

## **Relationship between Christian Parenting and Employment: An Exploratory Study of Seventh-Day Adventist Church (SDA) Perspective in Arusha Municipality Tanzania**

Alexander Mwita<sup>1</sup>, Musa Muneja<sup>2</sup>, DTh

<sup>1</sup>Chaplain Ikizu High School Mara Conference of SDA Church Tanzania Union

<sup>2</sup>Director of Research University of Arusha, Tanzania

**\*Corresponding author**

*Alexander Mwita*

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**Abstract:** This study was done in Arusha Municipality to find out relationship between Christian Parenting and Employment in SDA perspective. Objectives which guided this study were; to investigate the problems of Christian parenting in SDA Church perspective in Arusha municipality, to find out ways in which parents will balance Christian parenting and employment in SDA perspective in Arusha municipality and to recommend a model of a better balance of employment and Christian parenting in SDA perspective in Arusha municipality. The study employed qualitative approach which dealt with perspectives and believes of SDA believers on how they view relationship between Christian parenting and employment. Five Pastors from Arusha municipality, five Lectures from the University of Arusha, 25 church elders and church member from five SDA churches in Arusha municipality were purposive selected to represent other DSAs in Arusha municipality in regard to this topic. Findings showed that Christian parenting and employment are related and parents are not supposed to ignore employment because of situation analysis of the contemporary world; moreover they are not supposed to overlook parenting responsibilities because of the busy world of employment, both are needed in the family cycle. Therefore parents should balance by establishing self employment, or mothers may retire from work during first eight years of their children and also mothers may look for employment after eight years of their children.

**Keywords:** Relationship, Christian parenting, employment, SDA Church, Arusha municipality.

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **Background of the Study**

We are living in 21<sup>st</sup> century whereby life has become more sophisticated and makes life to be more challenging. On this ground people are compelled to work hard for their daily needs. This idea of hardworking brings a phenomenon of ‘Double Salary’, that is, parents (Husband and Wife) must be employed so as to reduce life challenges by multiplying their possessions. On this struggle, parents are obliged to leave their children at home where by Maids, Televisions and Internet become their mode of learning. In this regard, Televisions, Internets have taken children captives and have replaced parents on their parenting responsibilities. Supporting this idea, Pelt [1] says “Unless a child has developed character traits to withstand social pressures, the secular world with all its glitz and glamour will captivate and eventually consume him.” (p, 81)

According to Rubin [2] Children are shaped by physical and social setting within which they live. When children grow in a setting of being nurtured by

television, they will be shaped by that particular setting. Most of homosexual behaviors which have been reported in the SDA Churches are the results of movies and internets. It has been declared that there are many Adventist homosexuals. Edward [3] says that these homosexual passed a document to Toronto General Conference session which said;

“I hope the church will no longer take an Ostrich in the sand approach, but face the reality that its gay brothers and sisters are everywhere in the church. From congregational laity to college faculty, church pastors and General conference workers. We are hurting isolated and as much in need of denomination acceptance and the forgiving grace of Christ as anyone else. Please don’t continue to ignore us”

Baccheocchi [4] also commented that rock music in the Church is the result of music industries and movies. According Pelt [5] children have an enormous amount of unsupervised time because both parents are

at work. This issue of employment of both parents has become a model of combating life challenges in major cities including Arusha municipality. In this municipality, SDA Parents are occupied in multiplying their possession and are less concerned with parental responsibilities which if not balanced families will end up losing moral values [6].

### Statement of the Problem

As far as life is concerned, SDA parents (Husband and Wife) in Arusha municipality are compelled to engage in employment to face economic challenges within family cycle. In this case they do not get enough time for parental responsibilities for they are completely tangled in career pursuits. The lack of parental care leads children to develop immoral behaviors in the family, in the Church and in the Society at large. Immoral behaviors which comes in the fore-front are Homosexuality, Alcoholism and premarital sex [7] This problem need to be addressed so that parents in Arusha municipality may be able to balance the parental responsibilities and employment.

