

**A STUDY OF CHURCH INTERVENTION IN THE LIVES OF THE  
CHILDREN OF SEPARATED PARENTS: A CASE OF PAIDHA PARISH, NEBBI  
DIOCESE OF THE CHURCH OF UGANDA**

**WALTER CWINYAAI**

**M22B09/013**

**A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE BISHOP TUCKER SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY AND  
DIVINITY IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF THE  
DEGREE OF BACHELOR OF DIVINITY OF UGANDA CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY**

**September, 2025**

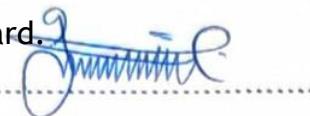


**UGANDA CHRISTIAN  
UNIVERSITY**

A Centre of Excellence in the Heart of Africa

## **DECLARATION**

I hereby declare to the best of my knowledge that this research is my own original work that has never been submitted to any institution of higher learning for any academic award.

Signature: 

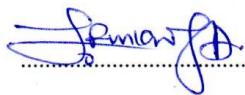
**Student's Name:** **Cwinyaai Walter**

**Registration Number:** M22B09/013

**Date:** 03/09/2025

### **APPROVAL**

This is to certify that this research by Cwinyaai Walter titled “A Study of Church Intervention in the Lives of the Children of Separated Parents: A Case of Paidha Parish, Paidha Archdeaconry, Nebbi Diocese of the Province of the Church of Uganda” has been done under my supervision and is now ready for submission with my approval.

Signature: .....

Date: 3rd Sept. 2025

**REV. CANON EKIRUNGA M.K. ROSE**

**SUPERVISOR**

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Title Page	
Declaration .....	ii
Approval .....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Table of Contents.....	iv
Dedication .....	viii
Acknowledgements .....	ix
List of Tables .....	x
Abbreviations and Acronyms .....	xii
Abstract .....	xii
CHAPTER ONE: THE PROBLEM AND ITS SETTING .....	1
1.0 Introduction .....	1
1.1 Background to the Study .....	1
1.2 Statement of the Problem .....	6
1.3.1 General Objective .....	7
1.3.2 Specific Objectives of the Study .....	7
1.4 The Research Questions .....	7
1.5 Scope of the Study .....	7
1.5.1 Content Scope .....	8
1.5.2 Time Scope .....	8

1.5.3 Geographical Scope .....	8
1.6 Justification of the Study .....	9
1.7 Significance of the Study .....	9
1.8 Theoretical Framework .....	10
1.9 Limitations of the Study.....	10
1.10 Conclusion .....	11
<b>CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW .....</b>	<b>12</b>
2.0 Introduction .....	12
2.1. Current Church Interventions in the Lives of Children of Separated Parents .....	12
2.2 Causes of Separation among Baptized Christian Parents .....	14
2.2.1 Lack of Genuine Faith .....	14
2.2.2 Misunderstanding of the Purpose of Marriage .....	15
2.2.3 Poverty .....	15
2.3 Biblical Teaching on the Separation of Married People .....	16
2.4 Effects of the Separation of Parents on their Children’s Life .....	17
2.5 The Church’s Response to the Challenges facing Children of Separated Parents ..	19
2.6 More that the Church can do to help Children of Separated Parents .....	20
<b>CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY .....</b>	<b>22</b>
3.0 Introduction .....	22
3.1 Study Design .....	22

3.2 Area of Study .....	23
3.3 Sources of Data .....	23
3.4 Target Population and Sampling Techniques .....	23
3.5 Variables and Indicators .....	24
3.7 Data Collection Instruments .....	24
3.7 Data Processing and Analysis Strategies .....	24
3.8 Ethical Considerations .....	25
<b>CHAPTER FOUR: PRESENTATION AND DISCUSION OF THE FINDINGS .....</b>	<b>26</b>
4.0 Introduction .....	26
4.1 Demographic Data of the Study Respondents .....	26
4.2 Challenges faced by Children of Separated Parents .....	27
4.3 The Current Church Interventions in the Lives of the Children of Separated Parents. .....	30
4.4 What more that the Church can do to help Children affected by the Separation of their Parents .....	32
4.5 How the Church would be Without Parents' Separation .....	34
<b>CHAPTER FIVE: THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION .....</b>	<b>36</b>
5.0 Introduction .....	36
5.1 Old Testament Perspective: God's Care for the Vulnerable .....	36
5.2 New Testament Perspective: Jesus and the New Family of God .....	37

5.3 Church History: Witness of Care in the Household of Faith .....	38
5.4 Modern Church: Mission in the Context of Paidha Parish .....	38
5.5 Conclusion .....	39
CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS .....	40
6.0 Introduction .....	40
6.1 Conclusion .....	40
6.2.1 General Recommendations .....	41
6.2.2 Recommendations for Further Studies .....	41
REFERENCES .....	43
APPENDICES .....	46
APPENDIX A: INTRODUCTORY LETTER .....	46
APPENDIX B: LIST OF RESPONDENTS .....	47
APPENDIX C: QUESTIONNAIRE / INTERVIEW GUIDE (ENGLISH VERSION) .....	49
APPENDIX D: QUESTIONNAIRE / INTERVIEW GUIDE (VERNACULAR VERSION) .....	51
APPENDIX E: TURNITIN REPORT.....	
	49

## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this dissertation to my dear and loving wife, Yoacel Judith, who stood faithfully by my side throughout the entire period of my study. I also dedicate it to my beloved children, Mungucangu Ezekiel, Anyonga Chrispus, and Madithrwoth Favored, whose presence brought me joy and encouragement. Special gratitude goes to my father, Mr. Okiirwoth Joel, and my mother, Ms. Ngombwegi Josephine, for their unwavering love, support, and prayers during my academic journey. May God's abundant blessings rest upon them all in the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First, I express my gratitude to the Almighty God for his love, care, protection, good health, financial provision, knowledge and wisdom that he has bestowed upon me during my Bachelor of Divinity studies and research. May His Name be exalted and glorified forever. Amen.

I would like to acknowledge Uganda Christian University staff for their spiritual nurturing. I also extend my special thanks to my Diocese (Nebbi) in partnership with Crosslinks for sponsoring my studies at Uganda Christian University.

Furthermore, I extend my appreciation to my mentors: The Bishop of Nebbi Diocese Rt. Rev. Pons Awinjo Ozelle and the Retired Archbishop of the Province of the Church of Uganda the Rt. Rev. Dr. Henry Luke Orombi. They recommended and encouraged me, prayed for me and provided financial support for me and my family which made me feel at home during my studies. May the Almighty God bless them abundantly.

In a special way, I thank my University Research Supervisor the Rev. Canon Rose Ekirunga for being a great teacher, counsellor and a mother to me. Also in a special way, I extend my appreciation to my respondents who helped to give me the necessary answers needed and with their cooperation, I was able to collect empirical data from all the six Churches within Paidha Parish.

Finally, yet importantly, I extend my thanks to Pastor Moody who linked me with Crosslinks through the Diocese and my dear friend Ronald Otuga. I also thank the administration of Paidha Parish for the spiritual, social and financial support they gave me during my stay with them. May the good Lord bless them all.

## LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Showing the Descriptive Statistics for the Respondents' Background Information .....	23
Table 2: Showing the Challenges faced by Children of Separated Parents.....	24
Table 3: Showing Current Church Intervention in the Lives of Affected Children.....	26
Table 4: Showing what the church can do to help children affected by separation of parents....	28
Table 5: Showing how the Church would be without the Separation of Parents.....	30

## ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

U.C.U      Uganda Christian University

C.O.U      Church of Uganda

Assoc.      Associate

Rt.          Right

Rev.        Reverend

Dr.         Doctor

Can.        Canon

Prof.       Professor

Mr.        Mister

Ms.        Miss

## ABSTRACT

Parental separation and divorce have become increasingly common in today's society, affecting millions of children worldwide. A descriptive study was carried out in Zombo district with the aim of establishing Church intervention in the lives of children of separated parents in Paidha Parish, Nebbi Diocese. Data was collected by use of questionnaires to gather empirical data. The findings revealed that the children of separated parents in Paidha parish face a number of challenges including: lack of basic needs, lack of parental love and anger, anxiety and emotional stress, poor performance in academics, depressive symptoms, poor health and malnutrition, low self-esteem, conduct problems, lack of parental care and guidance. The church is focusing on teaching the principles of safety and welfare of children affected by separation of parents, providing counselling services for separated parents to bring them together, offering prayer and support to children of separated parents and providing mentorship programs for skilling of affected children. The respondents suggested that the church should create supportive environment for children affected by the separation of their parents, have active programs such as care for kids of the divorced, active outreach and home visits for families, pastoral and emotional support for the affected children, encouraging healthy communication while allowing Bible-based healing through Bible study. All these would enable the church to grow strong, united, with godly instruction from every home, having holistic integration of faith and the homes would be transformed into little gospel outposts. The study recommended that the church should offer a Christian perspective that acknowledges and addresses the pain of separation, while providing a path toward healing by demonstrating healthy relationships and communication within the church community.

