative processes were used to provide a detailed description.⁶⁸ A descriptive account of the data was presented during the manifest analysis, focusing primarily on what respondents actually said, recorded, or observed without reading into or assuming anything about it. Descriptive analysis was conducted extensively during the interpretive stage, focusing on the meaning of the responses. The opinions of the participants on the

⁶⁶ Mark Saunders, Philip Lewis, and Adrian Thornhill, *Research Methods for Business Students*, 7th ed. (Harlow: Pearson Education, 2016), 124.

⁶⁷ M.D. LeCompte and J.J. Schensul, *Ethnographer's Toolkit* (Walnut Creek, CA: Bloomsbury Publishing PLC, 1999), 2.

⁶⁸ H.R. Bernard, *Social Research Methods: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2000), 5.

information they provided were supported by quotes that were found and used. The outcomes of the interviews with participants are shown below.

PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Demographic Characteristics of Participants

Fourteen (14) of the twenty-four (24) participants who were available for an interview included three (3) church leaders, two (2) youth leaders, four (4) retirees, and five (5) participants in a focus group discussion. For anonymity and ethical reasons, the respondents were assigned pseudonyms, including Church Leaders Interview (CLINT 01 – CLINT 04), Youth Leaders Interview (YLINT 01 – CLINT 04), Retirees Interview (RINT 01 – RINT 04), and Focus Group Interview (FGI 01 – FGI 12).

Background results of these participants indicated that males and females constituted (58%) and (42%), respectively. Significantly, (38%) of these respondents have been in the church between 6-10 years, while (30%) and (26%) have also been in the church between 11-15 years and 0-5 years, respectively. Furthermore, respondents who have been in the church for more than 16 years are (6%). Most respondents (56%) play different roles in the church, while the remaining (44%) do not. Of the respondents who play various roles, (48%) have served between 5-10 years, while (39%) and (13%) have also served for over 10 years and between 0-5 years, respectively. Most of the respondents, on a scale of ten, rated youth mentoring in their churches between the ranges of 1-6 and 7-9, representing (54%) and (41%), respectively. The remaining (5%) did not rate at all. Interestingly, none of the respondents rated their church's youth mentoring on a scale of 10. Regarding educational level, the study found that most respondents held either a master's degree or a first degree, including certificates.

Contributions of Youth Mentoring to Enhancing National Development

Responding to the contributions of youth mentoring in enhancing national development, participants associated several contributions of youth mentoring to a few important sectors of the country, including the economy, society, and religion.

Contributions to the Economic Sector

Some church leaders stated as follows.

CLINT 02:

Youth mentoring can contribute to a nation's development. Thus, by relying on mentors to improve the skills and/or talents of young people, which stimulates their innovations and creativity, youth mentoring promotes the initiation and design of new products or services for the market and enhances existing goods and/or services to boost the economy.

CLINT 03 commented that:

One contribution of youth mentoring is helping to bridge the income inequality gap. This is achieved through young people (mentees) whose skills or usefulness have been refined by more experienced or seasoned individuals (mentors), enabling them to earn a substantial income that caters for most basic needs.

Similarly, a youth leader shared this thought.

YLINT 03 stated that:

The contributions of youth mentoring are not direct but indirect. Hence, it can be stated that by stimulating the innovation of young people through the experience and expertise of mentors, youth mentoring promotes the creation of jobs or employment in the country.

Some comments from retirees on the contributions of youth mentoring relative to economic development are summarized.

RINT 02 opined that:

Through the stimulation of young people's industry, innovation, and artistry by mentors, youth mentoring can be cited to promote the processing of raw materials, manufacturing of products for local and international markets, and increasing a country's revenue, resulting in economic expansion [RINT 03, 2024].

RINT 01 argued that:

One contribution of youth mentoring is helping to reduce poverty in the country. This is accomplished by mentees through financial literacy, such as how to save money and make better financial decisions.

During the focus group discussions, participants' comments were centered on economic development. These comments are summarized.

FGI 01 commented:

Youth mentoring contributes to national development, including helping to combat unemployment and promote economic growth. However, because this is an indirect contribution, it is seen as relying on the youth whose entrepreneurial skills have been enhanced by mentors, and their self-discovery has aided in achieving this milestone [FGI 05 & FGI 12, 2024].

