

## ABSTRACT

Small Christian Communities (SCCs) embody fundamental features of the ecclesiology of Vatican II which encourages sharing and participation of all church members. SCCs serve as the family cell of the church where pastoral work begins and moves towards the sub-parishes, parishes and dioceses. As literature indicates, majority of the Christians in Catholic Church are not strongly inclined towards evangelization. This is based on the fact that the Catholic Church is highly dogmatic, sacramental and hierarchical in character. Church activities are primarily directed towards the instructional pastoral care. Absorbed in the inner problems of the church, and occasionally in issues of peace and justice, contemporary Catholics feel relatively little responsibility for spreading the faith. This is not an exception in the Catholic Church in Vihiga County. Therefore, this calls for a need to address the issues above. The current study therefore, investigated how SCCs are involved in evangelization that encompasses social justice and peace within Catholic Church in Vihiga County, Kenya. Specifically the study set to: describe involvement of SCCs in evangelization; evaluate SCCs involvement in promotion of social justice; and, examine the involvement of SCCs in promotion of peace in the Catholic Church. Functionalism theory by Emile Durkheim (1858-1917) was used to determine eufunctions (positive), dysfunction (negative) of SCCs in evangelization, social justice and promotion of peace in the Catholic Church. The study adopted descriptive research design and was conducted in Vihiga County. Vihiga County is one of the counties with the highest number of diverse Christian denominations Catholic Church being one of them. The study population comprised of 5 parish priests, 5 assistant priests, 5 fully trained catechists, 30 nuns and 279 SCCs drawn from; Luanda, Erusui, Hambale, Buyangu, and Chamakanga parishes. All the 5 parish priests and 5 assistant priests and 5 fully trained catechists were purposively interviewed. Simple random sampling was used to sample 74 SCCs using Leeuw's formula. For every sampled SCC, the chairperson was purposively sampled for the study. Two respondents were randomly picked from each SCC giving a total of 148 respondents. Nine nuns (30%) were also randomly sampled. Data was gathered through questionnaires which were administered to SCCs. In-depth oral interviews targeted priests and their assistant, nuns, two members from each SCC and catechists. Participant observation was carried out in selected SCCs. To establish reliability of research instruments, a pilot study was carried out involving; 1 parish priest, 1 assistant priest, 1 catechist, 1 nun and 7 chairpersons (10% of the study sample). Experts were consulted for validity of the instruments. Qualitative and quantitative data were analyzed using thematic analysis and descriptive statistics respectively and presented in texts, verbatim excerpts, narratives, frequency distribution tables and chats. The findings revealed that SCCs evangelize through catechism, seven steps of bible sharing, charitable activities and inculturation. Secondly, SCCs are involved in provision of social justice through activities that enhance principles of social justice which include; human dignity, common good, solidarity and subsidiarity. Finally, SCCs promotes peace through conflict resolutions approaches such as community based, mediators and reconciliation. The study findings may be instrumental in guiding the Catholic Church especially in Vihiga County on the importance of SCCs and evangelization which encompasses social justice and promotion of peace in the church.