## CHAPTER ONE

### THE PROBLEM AND ITS SETTING

#### 1.0 Introduction

The purpose of this research study was to establish Church interventions in the lives of the children of separated Christian parents in Paidha Parish, Nebbi Diocese. The study was intended to examine the Church interventions in the lives of the children left out as a result of separated baptized Christian parents. This research was developed through reviewing literature sources of previous studies on family issues, reviews of existing scholar's literatures in the library, personal testimony since the researcher is a product of a separated Christian couple. This study was based on some Biblical verses like Ephesian 6: 1-4, Psalm 127: 3-5, and Proverbs 22: 6 which says "train up a child in the way he should go; when he is old he will not depart from it". This study primarily focussed on the church's response to family separation, and the consequences which follow. This chapter presents the background to the study, statement of the problem, scope of the study, the study objectives, theoretical framework, justification and significance of the study.

#### 1.1 Background to the Study

Separation and divorce of baptised Christian couples have become increasingly common in today's society, affecting millions of children worldwide (Wohm, 2025). Family separation, the involuntary separation of family members, is a global issue with diverse causes and impacts, particularly affecting children (Willi, 2024). Divorce is a present-day reality of society and children of divorced parents are very many.

Statistics show that roughly 40% or more of marriages in the U.S. end in divorce. Worldwide it is about 25% and rising according to most experts (Armand, 2020) . Family separation in Sub-Saharan Africa is a complex issue with diverse drivers, including poverty, migration, conflict, and natural disasters. However, family separation can also stem from violence, abuse, or neglect. (Vise-Lewis, 2024) . This separation can have devastating consequences, including psychological distress, vulnerability to violence and exploitation, and missed educational and medical opportunities for children. The term ‘family separation’ encompasses all families whose parents separate, whether they are married or cohabitantes (Adam, 2020).

Many baptised Christian parents have separated and many are in the process of separation living their children without guidance and parental care in our societies (Krieken, 2024) . Christian parents going through separation will experience a whole cocktail of emotions about their situation, including a fear of what might happen next, a deep love for their children and worries about money

The emotional trauma that occurs during the crisis of separation and divorce is enormously disruptive and debilitating (Adriana, 2024). The sense of failure and loss that accompanies the marital breakdown frequently results in feelings of intense disappointment, bitterness, loneliness, dislocation, anger, sadness, fear, failure, guilt, hatred, and depression. While child fostering is a traditional practice, it can also be a response to these challenges, with children living with extended family members for various reasons, including access to services or to alleviate family hardship (Karen J. el al., 2022).

The Church as a family has a great responsibility teaching the Christian families the goodness of family and togetherness in the face of family's brokenness (Acutis, 2022). The role of the church is to offer a calm space in the midst of the storm and point Christians forward to making orderly plans for their future. The church has the work of reframing the complexities of an adult relationship breakdown into future-focussed discussions, so that their children might have the opportunity to thrive (Mark E.R., 2016). There are multiple ways in which the church might come alongside those who are fragile and fearful and point them towards a restored hope for their future. This all comes back to the risk of harm to children from parental conflict and the expectation that the church will lead the charge in calling for safe systems for all who separate, from the moment of separation rather than an application to court. The church has the responsibility to add its voice and not by promoting separation; but promoting child welfare.

One of the biggest obstacles teen children of divorce face is the lack of agency or control in their life because they are not full-fledged adults and are still dependent

on their parents for their basic needs, including things like their finances, transportation, and living arrangements. This dependence is a good and natural part of growing up; in a dysfunctional system, however, this can make setting and maintaining healthy boundaries difficult. According to Meola, D., (2023), children of divorce who have likely never left their original family system, may find it challenging to even identify the dysfunction or the interior wounds it has caused them and may also struggle with a false understanding of forgiveness. Teens are still subject to legal custody arrangements and separating with their parents could be unsuccessful or even risk backlash (Robert E. Emery, 2025).

There are vast numbers of children who are growing up with parents in different households, and yet it is not spoken of. A generous interpretation of the church's silence on family separation is that it has its head in the sand, buried and unresponsive due to helplessness, unsure of how to navigate the mess. According (Adam, 2020) , a less generous interpretation is that the church is more comfortable wearing the clean pressed clothes of judgement, than the grubby rags of grace. If grace but not judgement is the route taken by the church, then it is time to end the silence about family separation where the needs of vulnerable families are best left to others (Adam, 2020). The church should be proclaiming from the rooftops to the world at large that children must be protected from harm, physical or psychological, when parents separate (Barna, 2023) . Some families will need the protection of the family court to find safety, but many families will simply need the helping hand of others around them. A loving faith community can help a breaking family to let go of

what has passed and be pointed towards a future in which they and their children can thrive (Bengtson, 2023).

In inclusion, here is my personal testimony and experience as a victim of child neglect; “*From what other people told me, my parents got married (not in church), gave birth to me as their first born and separated a year after. They left me with my grandmother who took care of me, introduced me to salvation at that early age of five, took me to school, unfortunately she died when I was in primary two. My father got married to many other women, but none of them thought of taking care of me. I struggled with education up to primary seven, but joining secondary was not possible for me. My dream of studies ended, leaving with an option of joining a group of youths who were doing ‘moshomo’ business (selling roosted meat) within the town of Paidha.*

*The experience I passed through during my five years in that business was not good for a child. One that I cannot forget was entering a police cell at the age of 14, where police took us to their station at midnight as we were busy selling meat for our customers who were drinking in a certain bar. All of us were arrested that night, I lost all the money I had collected, it was the police commander who took a closer look at me and found that I was too young among the suspects, since it was night they made me spend a night in the cell and released me the next day. When my mother heard of this story, she came and looked for me. According to me, I believed God reminded my mother and made her to at least remember me. On her knees, she requested me to go back to school. Since I was a humble boy, I forgave them and took a step to go back to school, but with too much pain.” This testimony prompted me to*

conduct a study of church intervention in the lives of children whose parents have separated. My pain always comes back when I see parents separating these days. My desire is that, Christian families should live together until old age and death do them apart. Understanding the impact of family separation on children is crucial for parents, educators, and caregivers. This study focused on the effects of parental separation on child behaviour, explored common behavioural changes, identified influencing factors, and offers strategies to help children cope and adjust. I hope the findings of this study can help in getting lasting solutions to the challenges faced by children of separated parents in our community.

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

Child labor and child neglect among Christian families in Paidha Parish-Nebbi Diocese, Church of Uganda have been on the rise, especially among children of separated Christian parents. This has been attributed to recent increase of street kids. Children of separated parents are seen by the communities as failures in life, while most of them have low self-esteem, are malnourished and cannot easily relate with other children freely. As a result, many are growing with bitterness, without love, lonely life styles and exposed to early sexual relations which put them at a danger of contracting sexually transmitted diseases. The government of Uganda advocates for children's rights where all children should be under the guidance and protection of the parents. The church of Uganda has initiated counselling services for affected families and children with projects aimed at helping vulnerable children in the community. The local leaders have put in polices to reduce street children in towns, but the number of neglected children has been growing due frequent family breakage.

Therefore, it is on the basis of this high risk that a study was carried out to examine Church interventions in the lives of the children left as a result of their parents' separation. This study will provide information for the different stakeholders, and help in policy formulation to mitigate the challenges facing Christian families, as well as helping children of separated parents within Paidha parish (and beyond).

### **1.3.1 General Objective**

To study Church interventions in the lives of the children of separated parents in Paidha Parish, Nebbi Diocese (C.O.U).

### **1.3 Specific Objectives of the Study**

1. To identify the challenges faced by children of separated parents
2. To assess the current Church interventions in the lives of the children of separated parents.
3. To establish what more can be done by the Church to help children effected by the separation of their parents.

### **1.4 The Research Questions**

- i. What are the challenges faced by children of separated parents?
- ii. What is Church doing currently to help children of separated parents?
- iii. What does the Bible teach about the separation of Christian parents?
- iv. What more can be done by the church to help children affected by the separation of their parents?

### **1.5 Scope of the Study**

This refers to the boundaries or limitations that define the extent of the research or investigation being conducted.

### **1.5.1 Content Scope**

The content scope examines Church interventions in the issue of children of separated parents. This research focuses on exploring the impact of separation on the children in Paidha Parish. The study aims to provide some ways the Church can intervene to help the affected children. This study looks at the role of peace-making in the context of family separation, and invites an honest reflection on the part played by Christian faith communities, in its broadest meaning ‘the church’. The data is limited to Christian communities as the researcher has limited experience of other faith communities.

### **1.5.2 Time Scope**

This is contemporary research. The study was conducted from February to August 2025 and this implies that the research took about five months to complete. Empirical data was collected from June to July 2025 within Church working hours and in the community.