Innovation, creativity, and entrepreneurship are powerful accelerators for a nation's economic development. Daloz agrees with a lead pastor in mentioning that youth mentoring, which relies on experienced people to train, encourage, and criticize to make ideas a reality, stimulates these accelerators in emerging leaders to accomplish the following: promote the start and growth of businesses, produce entrepreneurs to offer employment opportunities for others, pay taxes, and promote the expansion of the economy.⁶⁹ Dubois and others also mention other contributions of youth mentoring, including promoting the following in the economy: the invention of new products or services into the market and enhancing existing ones, the creation of jobs, the expansion of the economy, and local and international competitiveness.⁷⁰ Other consequential contributions of youth mentoring from those mentioned above may include promoting the reduction of imported products, goods, or services, and promoting an increase in the patronage of local products.

Anastasia and Drever further add that recognizing the role of the more experienced or knowledgeable people, youth mentoring produces next-generational leaders, innovators, and change agents who guide, communicate, and strategically solve problems, including providing direction, encouragement, and support to transform government and private organizations.⁷¹ In summary, through stimulating, creating, developing, or building confident young people, youth mentoring contributes to a nation's economy by promoting the following: production of goods, services, or products that may reduce pressure on the local currency, creation of jobs, increment of employment rate, investment to boost the economy, global competitiveness, and building of competent leaders to assume leadership roles and responsibilities for positive results.

Contributions to the Social Sector

Participants' comments on the contributions of youth mentoring are also focused on a country's social development.

⁶⁹ Daloz, *Mentor: Guiding the Journey of Adult Learners*, 954.

⁷⁰ DuBois et al., "Effectiveness of Mentoring Programs for Youth: A Meta-analytic Review," 154.

⁷¹ Anastasia Dewi Anggraeni and H. J. Pentury, "Enriching Teachers' Pedagogical Strategy Using the Role of Global Competence Learning Model," *Jurnal Pendidikan Progresif* 9, no. 1 (2019): 29–39.

The comments of some church leaders are illustrated.

CLINT 02 commented that:

Youth mentoring helps to build strong ties between people in different communities. It accomplishes this by relying on mentors to teach mentees ways to interact and mutually associate with others despite differences in culture, race, ethnicity, or gender.

CLINT 04 also had this to say:

One contribution of youth mentoring is the promotion of peace and harmony in communities after mentors have trained and advised mentees to refrain from engaging in violence and agitation.

Youth leaders' comments are also illustrated.

YLINT 01 commented that:

Youth mentoring to facilitate interrelatedness and support among participants can be said to ensure harmony within the country.

YLINT 04:

After relying on mentors to help young people discover their potential, relevance, and worth by abstaining from various vices that erode peace within a country, youth mentoring promotes peace and security.

Concerning contributions of youth mentoring to society, retirees shared their thoughts. They are summarized as follows.

RINT 01 opined that:

Youth mentoring promotes community harmony when experienced individuals have the opportunity to educate young people on how to stay within communities and interact with others.

RINT 04:

Youth mentoring can contribute to reducing community strife and conflict in the country after young people are trained and aided by mature people to discover themselves.

The responses of participants in the focus group discussions were similar to those of all the leaders and retirees. They are as follows.

FGI 02 mentioned that:

Again, because youth mentoring contributions to a nation's development are deemed as indirect, it can be said that by supporting close and mutual relationships among participants (mentors and mentees), youth mentoring promotes cordial relationships and harmony in society [FGI 07, 2024].

Youth mentoring has the potential to ensure that the social fabric of a nation is strengthened. In championing empathy, understanding, and collaboration among young people, Phillips-Jones and many others believe that youth mentoring through the active role of mentors as advocates and role models promotes peace and security in society, irrespective of individual differences such as culture, race, ethnicity, or religion, and creates the avenue for interrelatedness and unity.⁷²

A respondent also adds that it promotes mutual engagement and harmony among different people. Mamo summarizes that youth mentoring, by supporting and enhancing the potential of young people, promotes a more prosperous, inclusive, and peaceful society where people gain the opportunity to thrive, resulting in more resilient and interconnected communities.⁷³

⁷² Phillips-Jones, *Skills for Successful Mentoring: Competencies of Outstanding Mentors and Mentees*; Handy, Rodgers, and Schwieterman, "Youth Asset Mapping: Showcasing Youth Empowerment and Positive Youth-Adult Partnership."

⁷³ Mamo, *The Maturing Church: An Integrated Approach to Contextualization, Discipleship and Mission*, 30.