### Objectives of the study

This study was guided by the following objectives;

- To investigate the problems of Christian parenting in SDA Church perspective in Arusha municipality
- To find out ways in which parents will balance Christian parenting and employment in SDA perspective in Arusha municipality
- To recommend a model of a better balance of employment and Christian parenting in SDA perspective in Arusha municipality

### Research questions

- What are the problems facing Christian parenting in SDA Church perspective in Arusha municipality?
- What are the ways in which parents will be able to balance Christian parenting and employment in SDA perspective in Arusha municipality?
- What is the recommendable model of a better balance of employment and Christian parenting in SDA perspective in Arusha municipality

### Justification and Significance of the study

Most Adventist Christian are struggling with life challenges whereby parents both husband and wife get involved in employment. In this regard, televisions and internets have replaced parents on their parental responsibilities as a result immoral behaviors such as alcoholism, premarital sex and homosexuality have been experienced in the Adventist church setting in Arusha municipality. This challenge should be addressed so that SDA parents in Arusha municipality

may know relationship between Christian parenting and employment and be able to balance between the two.

### REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Literature review focused on ideas and concepts of this study. The main ideas that guided this review were;

- Child development
- Christian parenting
- Employment of both parents

#### Child development

Parents are direct involved in child social development. Cherlin [8] says "In several years of life, families provide main setting in which children's fundamental need are met." (p, 410) This means that socialization always begins at home and main characters are parents who are supposed to impart learning which include talking, teaching children norms and values of a particular society.

Children can therefore develop strange behavior depending on the environment which brings them up during the early age of childhood. Farley [9] comments that the family is the most important agent of socialization, it provides necessary socialization theory to make children fit in the society. It is reasonable to assume that the society depend much of the family to shape the character of children to fit the society. On this regard, parents are the ones to be blamed or congratulated of the functioning of the children in the society. In case of physical and mental growth it is important for the parents to know that patterns such as nutrition and mental growth of their children need close contact between parents and children.

Children who do not get enough food which is good for their growth will become irritable. Good health especially in during the early age speed up the growth cycle while poor health slow them down. Parents are therefore required to provide better nutritional food for their children and make sure that they get the right thing that will bring up the child into societal acceptance.

Moreover, child development cannot be complete if spiritual dimension is not included. Posse and Melgosa [10] say that the better spiritual dimension of a child is always affirmed and developed by parents at home. White [11] supports this; she says "Parents are supposed to cooperate with God by bringing their children up in His core and fear." (p, 368) This point simply suggests that parents are responsible to train their children and bring them up to the fear of God and they will be liable for the neglect of this role.

#### Christian parenting

Atkinson and Field [12] define Christian parenting as a responsibility which implies the physical

and emotional care of a child from birth, it involves the building up of secure emotions and bonds within which strong attachment are formed between parents and a child and then utilizing that good experience between the child and others within the family and beyond. This definition reveals that families can produce great happiness or great misery depending on the parental approach that will be applied to the family. Supporting this view, Posse and Melgosa [13] comment that the family can experience happiness or suffering and anxiety depending with the style of parental care.

This idea compels any Christian family to a fundamental education which is based on values, traditions, customs, beliefs and ideals. These are mirrors of life style in Christian parenting point of view. Posse and Melgosa [14] say that, the higher values of parenting are spiritual and ethical formation that take place in the family. They say that home is the industry to cultivate spiritual dimension which has been forgotten in today's ideas of human development which includes only physical, mental and social dimensions White [15] says;

“In the divine plan of education as adapted to man's condition after fall, Christ stands as the representative of the Father, the connected link between God and man; He is the great teacher of mankind. And He ordained that men and women should be His representative. The family was the school, and the parents were the teachers” (p, 33)

This idea brings a close relationship between parents and children; it brings a close intimacy that cannot be transferred to other agents. Deuteronomy 6:6-7 gives instruction to parents on this grand responsibility, these verses say “And these words which I command you this day shall be upon your heart; And you shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise” God meant that Christian parenting should include not only giving instructions but also guiding children to the perfection of God's character. White [16] says;

“Religious instruction mean much more than ordinary instruction, it means that you are to pray with your children teaching them how to approach Jesus and tell him all their wants. It means that you are to show in your life that Jesus is everything to you and that His love makes you patient, kind, forbearing and yet firm in commanding your children after you as did Abraham” (p, 317)

Christian parenting in this regard has some guidelines which take a form of a steward. Parents are therefore entrusted by God to take care of their children.

This idea comes from the Psalmist declaration that children are heritage to the Lord (Psalms 127:3) and those who are entrusted as stewards are compelled be kind, patient as they bring these young ones to the acceptable moral values.