### **1.5.3 Geographical Scope**

Data was collected from Paidha Parish located in Zombo District, Paidha sub-county, Nebbi Diocese. The parish encompasses six churches including; St. Mark Pagisi which is the parish headquarter, Cana, Otheko, Amei, Uyoru and Agelemu C.O.U. The parish covers an area of approximately 12 miles and is characterized by Mountainous terrain. The weather is typically cold during the month of March to December and warm during January and February. Moreover, the area boasts a significant amount of planted forests and shares a boarder with the Democratic Republic of Congo, situated to the North Western side of Uganda.

## **1.6 Justification of the Study**

The findings of this study revealed that children of separated parents pass through a lot challenges which were not be documented. This study was intended to add on the effort being made by the Church to help the affected children of Christian separated parents and to ensure that the affected children are not left out to the world. The information yielded by this study is beneficial to the parish administration such as Parish priests, Lay Readers and any other Church leaders in Paidha Parish. The researcher was a victim of such life, but now is able to study, is married officially in Church with children who are clearly focused and are all in school. We pray that as long as God give us life, they will never experience child neglect and that no other child should pass through that bad experience.

## **1.7 Significance of the Study**

Church involvement to help children of separated parents in Paidha Parish lies in its ability to connect with the children at a deeper spiritual, social and emotional level. This will make them remain connected to other relatives, Church leaders and even to God. These children will still see hope in life if the Church comes closer to them in such a time. This connection will help to strengthen their faith, bringing them closer to God and promoting a more profound spiritual experience. Above all, the children will know that, they are gift from God, parents just take care of them. This kind of knowledge is only possible when the Church can stand to support these abandoned children.

Although the study was conducted in only 6 Churches in Paidha Parish, in the Diocese of Nebbi, its findings will be of great use not only to Paidha Parish, but to the Church

of Uganda to evaluate how the Church intervenes in the issue of separated parents and neglected children. This will also allow the Church as a whole to actively participate in helping the children of these separated parents, lifting their spirit and creating an atmosphere of love and care. This can enhance the overall spiritual experience and reinforce the teachings of the gospel. The study is also a requirement for the researcher to acquire the Bachelor of Divinity Degree of Uganda Christian University.

### **1.8 Theoretical Framework**

Church involvement to help children who are victims of their parents' separation plays a crucial role in building the spiritual lives of these children in Paidha Parish. By putting religious themes, Biblical references, and uplifting their self-esteem at the fore front, the Church creates an immersive and engaging environment that helps individuals to connect with their faith and inspire them to share their faith with others. Thus, this theoretical framework acknowledges the transformative power of Church involvement and its ability to uplift, unite, and ultimately facilitate evangelization on the importance of a good family within Paidha Parish.

### **1.9 Limitations of the Study.**

Sampling bias: The study might only focus on a specific denomination (Anglican Church of Uganda), leaving others in the community with such challenges of separation in marriage. This limitation may look to be a bias in nature.

Geographical coverage: This study only focused on Paidha Parish, limiting its generalizing to other contexts. More data could have been gathered, but due to its geographical area of study, it might be very hard to reach other ideas.

Church involvement: The study might not fully capture the complexity of the Church involvement, such as the role of individual members versus the institution as a whole. This is so because, this study looks at the Church as institution not as individual.

Contextual factors: The study might overlook external factors such as social, cultural or economic context influencing the Church to involve in the lives of the children left due to the separation of their parents.

Resource constraints: The study might be limited by time, funding, or personnel impacting its scope. This could be because factors like period given, current financial constraints and available people to volunteer to help as respondents.

### **1.10 Conclusion**

The above chapter covering the background, statement of the problem, purpose and objectives of the study, the research questions, the scope, justification, significance, theoretical framework and the limitation of the study, gives us the whole picture of the outcome of this research. Therefore, without this chapter one, it could have been difficult to understand the whole research.

## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 2.0 Introduction

This chapter focused on the causes of separation among Christian parents of Paidha Parish, its effects on the children and the Church's response to the problem in line with what other scholars have also written.

#### 2.1. Current Church Interventions in the Lives of Children of Separated Parents

The good news is that God is at the center of our lives through every storm, whether it be sickness, divorce, loss of loved ones, loss of income, and many other trials (Brownson, 2023). When our identity and security in life are stripped away, we are left in a place where only God can fill the void. Helping a child cope with divorce is possible through faith in God and the belief that He can heal all hurts. Therefore, the church has the responsibility to show the way and point to God through counselling and teachings that restores hope in children of separated parents (Cory B Armad, 2020). Unfortunately, research shows that 75% of the children who are active in church during the time of the divorce, say that neither the pastor nor anyone else reached out to them during the divorce. For these children going through trauma, the church was absent, making these children loose trust in the church and the could be the reason why the highest percentage of grown up children least likely to be in the church as adults today (Lead, 2025). The church can do better than this!

Church members are often afraid they will make things worse or they do not know what to say so, they say and do nothing (Murrow, 2021). To make matters worse, the

church tells stories of faith in a way that reflects a perspective of a 2-parent household, which creates a disconnect for children in single parent homes or those moving from home to home. Children of divorce are always missing someone, no matter where they are. When they are with mom, they are missing dad or the other way around. They are always navigating two worlds, two value systems, two ways of believing or if they lose contact with one parent, are internalizing this loss. It is hard for them to be part of a faith community as they travel between parents, and they often lose touch. The church can make this easier for the children and their families by being the church during this time of grief. The church can accompany them through their pain, acknowledging that it is beyond comprehension. The church can validate their suffering and assure them that they are not alone. The church can remind them that God will never leave them. The church can help children as they find a new normal and navigate their lives.

The possible influence of parental divorce on the religious participation and experiences of offspring—adolescents or young adults has rarely been examined systematically. However, a few studies do conclude that offspring who are raised by both biological parents, as opposed to those raised in single-parent households or stepfamilies, are more likely to adopt their parents' religious practices and convictions (Elizabeth et al., 2024). The church can follow up children of divorced parents before they get lost in the world. The overall goal of the Church is to strengthen those congregations with a charism of care and to do so in ways that help children grow up in safe, nurturing families.

## **2..2 Causes of Separation among Baptized Christian Parents**

More than a million children are separated from their parents by government authorities (Spieker et al., 2023) . The causes of family separation are varied, including separation for parental maltreatment, adoption, illegal immigration, parental incarceration, and Indigenous status (Patricia, (2023). Basically, there are three main leading causes of Christian parent's separation making them to leave their children unattended to. These include: lack of genuine faith, misunderstanding of the purpose of marriage and poverty.

### **2.2.1 Lack of Genuine Faith**

According to the research done by Reconciliation Ministry, a local faith-based organization in Nebbi diocese, it was found that one of the main reasons why baptized Christian parents are separating is lack of genuine faith in Jesus Christ among some Christians. This is because many are just baptized Church members without real belief in Jesus Christ (Reconciliation, 2019) . In other words, they are not born-again Christians and this makes them not rooted in their faith. The trials and temptations that come their way put them down. They cannot encourage one another in case of any challenge. However, according to me, they could be helped by attending Church and even listening to the word of God but since they are unfaithful in their ways of life, the words are just left in the Church. For example, the Church is always teaching against alcohol, but some parents still go ahead and drink. Others engage in domestic violence among other abuses. The Church advises parents not to fight, yet some of them are always fighting, and as a result they fail to live together for long.

### **2.2.2 Misunderstanding of the Purpose of Marriage**

According to (MacArthur, 2002) one of the reasons why parents are separating leaving the children alone is the parents' misunderstanding of the purpose of marriage. He emphasized that marriage is not primarily designed for personal fulfillment, but rather to symbolize the relationship between Christ and the Church. When individuals prioritize their own happiness above the divine purpose of marriage, they risk undermining the foundation of the relationship, potentially leading to separation. Meanwhile, he did not notice that many Christians did not even think of wedding. Actually, majority of the baptized Christians are married outside church. From where will they learn about the purpose of marriage, when many baptized Christians have nothing to do with Church marriage? More emphasis should be put on negative cultural influence because among many people groups in Africa, men are free to marry as much as many women as they want. That cultural influence has made men unfaithful in their marriages. Therefore, they should first be encouraged to go for church wedding in order to protect their marriages against separation.

### **2.2.3 Poverty**

A family which cannot provide for the basic needs of children can also fail to raise them up (MacArthur, 2002). But this could be reversed if the Church can offer some solutions to help such parents. Many families are passing through poverty, but they are still working together as one family and at the end they make poverty history in their homes. Here for me I see lack of knowledge of how the parents can come out of poverty. Because if one can work, he or she will also be able to provide for his or her basic needs of life.

## **2.3 Biblical Teaching on the Separation of Married People**

According to 1 Corinthians 7:10-16, God desires that married couples stay together even through disagreements and difficulties in the marriage. This is God's ideal, so much so that, God does not even want unbelievers married to believers to separate from the marriage either. Paul points out that the believer is no longer bound or a slave of the marriage covenant in these circumstances. Wilful desertion renders the marriage covenant null and there is a release from the bond of Holy Matrimony. Adultery strikes at the heart of the marriage covenant, so Jesus allows for divorce in those cases. Adultery is such a deep breach of the marriage covenant that untold pain and rift are caused in the relationship. However, the principle of forgiveness and trust is also present and as long as couples are willing to work through a deep breach of the marriage covenant, there is a real possibility of repair and healing in the marriage.