Contributions to the Religious Sector

The comments of the participants concerning youth mentoring were also related to the development of a country's religion. One of the church leaders stated the following.

CLINT 02 opined that:

Youth mentoring also contributes to national development by helping to produce competent leaders who assume leadership roles and responsibilities within the church space and beyond. However, this is achieved by mentors guiding young people to navigate challenges, understand church beliefs, and live with others in different religious groups [CLINT 03, 2024].

A youth leader commented as follows.

According to YLINT 03:

Youth mentoring plays an important role in the religious sector. Thus, relying on experienced leaders (mentors) to enhance the moral and ethical development of upcoming leaders (mentees), youth mentoring helps produce knowledgeable and skillful leaders for various faith-based denominations.

Interviews with the retirees also revealed several thoughts. They are summarized as follows.

RINT 03 opined that:

Through youth mentoring, inter-faith and intra-faith dialogues are strengthened. This is promoted through the opportunity mentees gain from the mentoring relationships, which connect them with other participants who share similar or different values and aspirations [RINT 02, 2024].

A comment by one participant in a focus group discussion is also postulated as follows.

FGI 04 mentioned:

Ensuring religious and/or national faith, beliefs, and culture are protected is another contribution of youth mentoring. This is achievable through the information mature leaders leave for upcoming ones throughout the mentoring program.

For the development of a nation's religious sector, youth mentoring also contributes immensely. According to Barentsen, relying on experienced mentors to identify, nurture, and enhance potential, young mentoring produces a pool of capable, morally right, and visionary leaders who assume leadership roles or positions, solve difficult problems, and promote positive change within and outside their religious organizations.⁷⁴ A lead pastor demonstrates that "by relying on older or mature leaders (mentors) to teach, instruct, or guide, youth mentoring builds young people (mentees) who are enabled to navigate challenges, shape church beliefs, and co-exist with other religious groups to facilitate national peace and cohesion."

Again, to religion, Anastasia and Drever reveal that youth mentoring produces young people whose beliefs and leadership skills are shaped by mature or experienced leaders to effectively lead a church and positively influence others.⁷⁵ Other contributions of youth mentoring to the sectors of a nation, as suggested by Barentsen, may include building capable young people who are capable of increasing social pressure and political scrutiny, changing the roles of tradition and beliefs, and solving difficult challenges.⁷⁶

⁷⁴ Barentsen, "Practicing Religious Leadership," 260; Peretomode and Ikoya, "Mentorship: A Strategic Technique for Achieving Excellence, Manpower Development and Nation Building," 17.

⁷⁵ Anastasia and Drever, "A Review of Youth Mentoring Research and Practice: Lessons for Adoption and Adaptation," 10.

⁷⁶ Barentsen, "Practicing Religious Leadership," 260.

CONCLUSION

The study reveals that youth mentoring contributes to the progress and sustainability of a nation. Some sectors in which it impacts include the economy, society, and religion. To the economy, through stimulating the innovation and creativity of young people, youth mentoring promotes the following: start and growth of businesses; production of goods, services, or products; creation of jobs; reduction of local currency pressure; increase in employment rate; investment and spending to boost the economy; global competitiveness; and production of competent leaders who assume leadership roles and responsibilities for positive results. Other consequential contributions of youth mentoring from these contributions mentioned may include promoting the reduction of imported products, goods, or services, and promoting an increase in the patronage of local products.

To society, through the support and improvement of the potential of young people, youth mentoring promotes a more prosperous, inclusive, and peaceful society where people gain the opportunity to thrive, resulting in more resilient and interconnected communities, among others. In the religious sector, through enhancing essential leadership skills, youth mentoring produces competent young men and women who are enabled to lead various religious organizations, perform different religious roles and responsibilities, and promote religious dialogue and/or tolerance, al. al. The other contributions of youth mentoring to a nation's sectors may include producing capable young people who increase social pressure and political scrutiny, change the roles of tradition and beliefs, and solve difficult challenges.

Limitations of the Study

Fourteen (14) of the twenty-four (24) participants turned up for interviews. However, the decline in this number did not damage the quality of the research. Another limitation is the exclusive use of churches within the Kumasi Metropolitan Assembly, which limits the generalization of the findings.

CONFLICTING INTERESTS

The authors have not declared any conflicts of interest.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The authors express their unreserved appreciation to all the authors whose work was consulted and cited in this study.

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