### **Employment of both parents**

Technology and life challenges in 21century have forced men and women to straggle for the daily living. Cherlin [17] said “the movement of mothers into paid workforce is one of the significant change in the family life over the past half century because mothers are employed outside the home and cannot do as much house work and child rearing as they used to do.” (p,175) Lourdes and Martha [18] said that when they did an interview on employment, one woman said “Now I get my own money, I feel better. Before I get a job I used to ask my husband for everything” she told her husband “with the small salary you earn, you go and spend it on drinking with your friends. Look at me, I am also earning money and I do not buy anything for myself but all I get I put it in the house” (p, 148)

Pelt [19] says “Two-career family life run smoothly on television sitcoms, the juggling act between jobs and family is a major stressor in many homes. Both parents have less time for their children.” Based on this matter, many families who get into employment both husband and wife in the contemporary world send their children to day care schools or hire a person who will take care of the children, the work which was previously done by mothers. This new movement has been challenged by some family life scholars. Edith [20] says “taking a carrier of being a mother and wife is a most exciting possibility of changing the tide, of serving the species, of effecting history, of doing something that will be felt and heard in ever-widening cycle” (p, 47) supporting this point White [21] said “Let woman realize the sacredness of her work in the strength and fear of God, take up her mission, let her educate her children for usefulness in this world and for a fitness for the better world”

### **RESEACH METHODOLOGY**

This study employed qualitative approach because it deals with perspectives and believes of SDA believers on how they view relationship between Christian parenting and employment. Information was gathered from interviews, focus groups discussion, questionnaires and observance of parenting styles from different families. According to Mwita [22] the use of qualitative approach extended the inquiry for the better results.

The study implemented purposive sampling because the method is appropriate to get information from selected respondents who are familiar with the study. The study selected five Pastors from Arusha

municipality, five Lectures from the University of Arusha, 25 Church elders and Church member from five SDA churches who were put in five focus groups discussion. These respondents represented other DSAs in Arusha municipality in regard to this topic.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This study intended to find SDA perspective on the relationship between Christian parenting and employment. The researcher intended to find answers to three research questions which inquired to know the problems facing Christian parenting in SDA Church perspective in Arusha municipality, ways in which parents will be able to balance Christian parenting and employment in SDA perspective in Arusha municipality and recommendable model of a better balance of employment and Christian parenting in SDA perspective in Arusha municipality.

### What are the problems facing Christian parenting in SDA Church perspective in Arusha Municipality?

This question was discussed by respondents in focus groups discussion, interviews, questionnaires and from personal observations on the contemporary SDA Christian parenting styles in Arusha municipality. Results revealed that most SDA parents send their children in day care schools and boarding schools from their early age of four years old, still some employ maids in their homes to do parental responsibilities. Personal observation of the researcher started from respondent homes and found that 86% sent their little kids of four and five years old to boarding school so as to have enough time for employment and other family development activities. The observation went further to one of SDA primary schools and found 87% of boarding school student who are under ten years old are coming from SDA's families. Leader 1 from Tanzania Union said "Parenting is like a part time work, Parents shift their parental responsibilities to grandmothers, day care and boarding schools" Focus group discussion which was done in church A, C and E revealed that most SDA parents have employed maids in their homes to take care of their children when they are at work.

These results bring remarkable contradiction to what White [23] wrote in regard to Christian parenting. She said "For the first eight or ten years of a child life, the field or garden is the best schoolroom, the mother the best teacher, nature the best lesson book" she also said "Infancy extends to the age of six to seven, parents especially mothers should be only teachers of such infant minds."

The research found that, the key issue that brings SDAs to diverge from the counsel of their co-founder regarding parenting roles is economic. It shows that parents have failed to do most of their parental activities because life is tough and they are compelled

to take much of their time for employment and give less time for parental activities.

During focus group discussion in Church A, the researcher posed a question which said "How can life challenges affect Christian parenting" Respondent number 5 said "because people are looking for something to do (employment) to get money, this makes them fail to do parenting roles as they should" Moreover pastor 3 said that "poverty makes some weak parents refrain from parenting roles and commit themselves totally to employment"

Another challenge to SDA Christian parenting as noted from focus groups discussion and interviews was novice to riches. Result showed that SDA parents had no restrictions on Television watching and Internet to their children. Pastor 1 said "Rich parents bring Televisions and computers whereby children are free to use them as they please hence destroy their moral character" Cherlin [25] also supports this point, she says "Parents sometimes spend more money to their children as a substitute for spending more time with them" (p, 359)

### What are the ways in which parents will be able to balance Christian parenting and employment in SDA perspective in Arusha Municipality?

This question revealed that SDA Christian parenting and employment depend each other, however they are parallel in the fact that each one needs time. On one hand employment helps parents provide food, cloths education to the children, and on the other hand parenting needs parents spend time for parental roles. In this regard, balance of the two needed discussion from the research respondents. Result from respondent indicated that parents may do self-employment during the early years of their children; this will assist them to divide time for parenting and for self-work.