God commands that a wife must not leave her husband, and if she does leave him, must remain single, or else be reconciled to him while the husband must not leave his wife (1 Cor.7:10-11). Obviously, separation is not something we should just jump into and so, should be avoided whenever possible. There are times, though when it becomes needed, and these are the exceptions to the rule. In these cases, we should not be looking to find a “better option” in someone else, but to find a way to reconcile the marriage if possible (Cherith., 2019).

The goal of separation is reconciliation, not to go back to ‘the way it was’ because it contributed to where you are now (Santiago, 2025) . Use your separation as an opportunity to practice new ways of relating to each other and handling conflict. Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may

be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working (James 5:16). Marital problems are intimate and our natural instinct is to keep quiet. But If we keep our problems a secret, we interfere with God's primary method of offering aid through the body of Christ. Jesus very plainly said, "What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate" (Matthew 19:6). This was such a straightforward statement that many had trouble accepting it. Even His own disciples replied, "If such is the case of a man with his wife, it is better not to marry" (Mathew 19:10).

#### **2.4 Effects of the Separation of Parents on their Children's Life**

The effects of the separation of parents on their children's lives are multifaceted, encompassing emotional challenges like guilt, anger, anxiety, and a sense of loss, as well as behavioural problems such as aggression and academic decline (Millozzi, 2025) . However, parental handling of the separation, including maintaining stability and prioritizing the child's needs, significantly influences outcomes. While many children are resilient, some face long-term difficulties in relationships and mental health, with risk factors increasing if parents' conflict and financial stress persist (Cowan, 2014) . Children may feel responsible for the separation or worry about a parent's absence. They can experience anxiety about the future, changes in their lives, and the potential for further abandonment. Feelings of anger toward one or both parents and sadness over the loss of their family structure are common. Younger children may show signs of regression, such as bedwetting, sleep disturbances, or increased weepiness.

Children may exhibit increased irritability, demanding behaviour, and defiance including problems with peer relationships and general noncompliance can arise. Adolescents from separated homes have a higher risk of engaging in substance abuse and risky sexual behaviour. School performance can decline, and children may show less interest in their studies due to an increased risk of disruptive behaviours which can conduct problems at school.

Parental separation can have long-term effects on a child's behaviour and development, potentially leading to issues such as trust difficulties, relationship problems, and mental health challenges in adulthood. However, the impact varies depending on factors like the level of parental conflict, the quality of the parent-child relationship, and the support systems in place. With appropriate interventions and support, many children can adapt and thrive despite the initial challenges posed by separation.

Separation can affect adult children's ability to form stable and trusting intimate relationships and the effects on mental health can persist into adulthood, increasing the risk of psychological problems (Milrod et al., 2024) . Children from divorced families are at higher risk of experiencing their own family instability and separation in adulthood. High levels of conflict between parents during and after separation are detrimental to children's adjustment. Children are at greater risk when parents criticize each other or put the child in the middle of their disputes. Post-separation financial problems and economic hardship can create significant stressors for children. Many children are resilient and may fare better in a less-conflicted environment, even after a separation.

According to a study done by (Spieker et al., 2023) the effects separation of parents on children were universally negative, did not differ by reason for separation, and included neurological change from psychological trauma, precocious sexual maturity, physical and sexual abuse, neglect, academic delay, poor peer relations, psychosomatic symptoms, psychiatric disorder, and behaviour problems such as depression, anxiety, delinquency, self-harm, substance abuse, and inappropriate sexual behaviour. A study by Patricia M, (2023) found indications that separation led to intergenerational cycles of family separation and the research indicated that children are most vulnerable from 9 months to 9 years of age.

## **2.5 The Church's Response to the Challenges facing Children of Separated Parents**

Churches address challenges children of separated parents face by offering spiritual guidance, emotional support, and community resources, focusing on healing, fostering resilience, and promoting healthy family dynamics through faith-based counselling, support groups, and compassionate care from church members (Grant, 2024). Strategies include providing secure environments, teaching children to value both parents, reassuring them they are not to blame, and connecting families with professional help when needed. Many churches provide or refer families to faith-based counselling services that address the emotional wounds, anxiety, and anger that children often experience after a separation (Eng.Ronney, 2025).

Prayer offers comfort and strength to both children and parents, helping them navigate feelings of confusion and sadness (Miller-McLemore, 2019). Churches can organize or facilitate support groups for children and parents to share experiences and learn coping mechanisms within a faith-based community. Churches can teach

parents to make it easy for children to love and maintain relationships with both parents, avoiding criticism or belittling the other parent.

Parents are encouraged to tell their children the truth in a simple, age-appropriate way and to clearly reassure them that the separation is not their fault (Deering, 2022) . A church's stable and secure environment can offer children a sense of consistency and safety during turbulent times. Church members can provide practical and emotional support, offering help with daily tasks or simply listening to children and families. Providing resources and books that can provide pathways to healing for adult children, emphasizing concepts like redemptive suffering and addressing common wounds such as broken identity and anxiety. Churches often partner with mental health professionals and community organizations to provide comprehensive support for children and families experiencing separation.

## **2.6 More that the Church can do to help Children of Separated Parents**

Churches can support children of separated parents by providing stable environments, emotional support, and resources like counselling and educational programs, while also emphasizing the importance of parental love and reinforcing children's strengths (Dialog, 2018) . By offering a sense of continuity, affirming positive qualities, and watching for signs of distress, churches can act as a vital source of stability and healing for children navigating the complexities of family separation. The church to provide predictable and supportive environments within the church community to offer a sense of normalcy and security and create opportunities for children to

express their feelings and provide a safe space for them to process their experiences (Sider, 2022).

Churches can help children recognize and build on their individual strengths, rather than focusing on their parents' situation (Scottie May, 2025). Emphasize that they are loved by God and the church community, regardless of their parents' separation. Offer a Christian perspective that acknowledges and addresses the pain of separation while providing a path toward healing. Demonstrate healthy relationships and communication within the church community. Provide access to pastoral care, counselling services, and programs designed to help families and children cope with divorce.

The church can encourage and model neutral, child-focused communication about the other parent (Wess Gallager, 2023) . Offer workshops or resources on child-focused co-parenting and how to support children through the separation process. Create a community where children feel supported by the church and not caught in the middle of parental conflict. Facilitate children's participation in church activities to provide a sense of belonging and normalcy. Equip church leaders and volunteers to understand the unique challenges faced by children of separated parents (Heacoxa, 2019).

## CHAPTER THREE

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

#### **3.0 Introduction**

This chapter presents the method by which data is gathered to achieve the objectives of the research project. It presents the blueprint for the collection, measurement, and analysis of data in order to achieve the objectives of the research project. It presents the method that the researcher used in this study highlighting a more detailed description of the selected methodology. This section includes research design, area of study, sources of data, population and sampling techniques, variables and indicators, data collection instruments and ethical consideration. The purpose of this study was to look at the role of the Church in helping the children of separated parents in Paidha Parish, Goli Central Archdeaconry, Nebbi Diocese.

#### **3.1 Study design**

A descriptive study design was used to establish church intervention in the lives of the children of separated Christian parents in Paidha Parish, Nebbi Diocese (C.O.U). The study design helped in describing the characteristics, patterns, or key aspects of the phenomenon. This involved in-depth understanding of experiences, perspectives, and contexts, using methods like interviews, observations, and focused groups. The study used qualitative approach which involved open-ended questions that enabled respondents to express their opinions, suggestions, and recommendations regarding the purpose of the study. This was because descriptive research design aims to systematically describe the characteristics of a population or phenomenon. It also

enabled the researcher to answer "what," "where," "when," and "how" questions, rather than "why". This study design has sharpened the research methods suitable for examining the church intervention in addressing the challenges facing neglected children of separated Christian parents.

### **3.2 Area of Study**

This refers to the specific geographical and cultural or social context setting where the research was conducted. For the sake of this research, the geographical area was in Paidha Sub-county, Zombo District, Westnile Region, Uganda. Culturally or socially, the research was done among the people of Alur tribe. This was one of the largest tribes in Westnile Region of Uganda.

### **3.3 Sources of data**

This study used both primary and secondary sources of data which was collected from the Christian community in different churches within Paidha parish. The primary data was collected through interviews, observations and questionnaires distributed to 50 individuals of all ages. While secondary data was collected from the documents, records and archive of the different churches.

### **3.4 Target population and Sampling Techniques**

The target population for this study included the adults both male and female and the children of Paidha Parish. In this research non-probability sampling was used, particularly convenience sampling where by the selection of the participants were accessible. A total of 50 participants were purposefully selected and interviewed to provide information that could be analysed.

### **3.5 Variables and Indicators**

Both independent and dependent variables were used in this study. The independent variable included challenges facing the children of separated parents, causes of separation among Christian parents and church response, while the dependent variable included the effects of separated Christian parents on children. The variables were measurable characteristics that can change, while indicators were specific, observable, and measurable characteristics used to assess the presence or change in a variable.

### **3.7 Data Collection Instruments**

In this research, questionnaires, observation and open- ended interview guides were used to get information from various members in the mentioned area of the study. Copies of these questionnaires and interview guide or questions are located in Appendix A.

### **3.7 Data Processing and Analysis Strategies**

Qualitative content and contextual analysis were used in this research study. The Conceptual analysis involved examining a particular subject within its surrounding circumstances, conditions, or setting to gain a deeper understanding of its meaning, relevance, or implications. This approach considered the broader context in which something existed or occurred, including historical, cultural, social, and situational factors, in order to interpret and analyse the subject more accurately. By investigating the context in which something is situated, contextual analysis aims to uncover hidden meanings, connections, and influences that can provide valuable insights and enrich interpretations.

### **3.8 Ethical Considerations**

The study strived to avoid any form of harm to respondents by observing the ethical rules and these included; informed consent, respect for confidentiality of respondents' views and assurance of not causing any harm to the respondents.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### PRESENTATION AND DISCUSION OF THE FINDINGS

#### 4.0 Introduction

This chapter covers the demographic data of the respondents including age, gender, education level and marital status. The chapter also covered the causes of separation in marriage, the effect on children and Church responds to the needs of these children. These were presented in tables with narration under each.

#### 4.1 Demographic Data of the Study Respondents

Table 1: Showing descriptive statistics for the respondents' background information

Characteristics	Category	Frequency N=53	Percentage (%)
Age	12-17	05	9.4
	18-25	17	32
	26-35	16	30.1
	36-45	12	22.6
	46-55	02	3.7
	56 & above	01	1.8
Sex	Male	12	22.6
	Female	41	77.4
Education level	None	00	00
	Primary	05	9.4
Marital status	Secondary	36	68
	Tertiary & above	12	22.6
	Married	16	30
Marital status	Single	30	57
	Separated	7	13

Source; Primary data June 2025.

Table 4.1 shows that majority of the respondents were youth between the age of 19-35 years (62.1%), adult between the age of 36-55 years accounted for 26.3% of the

respondents, while teenagers between the age 12-18 years was 19%, and elders from 56 years and above represented 1.8%. This data revealed that the youth represent the majority in the church and should be properly trained for the church to have faithful and happy families.

The table further shows that the majority of the respondents were female (77.4%) while the male represented only 22.6%. The table also presents that most of the respondents (68%) at least attended secondary education, while 22.6% had tertiary education and 9.4% attended primary education. This means that, the respondents were mostly educated. Meanwhile on marital status, most of the respondents (57%) were unmarried, while 30% were married, and 13% had divorced. This could be due to the location of the respondents and the target group of people and also reveals that there is prevailing incidences of parent's separation in the church.

#### **4.2 Challenges faced by Children of Separated Parents**

Table 2: Shows the challenges faced by children of separated parents

Variables	Frequency N=53	Percentage (%)
Lack of basic needs	39	73.40
Lack of parental care and guidance	19	35.80
Anxiety and emotional stress	39	73.60
Depressive symptoms	24	45.20
Anger/lack of parental love	42	79.20
Guilt and children blaming themselves for the divorce	15	28.30
Conduct problems	21	39.60
Poor health and Malnutrition	20	37.70
Poor performance in academics	32	60.40
Low self esteem	20	37.70

As shown in table 2 above, the data revealed that children of separated parents have challenges including lack of basic needs (73.4%), lack of parental love and anger

(79.2%), anxiety and emotional stress (73.6%), poor performance in academics (60.4%), depressive symptoms (45.2%), poor health and malnutrition (37.7%), low self-esteem (37.7%), conduct problems (39.6%), lack of parental care and guidance (35.8%). The findings further indicated that children experienced increased irritability, demanding behaviour, and defiance including problems with peer relationships and general noncompliance can arise. Adolescents from separated homes had a higher risk of engaging in substance abuse and risky sexual behaviour. School performance declined, and children showed less interest in their studies due to an increased risk of disruptive behaviours which caused problems at school. It was evident that most neglected children experienced anxiety about the future, changes in their lives, and the potential for further abandonment which resulted into feelings of anger toward one or both parents and sadness over the loss of their family structure. Younger children showed signs of regression, such as bedwetting, sleep disturbances, or increased weepiness.

This finding agrees with that in a study by Millozi, (2025) who found that the effect of separation of parents on the children is multifaceted, encompassing emotional challenges like guilt, anger, anxiety, and a sense of loss, as well as behavioural problems such as aggression and academic decline. This is because of poor parental handling of the separation, including lack of stability and priority for the child's needs which significantly influences the outcomes. According to a study by Cowan, (2014), it was found that although many children are resilient, some face long-term difficulties in relationships and mental health, with risk factors increasing if parents' conflict and

financial stress persist. Cowan, (2014) pointed out that children may feel responsible for the separation or worry about a parent's absence.

According to Spieker, (2023), the impact of separation of parents on children varies depending on factors like the level of parental conflict, the quality of the parent-child relationship, and the support systems in place. In cases where the church provided appropriate interventions and support, many children adapted and thrived despite the initial challenges posed by separation. Milrod et al., (2024) found that separation can affect adult children's ability to form stable and trusting intimate relationships and the effects on mental health can persist into adulthood, increasing the risk of psychological problem. The study by Milrod et al., (2024) further reported that children from divorced families were at higher risk of experiencing their own family instability and separation in adulthood.

According to study done by (Spieker et al., 2023) the effects separation of parents on children were universally negative, did not differ by reason for separation, and included neurological change from psychological trauma, precocious sexual maturity, physical and sexual abuse, neglect, academic delay, poor peer relations, psychosomatic symptoms, psychiatric disorder, and behaviour problems such as depression, anxiety, delinquency, self-harm, substance abuse, and inappropriate sexual behaviour. In a similar study by Patricia M, (2023) it was indicated that separation led to intergenerational cycles of family separation and the research indicated that children are most vulnerable from 9 months to 9 years of age. High levels of conflict between parents during and after separation are detrimental to children's adjustment. Children are at greater risk when parents criticize each other

or put the child in the middle of their disputes. Post-separation financial problems and economic hardship can create significant stressors for children. Many children are resilient and may fare better in a less-conflicted environment, even after a separation.

#### **4.3 The Current Church Interventions in the Lives of the Children of Separated Parents.**

Table 3: showing current church intervention in the lives of affected children

Variables	Frequency N=53	Parentage (%)
Support projects such as compassion	31	58.50
Focus teaching on principle of safety and child welfare	41	77.40
Counsel the parents to come together	36	67.90
Mentorship programs/skilling the affected children	25	47.20
Prayer and support to the children of separated parents	33	62.30

As shown in table 3 above, majority (77.4%) of the respondents believe that the church is focussing on teaching the principle of safety and welfare of children affected by separation of parents. More than 67% of the respondents believe that the church provides counselling services for separated parents to bring them together. Most of the respondents (62.3%) believe that the church offers prayer and support to children of separated Christian parents, while 58.5% agreed that the church have projects such as compassion to support the children affected by separation of parents. Lastly, 47.2% of the respondents believe that the church has mentorship programs for skilling of affected children.

This finding agrees with those from other studies, such as a study by Grant, (2024), who found that churches do address challenges children of separated parents face by offering spiritual guidance, emotional support, and community resources, focusing on healing, fostering resilience, and promoting healthy family dynamics through faith-based counselling, support groups, and compassionate care from church members.

Another study by Ronney, (2025), revealed that the churches are using various strategies including provision of secure environments, teaching children to value both parents, reassuring them they are not to blame, and connecting families with professional help when needed. Ronney, (2025) also found that many churches provided or referred families to faith-based counselling services that addressed the emotional wounds, anxiety, and anger that children often experience after a separation.

According to Miller. (2019), prayer offers comfort and strength to both children and parents, helping them navigate feelings of confusion and sadness and therefore, some churches organized or facilitated support groups for children and parents to share experiences and learn coping mechanisms within a faith-based community. This was done by teaching parents to make it easy for children to love and maintain relationships with both parents, avoiding criticism or belittling the other parent.

Another study by Deering, (2022) found that parents were encouraged to tell their children the truth in a simple, age-appropriate way and to clearly reassure them that the separation is not their fault. A church's stable and secure environment can offer children a sense of consistency and safety during turbulent times. Church members can provide practical and emotional support, offering help with daily tasks or simply listening to children and families. As reported by Deering, (2022), churches were providing resources and books that can provide pathways to healing for adult children, emphasizing concepts like redemptive suffering and addressing common wounds such as broken identity and anxiety as reported. Churches often partner with mental

health professionals and community organizations to provide comprehensive support for children and families experiencing separation.