This can be possible because self-employment has self arrangement than other employments in private and government institutions whereby a person (s) works under managers and other organization supervisions. Pastor 3 answering this question said "Parents need to find self-employment that they can control themselves and divide what time they should work and what time they should act on parenting roles" The researcher posed a question to Lecture no 2 from University of Arusha on how does the self-employment provide room for the balance of employment and parenting. He said "Employed work is a contract between organization and the employee. The employee should work according to the contract, but if a person has a self-employment h/she is the final authority of what should be done at a particular time"

Another option which was proposed by Pastor 2 was that one parent especially mothers should retire

from work during the early age of their children and do parental roles. He said "Parents should negotiate, one should remain at home for parenting responsibilities because this is a full time work because children learns through hearing, and seeing" This discussion raised a feminist concern which said, "is it necessary for the mothers remain at home for parental roles?" According to this discussion it was agreed by respondents that it is good for the mothers remain at home because of biological nature. The mother will need to breastfeed the child, white [25] supports this by saying "The mother is a Queen of her household. She has in her power the molding of her children's character that they may be fitted for the higher immortal life" (p, 231) Therefore, it was agreed that during early age of a child, husbands may continue with the employment if any and wives should retire from work for parental responsibilities.

Moreover, employed parents may work in shifts, if one parent is at work the other should be at home, and use weekends and holydays effectively for their marriage issues and plans for their family.

#### **What is the recommendable model of a better balance of employment and Christian parenting in SDA perspective in Arusha Municipality?**

The study had to look for the model of a better balance of employment and Christian parenting in the SDA perspective. Respondents suggested that it is better that parents should take parenting responsibilities in a serious note, they should divide themselves to meet these parallel responsibilities. During the early age of their children, parents are advised to agree each other that husbands should continue with the employment (if any) and mothers can retire from work or create self-employment if they are compelled to do so. Pastor 5 said "If parents are compelled to look for a job in order to face economic challenges during the early years of their children, they need to be wise enough that husbands can be employed and the mothers remain at home and look for self-employment." Pastor 4 said "Other model that can be applied by parents is to establish self-employment for both, for this will help them balance employment and Christian parenting.

Focus group discussion in Church B commented that mothers may also retire from work during the first eight years of their children or may be employed after their children have grown up. This point was also suggested by leader no 5 from Tanzania union of SDA church. He also said that mothers may create self-employment such as gardening, chicken rearing, home shops and the like. He said these can be done at home where children would also learn from their mothers.

#### **FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATION**

The study finding showed that Christian parenting and employment are related, for they both

need time. Parents are not supposed to ignore employment because of situation analysis of the contemporary world; moreover they are not supposed to overlook parenting responsibilities because of the busy world of employment. These findings were arranged according to the objectives of the study.

#### **To investigate the problems of Christian parenting in SDA Church perspective in Arusha municipality**

Research findings noted that SDA parents do not use most of their time to do their parental duties as they should. Majority sends their children to day care and boarding schools; still others handle their children to maids, televisions and computers which in turn affect their moral values

Another problem that was noted as a challenge to SDA Christian parenting was the economic issue. Because of toughness of life both parents (husband and wife) are forced to look for employment which affect their parental responsibilities for they use most of their time for searching their daily living and spend less time for parenting.

The last problem was novice to riches. This was noted that most parents fail to control their children on television watching, internet browsing, hence their children get involved in immoral behaviors they learn from these gadgets.

#### **To find out ways in which parents will balance Christian parenting and employment in SDA perspective in Arusha municipality**

Finding revealed that parents may have several options of balancing Christian parenting and employment. Suggested ways are;

- Parents may do self employment during the early years of their children for they will be able to balance parenting and employment
- Mothers should retire from work during early years of their children and take care of their children while husband continue with employment
- Employed parents may work in shifts for balancing parenting responsibilities and employment

#### **To recommend a model of a better balance of employment and Christian parenting in SDA perspective in Arusha municipality**

This objective revealed that SDA can have better balance for Christian parenting and employment. The recommended models are;

- Parents may establish self employment
- Mothers may retire from work during first eight years of their children
- Mothers may look for employment after eight years of their children

### Conclusion and recommendations

The study concluded that Christian parenting and employment are close related. Parent should know that they should not all stay at home taking care of their children or all go to work and live children at home with maids, televisions and computers. It is recommended that parents should make sure they balance them according to the findings of this study for the betterment of the family.

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