#### **4.4 What more the Church can do to help Children Affected by the Separation of their Parents**

Table 4: showing what the church can do to help children affected by separation of parents

Variables	Frequency N=53	Percentage (%)
Active programs such as Care for kids of divorced	30	56.60
Active outreach and home visits	28	52.80
Provide guidance and counselling	19	35.80
Pastoral and emotional support	20	37.70
Bible-based healing/ Bible study	17	32
Encourage healthy communication	21	40
Creating a supporting environment	32	60.30

As in table 4 above, more than 60% of the respondents suggested that the church should create supportive environment for children affected by separation of parents. Most respondents (56.6%) suggested that there should be active programs such as care for kids of the divorced to help the affected children grow in faith. The respondents (52.8%) also suggested that there should be active outreach and home visits for families, especially those with separated parents. The respondents recommended pastoral and emotional support for children of affected children (37.7%), encouraging healthy communication (40%), while allowing Bible-based healing through Bible study (32%).

This finding were consistent with that of a study by Dialog, (2018) who reported that churches can support children of separated parents by providing stable environments, emotional support, and resources like counselling and educational programs, while

also emphasizing the importance of parental love and reinforcing children's strength. Similarly, Sider, (2022) suggested that churches can act as vital source of stability and healing for those going through hardship due to the effect of parent separation by offering a sense of continuity, affirming positive qualities, and watching for signs of distress. Sider, (2022) further added that the church to provide predictable and supportive environments within the church community to offer a sense of normalcy and security and create opportunities for children to express their feelings and provide a safe space for them to process their experience.

According to Scottie, (2025), churches can help children recognize and build on their individual strengths, rather than focusing on their parents' situation. This could be done if the churches can emphasize that they are loved by God and the church community, regardless of their parents' separation. Additionally, the churches can teach a Christian perspective that acknowledges and addresses the pain of separation while providing a path toward healing as also reported by Gallagher, (2023). A study by Wess, (2023) acknowledged that the church can demonstrate healthy relationships and communication within the church community by providing access to pastoral care, counselling services, and programs designed to help families and children cope with divorce.

According to Gallager, (2023), the church can encourage and model neutral, child-focused communication about the other parents and offer workshops or resources on child-focused co-parenting and how to support children through the separation process. According to Heacoxa, (2029), the church can create a community where

children feel supported by the church and not caught in the middle of parental conflict by facilitating children's participation in church activities to provide a sense of belonging and normalcy, while equipping church leaders and volunteers to understand the unique challenges faced by children of separated parents.

#### **4.5 How the Church would be Without Parents' Separation**

Table 5: showing how the church would be without separation of parents

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
	N=53	(%)
Strong, united and fast growing church	35	66
Holistic integration of faith	31	58.5
Transformative homes into little gospel out posts	26	49
Consistency of children	18	33
Godly instruction at home	36	68
Bridging the gap between secular and sacred	3	5.70

As in table 5 above, most of the respondents (66%) believe that the church would be strong, united and fast growing if family stayed together without separation of parents. The Majority of the respondents (68%) also believed that the church would grow with godly instruction from every home, while 58.5% of the respondents believed that the church would have holistic integration of faith and the homes would be transformed into little gospel out posts (49%). This finding is supported by Biblical teachings as in 1 Corinthians 7:10-16, which states that, God desires that married couples stay together even through disagreements and difficulties in the marriage and this is God's ideal for the family and the church to prosper.

Although Paul points out that the believer is no longer bound or a slave of the marriage covenant in some circumstances such as adultery, the church should always forgive. The church should practice the principle of forgiveness and trust as long as

couples are willing to work through a deep breach of the marriage covenant, and there should be a real possibility of repair and healing in the marriage. According to 1 Corinthians 7:10-11, God commands that a wife must not leave her husband, and if she does leave him, must remain single, or else be reconciled to him while the husband must not leave his wife. This clearly illustrates that reconciliation is key for a successful family and the church. According to Cherith, 2019, the church has the responsibility to avoid separation of family as much as possible for it to stay strong and united. The church shouldn't be looking to find a "better option" in someone else, but to find a way to reconcile the marriage if possible as suggested by Cherith, (2019).

According to Santiago, (2025), the goal of the church is always reconciliation of family and bringing parents together to avoid divorce. Therefore, the church should teach Christians to confess their sins to one another and pray for one another, that they may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working (James 5:16). This is because marital problems are intimate and our natural instinct is to keep quiet, but if we keep our problems a secret, we interfere with God's primary method of offering aid through the body of Christ. Lastly, as Jesus very plainly said in Matthew 19:6, "What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate" let there be no separation of family for the church to stay strong and united in the body of Christ.

## CHAPTER FIVE:

### THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION

#### **5.0 Introduction**

Family is central in God's plan for humanity. From creation, God intended family to be a place of nurture, love, and continuity of faith (Genesis 2:18-24). Yet, in many communities today, including Paidha Parish in Nebbi Diocese, families experience breakdown through separation, leaving children vulnerable. These children often carry deep wounds of rejection, insecurity, and stigma.

The Church of Uganda, as part of the Body of Christ, is called to respond theologically and pastorally. This reflection considers church intervention in the lives of children of separated parents, drawing insight from the Old Testament, New Testament, Church History, and the Modern Church.

#### **5.1 Old Testament Perspective: God's Care for the Vulnerable**

The Old Testament consistently emphasizes God's concern for those made vulnerable by family or social breakdown. Children of separated parents in Paidha Parish can be understood in the same category as the fatherless, the orphan, and the widow. God commands Israel: "You shall not mistreat any widow or fatherless child" (Exodus 22:22). Similarly, "He defends the cause of the fatherless and the widow, and loves the foreigner residing among you" (Deuteronomy 10:18).

The Psalms celebrate God as “a father to the fatherless, a defender of widows” (Psalm 68:5). In Isaiah’s prophecy, God commands: “Learn to do right; seek justice. Defend the oppressed. Take up the cause of the fatherless” (Isaiah 1:17).

These texts demonstrate that care for vulnerable children is not a matter of choice but of obedience to God’s covenant. Thus, the Old Testament challenges the church in Nebbi Diocese to see children of separated parents as those under God’s special protection.

### **5.2 New Testament Perspective: Jesus and the New Family of God**

In the New Testament, Jesus places children at the very centre of the Kingdom of God. “Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these” (Matthew 19:14). This affirmation speaks directly to children who may feel rejected by parental separation.

Jesus redefines family beyond biological ties: “Whoever does God’s will is my brother and sister and mother” (Mark 3:35). This teaching assures children that the church, as the household of God, is their true family. Paul affirms this when he writes: “You are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God’s people and also members of his household” (Ephesians 2:19).

The parable of the lost sheep (Luke 15:3-7) and the parable of the prodigal son (Luke 15:11-32) reveal God’s concern for those who are lost or broken. In the same way, the church must actively seek out and embrace children of separated parents, reminding them of their dignity in Christ.

### **5.3 Church History: Witness of Care in the Household of Faith**

The book of Acts shows the early church sharing resources so that no one was in need:

“They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need” (Acts 2:45).

Later, it is recorded that “there were no needy persons among them” (Acts 4:34).

James reminds the church that “Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress” (James 1:27). This apostolic teaching illustrates how the church has historically understood care for the vulnerable as integral to true Christian faith.

Thus, from the earliest days, the church’s identity has been bound to compassionate care. Children of separated parents today fall within this biblical mandate.

### **5.4 Modern Church: Mission in the Context of Paidha Parish**

In the modern church, particularly in Paidha Parish, Nebbi Diocese, the biblical mandate remains clear. Children of separated parents face emotional trauma, economic hardship, and social stigma. The church’s mission must reflect Christ’s holistic love through:

Pastoral Care - Offering counseling and guidance in the spirit of the Good Shepherd (John 10:11).

Belonging in God’s Family - Strengthening children’s ministries to affirm the truth that “we are all one in Christ Jesus” (Galatians 3:28).

Practical Support - Living out James 2:17, which teaches that “faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.”

Advocacy for Justice - Following Micah 6:8, to act justly and love mercy in defending children's rights.

Spiritual Formation - Teaching children the promise that "though my father and mother forsake me, the Lord will receive me" (Psalm 27:10).

By doing this, the church embodies God's mission of healing and reconciliation in the local context.

### **5.5 Conclusion**

From the Old Testament command to defend the fatherless, to Jesus' radical embrace of children in the New Testament, to the early church's witness in Acts, the consistent biblical message is clear: God calls His people to care for vulnerable children.

For the modern church in Paidha Parish, Nebbi Diocese, this means intentional pastoral, spiritual, and practical interventions that restore dignity and hope for children of separated parents. The church must embody God's promise as "a father to the fatherless" (Psalm 68:5) and stand as a living family where every child finds belonging in Christ.

## **CHAPTER SIX**

### **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **6.0 Introduction**

This chapter presents the conclusion according to the study objectives and recommendations to the study findings. The purpose of the study was to assess the church intervention in the life of children of separated Christian parents in Paidha parish, Nebbi Diocese. The study was intended to identify the challenges faced by children of separated parents, to assess the current Church intervention in the lives of the children of separated parents, and to establish what more the Church can do to help children effected by separation of parents. Data was collected by interviewing 53 participants of different age groups within the parish. The data was analyzed and the study findings were documented.

#### **6.1 Conclusion**

The children of separated parents in Paidha parish face a number of challenges including: lack of basic needs, lack of parental love and anger, anxiety and emotional stress, poor performance in academics, depressive symptoms, poor health and malnutrition, low self-esteem, conduct problems, lack of parental care and guidance. The church is focusing on teaching the principle of safety and welfare of children affected by separation of parents, providing counselling services for separated parents to bring them together, offering prayer and support to children of separated parents and providing mentorship programs for skilling of affected children. The respondents suggested that the church should create supportive environment for children affected by separation of parents, have active programs such as care for kids

of the divorced to help the affected children grow in faith, active outreach and home visits for families, pastoral and emotional support for children of affected children, encouraging healthy communication while allowing Bible-based healing through Bible study. All these would enable the church to grow strong, united, with godly instruction from every home, having holistic integration of faith and the homes would be transformed into little gospel outposts.

## **6.2 Recommendations**

### **6.2.1 General Recommendations**

Based on the above findings, the study recommended that the church should offer a Christian perspective that acknowledges and addresses the pain of separation while providing a path toward healing by demonstrating healthy relationships and communication within the church community. The church should provide access to pastoral care, counselling services, and programs designed to help families and children cope with divorce. The church should encourage and offer workshops or resources on child-focused co-parenting and how to support children through the separation process and create a community where children feel supported by the church and not caught in the middle of parental conflict. The church should facilitate children's participation in church activities to provide a sense of belonging and normalcy while training church leaders and to understand the unique challenges faced by children of separated parents.

### **6.2.2 Recommendations for Further Research**

The current study can be interpreted as a first step in the research on church intervention in the life of children of separated parents. However, the results of this

study may not be representation of the broader picture of effect of separation of parents on children life due to the small sample size and the small geographical area. Future study should consider a wide geographical area with larger sample size to provide better insight on the challenges faced by children of separated parents and the church intervention.

Future studies on this topic would benefit from more precise data on the timing of religious socialization, divorce, relocation, and the formation of blended families. It would also be desirable to have more detailed information about each parent's religious involvement and the nature and timing of any changes therein.

Future research could address the response to family separation and the implication of silence by the church which affect children's life. This is because sometimes the church fail to engage in the matters that result into separation of family and this impact greatly on the life of children.

## REFERENCES

- Acutis, C. (2022). Ministering to Teens with Divorced Parents: Some Unique Challenges and Guidance. <https://www.lifegivingwounds.org/blog/ministering-to-teens-with-divorced-parents-some-unique-challenges-and-guidance> Jan 12 , 34.
- Adam, H. (2020). President of Family Division at launch of Family Solutions Group report Nov 2020. 9 <https://naccc.org.uk/20.11.22>, 23.
- Adriana. (2024). THE FAMILY ENVIRONMENT OF CHILDREN WITH DIVORCED PARENTS AND THEIR EMOTIONAL DISTURBANCES. *Institutul de Antropologie „Francisc I. Rainer” al Academiei Române*, 45.
- Armand, C. B. (2020). 8 Powerful Ways A Child of Divorce Finds Healing. July 22, 2020 / *Cory B Armand / 48 Comments*, 23.
- Barna, G. (2023). Transforming Children Into Spiritual Champions: Why Children Should Be Your champion. *Bills Hyballs*, 142.
- Bengtson, V. (2023). Families and faith: How religion is passed down across generations. *Oxford University press*, 234.
- Brownson, J. V. (2023). StormFront: The good news of God. . *Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing.*, 241.
- Cherith., P. (2019). Separation in Marriage - Bible. *Help for broken marriage*, 256.
- Cowan, P. A. ( 2014). Thinking about risk and resilience in families. In Stress, coping, and resiliency in children and families (pp. 1-38). . *Psychology Press.*, 1-38.
- Deering, C. a. (2022). Communicating with Children and Adolescents:‘Children are all foreigners,’. *Ralph Waldo Emerson said; but it need not always be the case. Here are some specific, age-appropriate tips for understanding the language of chil*, 165.
- Dialog, B. (2018). Biblical and theological perspectives on children, parents, and 'best practices' for faith formation: Resources for child, youth, and family ministry today. *Wiley Online Library- 2018* -, 45.
- Elizabeth et al., M. J. (2024). Parental Divorce and Religious Involvement among Young Adults\*. *Institute of American Values*, 1165.
- Eng.Ronney. (2025). Faith Working Through Love: Biblically-Grounded, Trauma-Focused, Evidence-Based Practices for Holy Matrimony. (*Doctoral dissertation, Regent University*), 131.

- Grant, R. E. (2024). . Support Strategies Used by Faith-Based Counselors of Adult Children of Previously Incarcerated Parents: . *An Exploratory Case Study* (*Doctoral dissertation, University of Arizona Global Campus*). , 45.
- Heacoxa, S.-J. (2019). Empowering parents as spiritual mentors for their children. *Doctorial theses* , 152.
- Karen J. el al., F. P.-P. (2022). Caring for nontraditional families: Kinship, foster, and adoptive. *Wiikeys library-First published: 14 June 2022*  
<https://doi.org/10.1111/jspn.12388>Citations: 5, 14.
- Krieken, R. V. (2024). The ‘Best Interests of the Child’ and Parental Separation: on the ‘Civilizing of Parents’. *Willey online Library-First published: 23 December 2024 https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2230.2005.00527.x*Citations: 51, 1468-2230.
- Lead. (2025). Being the CHURCH with children who are caught in the middle of divorce. <https://leadconnects.org/being-the-church-with-children-who-are-caught-in-the-middle-of-divorce/>, 54.
- MacArthur, J. (2002). Better Marriage, Exemplary Husband. Page 63. *Better marriage*, 63.
- Mark E.R., S. (2016). Hope in Child and Youth Care: An Ecological Perspective. *Mount Saint Vincent University*, 57.
- Miller-McLemore, B. J. ( 2019). In the midst of chaos: Caring for children as spiritual practice. . *Fortress Press.*, 115.
- Milozzi, S. (2025). Milozzi, S. (2025). Systematic Review of the Impact of Parent-Child Separation on Children’s Mental Health and Development. *Revista de psicoterapia*, 36(130), 5-17., 5-17.
- Milrod et al., B. M. (2024). . Childhood separation anxiety and the pathogenesis and treatment of adult anxiety. *American Journal of Psychiatry*, 171(1), 34-43., 34-43.
- Murrow, D. (2021). Why men hate going to church. Thomas Nelson. *Thomas Nelson.*, 261.
- Reconciliation. (2019). marriage without separation an Article. Page 14. *An Article.* Page 14., 14.
- Robert E. Emery, R. K. (2025). A Critical Assessment of Child Custody Evaluations: Limited Science and a Flawed System. *Sage Journal*<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1529-1006.2005.00020.x>, 14.
- Santiago, C. (2025). Saving a Marriage Through Separation. *Family lif: Troubled Marriage*, 113.

- Scottie May, B. P. (2025). Children Matter: Celebrating Their Place in the Church, Family, and Community. *Stonehouse, Linda Cannell*, 43.
- Sider, R. J. (2022). Churches that make a difference: Reaching your community with good news and good works. *Baker Books.*, 265.
- Spieker et al., ,. P. (2023). The Effects of Separation from Parents on Children. *Open access peer-reviewed chapter-Submitted: 16 August 2023 Reviewed: 07 September 2023 Published: 07 November 2023*, 132.
- Vise-Lewis, E. d. (2024). Family support services and alternative care insub-saharan africa. *Child Frontiers Ltd & UNICEF*, 12.
- Wess Gallager, S. J. (2023). Impressions and Arrows: Forming Faithful Preteen Hearts. *George Fox University*, 162.
- Willi, R. a. (2024). Global Report on Children's Care and Protection: Understanding and Preventing the. *SOS Children's Villages International*, 123.
- Wohm. (2025, August 19). *How Parental Separation Affects Child Behavior: Insights and Strategies for Parents*. Retrieved from Family seperation :  
[https://wohum.org/how-parental-separation-affects-child-behavior-insights-and-strategies-for-parents/?gad\\_source=1&gad\\_campaignid=18153687031&gbraid=0AAAAAojqKq2iiEOYARIOi0m8Hm3mLHK18&gclid=Cj0KCQjwh5vFBhCyARIsAHBx2wx\\_BiKTTF9ljoSYIOPlIE0-Wa9-0PWJNl\\_sb6-l](https://wohum.org/how-parental-separation-affects-child-behavior-insights-and-strategies-for-parents/?gad_source=1&gad_campaignid=18153687031&gbraid=0AAAAAojqKq2iiEOYARIOi0m8Hm3mLHK18&gclid=Cj0KCQjwh5vFBhCyARIsAHBx2wx_BiKTTF9ljoSYIOPlIE0-Wa9-0PWJNl_sb6-l)

## APPENDICES

### APPENDIX A: INTRODUCTORY LETTER



TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

Dear Sir/Madam

#### INTRODUCTION LETTER FOR DATA COLLECTION

This letter serves to introduce to you Dr. Cwinyaii Walter a student of Bishop Tucker School of Divinity pursuing a

- Master of Divinity
- Master of Arts in Theology
- Master of Arts in Theology and Development
- Master of Arts in Theology and Health care Management
- ✓ Bachelor of Divinity.

The Candidate is carrying out a research as a partial requirement for the award of the degree mentioned above. So kindly avail required information to the bearer of this letter.

Counting on your cooperation and thank you in advance

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Emmanuel Mukeshimana".

Rev. Dr. Emmanuel Mukeshimana  
Research coordinator, Bishop Tucker School of Divinity and Theology.  
[emukeshimana@ucu.ac.ug](mailto:emukeshimana@ucu.ac.ug), 0772505474

A Centre of Excellence in the Heart of Africa

## APPENDIX B: LIST OF RESPONDENTS

PAIDHA PARISH

S/NO.	NAME	ADDRESS (CHURCH)	TYPE ('Q' Questionnaire or Interview 'I')
01	Jariekonga Francis	St. Mark's Pagisi	Questionnaire
02	Giramia Evaline	St. Mark's Pagisi	Questionnaire
03	Yoacel Judith	St. Mark's Pagisi	Questionnaire
04	Mateso lassac	St. Mark's Pagisi	Questionnaire
05	Abednego Richard	St. Mark's Pagisi	Interview
06	Otim Alex	St. Mark's Pagisi	Questionnaire
07	Apio Jane	St. Mark's Pagisi	Questionnaire
08	Yonikane Cosmas	St. Mark's Pagisi	Interview
09	Acikane Caroline	St. Mark's Pagisi	Questionnaire
10	Rwothomio John	St. Mark's Pagisi	Questionnaire
11	Uringi John	St. Mark's Pagisi	Interview
12	Ukwai Hurry	St. Mark's Pagisi	Questionnaire
13	Afoyorwoth Jolly	St. Mark's Pagisi	Questionnaire
14	Amia Florence	Cana	Questionnaire
15	Ayika Hellen	Cana	Questionnaire
16	Adoch Daizy	Cana	Questionnaire
17	Mungucngu Ezekiel	Cana	Questionnaire
18	Uzelle Loice	Cana	Questionnaire
19	Kumakech Charles	Cana	Questionnaire
20	Munguriek Wilson	Cana	Questionnaire
21	Apio Delis	Cana	Questionnaire
22	Ajoko Selina	Cana	Questionnaire
23	Kwiocwiny Maurine	Uyoru	Interview
24	Kayenypamungu Nancy	Uyoru	Interview
25	Anyonga Chrispas	Uyoru	Interview
26	Ofoymungu Bonny	Uyoru	Questionnaire
27	Mungujakisa Cyrus	Uyoru	Questionnaire
28	Thokerunga Charles	Uyoru	Questionnaire
29	Warom Felix	Uyoru	Questionnaire
30	Nimungu Rose	Uyoru	Questionnaire
31	Kayeny Robinah	Otheko	Interview
32	Unegiu Moris	Otheko	Questionnaire
33	Okecha Paul	Otheko	Questionnaire

34	Okirwoth Patrick	Otheko	Questionnaire
35	Yoacel Racheal	Otheko	Questionnaire
36	Veve Richard	Amei	Questionnaire
37	Adokurach Christine	Amei	Interview
38	Oyenbyoth Evaline	Amei	Questionnaire
39	Mungujakisa Alfred	Amei	Questionnaire
40	Anewa Roseline	Amei	Questionnaire
41	Binen William	Amei	Interview
42	Cekecan Isaac	Amei	Questionnaire
43	Nyolonga Denis	Amei	Questionnaire
44	Aliana Geoffrey	Amei	Questionnaire
45	Jalwiny Innocent	Amei	Questionnaire
46	Jawiambe Clinton	Amei	Questionnaire
47	Ozelle Nancy	Agelemu	Questionnaire
48	Uyergiu Jeremy	Agelemu	Interview
49	Abe Sylvia	Agelemu	Questionnaire
50	Ungur Stephen	Agelemu	Questionnaire
51	Munguriek Vicky	Agelemu	Interview
52	Kwiocwiny Mercy	Agelemu	Questionnaire
53	Ajolorowoth Precious	Agelemu	Questionnaire

## APPENDIX C

### QUESTIONNAIRE / INTERVIEW GUIDE (ENGLISH VERSION)

My name is Cwinyaai Walter. I am a student of Uganda Christian University pursuing a Bachelor of Divinity degree. Currently I am carrying out research on the topic titled ‘A Study of Church Involvement in the matters of separation of marriage and how they can help the children left (Case study of Paidha Parish).

#### **PERSONAL INFORMATION**

**What is your age**

18-25 years  26-35  36-45  46-55  56 & above

**Your gender**

Male  Female

**Education level**

Primary  Secondary  Certificate  Diploma  Bachelor

**Marital status**

Single  Married  Separated  Divorced

**If married, for how long?**

Less than 1 year  1-5 years  6-10 years  10 years & above

**How many children do you have?**

None  1-2  3-5  6-10  10 & above

**What are some of the challenges faced by children of separated parents?**

.....

.....

.....

**What do you think the church is doing to help the children who are involved in such challenges above?**.....

.....

.....

Suggest some three ways the church can use to solve some of the challenges faced by the children of separated parents .....

How will our church be if all parents stay together with their children without separation until death?.....

Thank you

**May God bless you!**

**APPENDIX D**  
**QUESTIONNAIRE / INTERVIEW GUIDE (VERNACULAR VERSION)**

Nyinga otie Cwinyaai Walter a somo I Uganda Christian University ma abibitmo degree I lembe mi dini. Ka woni abikwano lembe I kum ‘Bedo nuti pa kanisa I lembe ma maku gamiri ku wekri pa jururnyodo man kite ma kanisa u bekonyo awia pa ju magi wekri I paidha parish.

**LEMBE I KUMI**

**Oro peri**

18-25 years       26-35       36-45       46-55       56 & nyo malu

Ni coo       Dhaku

**Ponjiri peri**

Primary       Secondary       Certificate       Diploma       Bachelor

**Gamiri peri**

Podi       Agamira       wapokra       Wawekra

**Kan igamiri, iri rom kani I gamiri?**

Tuc ungo oro 1       oro 1-5       oro 6-10       oro 10 nyo malu

**Itie kud awia adii?**

Upe       1-2       3-5       6-10       10 & nyo malu

Peko ango ma awia ma junyodo migi upokire benwango I Paidha Parish?

.....

.....

.....

I paru kanisa ubetimo ango kawoni pi konyo awia ma jurunyodo migi upokire?

.....

.....

I paro peri yore makani adek ma kanisa copo timo pi konyo awia ma jurunyodo migi upokire?

.....

.....

.....

I paru Kanisa mwa bibedo nenedi ka Jurunyodu bedo karacelu I gamiri mapokiri upe cil I tho?

.....

.....

.....

Afayo

**Wek Mungu umed iri Mugisa!**

## APPENDIX E: TURNITIN REPORT (PLAGIARISM REPORT)

The image shows a Turnitin plagiarism report interface. At the top left is the Turnitin logo. To its right, it says "Page 1 of 74 - Cover Page". On the far right, it displays "Submission ID trn:oid::1:3330021577". Below this header, there is a large, mostly blank document area. At the bottom of the page, there is a toolbar with several icons and text fields. From left to right, the toolbar includes: a "Quick" dropdown menu, a "Quick" button, a "Uganda" button, an "Ask AI Assistant" button (which has a small icon of a person thinking), a text input field containing "Simplify the document for me", a "Send" button (with a right-pointing arrow), and a "...". Below the toolbar, a note states: "By using AI Assistant, you agree to [Generative AI User Guidelines](#)".

# 24% Overall Similarity

The combined total of all matches, including overlapping sources, for each database.

## Filtered from the Report

- ▶ Bibliography
- ▶ Quoted Text

### Match Groups

 134	Not Cited or Quoted	19%
Matches with neither in-text citation nor quotation marks		
 29	Missing Quotations	5%
Matches that are still very similar to source material		
 0	Missing Citation	0%
Matches that have quotation marks, but no in-text citation		
 0	Cited and Quoted	0%
Matches with in-text citation present, but no quotation marks		

### Top Sources

23%	 Internet sources
9%	 Publications
8%	 Submitted works (Student Papers)

### Integrity Flags

#### 0 Integrity Flags for Review

No suspicious text manipulations found.

Our system's algorithms look deeply at a document for any inconsistencies that would set it apart from a normal submission. If we notice something strange, we flag it for you to review.

A Flag is not necessarily an indicator of a problem. However, we'd recommend you focus your attention there for further review.