

**Responding to Knife Crime: A Case Study of Church Leadership in a
Community Crisis**

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Studies**

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Declaration

This is to certify that:

- i. The author of this thesis declares that it does not include work forming part of a thesis presented successfully for another degree,
- ii. All work presented represents the author's own original work except for when referenced to others,
- iii. In accordance with the rules and regulations of PhD thesis submission, the word count of this thesis does not exceed the stipulated 80,000 words, exclusive of abstract, acknowledgements, contents, lists of figures and tables, reference list, and appendices.

Table of Contents

Table of Contents	iii
List of Figures	ix
List of Tables	ix
Acknowledgements	xi
Abstract	xiii

Chapter One: Introduction	1
1.1 Chapter One Overview	1
1.2 Background and Context	1
1.3 Research Aim	5
1.4 Research Objectives	5
1.5 Research Questions	6
1.6 The Interdisciplinary Approach to the Research	6
1.7 The Researcher's Positionality.....	7
1.8 Thesis Overview	8
1.9 Chapter One Summary	10
 Chapter Two: Church Leadership and Black Pentecostalism	 11
2.1 Chapter Two Overview	11
2.2 Black Majority Church Leadership	12
2.2.1 The Church and Society.....	12
2.2.2 The Recent History of Black Majority Churches (BMCs)	13
2.2.2.1 The First Major Wave of BMCs: 1940s – 1950s.....	13
2.2.2.2 The Second Major Wave of BMCs: 1980s – 1990s.....	15
2.2.2.3 The Third Major Wave of BMCs: 2000 - Present.....	16

2.3 Leadership in BMCs: Common Models and Theories.....	17
2.3.1 Church Leadership in General.....	17
2.3.2 Church Leadership Models.....	19
2.3.2.1 Servant Leadership	20
2.3.2.2 Transformational Leadership	22
2.3.2.3 Charismatic Leadership.....	23
2.3.2.4 Paternalistic Leadership	24
2.3.2.5 Contemplative Leadership	24
2.3.2.6 Authentic Leadership	25
2.3.2.7 Autocratic Leadership.....	26
2.3.2.8 Collaborative Leadership.....	27
2.3.3 Church Leadership Models in Dealing with Knife Crime Crises.....	30
2.4 Theology of BMCs.....	31
2.4.1 The Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG).....	34
2.5 The Activities and Contributions of BMC Leadership in their Communities.....	36
2.5.1 Support for Immigrants.....	37
2.5.2 Revitalisation of the Nation’s Spiritual Life Through Reverse Mission.....	38
2.5.3 Networking During Corona-Virus Pandemic.....	39
2.5.4 Social Action Projects.....	40
2.5.5 Reduction of Knife and Gun Crimes.....	41
2.6 Chapter Two Summary.....	41
 Chapter Three: The Problem of Knife Crime in British Society	 42
3.1 Chapter Three Overview	42
3.2 Evolution of the Terminologies of Knife Crime.....	42
3.3 The Crisis Situation of Knife Crime in British Communities	47
3.3.1 London.....	50

3.3.1.1 London Demography.....	50
3.3.1.2 London Crime.....	51
3.3.1.3 London Religion.....	52
3.3.2 Birmingham.....	53
3.3.2.1 Birmingham Demography.....	53
3.3.2.2 Birmingham Crime.....	54
3.3.2.3 Birmingham Religion.....	54
3.3.3 Manchester.....	55
3.3.3.1 Manchester Demography.....	55
3.3.3.2 Manchester Crime.....	55
3.3.3.3 Manchester Religion.....	56
3.4 Underlying Causes of Knife Crime in London, Birmingham, and Manchester.....	56
3.4 Chapter Three Summary	60
 Chapter Four: Methods and Methodology	61
4.1 Chapter Four Overview	61
4.2 Research Design	62
4.2.1 Research Aim	62
4.2.2 Research Questions.....	62
4.2.3 Research Philosophies	63
4.3 Research Methods	64
4.3.1 Narrative Approaches.....	65
4.3.2 Understanding the Researcher's Background.....	66
4.4 Data Collection and Analysis.....	69
4.4.1 Initial Interview Design	70
4.4.2 Making Contact and Negotiating access.....	72
4.4.3 Interview Schedule and Data Records	73

4.4.4 Research Ethics.....	74
4.4.5 Research Reflexivity.....	74
4.4.6 Interviewing.	75
4.5 Data Analysis	76
4.5.1 Thematic Analysis	77
4.5.1.1 First Order Analysis.....	77
4.5.2 Pastoral Cycle	78
4.6 Sampling	82
4.7 Chapter Four Summary	82
 Chapter Five: BMC Leaders' Accounts of Issues Underlying Knife Crime Crisis	84
5.1 Chapter Five Overview	84
5.2 Issues Underlying Knife Crime Crisis	84
5.2.1 Key Stages 1 and 2 Data Analysis Results.....	84
5.3 Family or Parental Problem	88
5.4 Gangs and Drugs	91
5.5 Bullying	94
5.6 Absence of Recreation Facilities	97
5.7 Social media	101
5.8 Culture and Identity	104
5.9 Policing and Justice	107
5.10 Lack of Religious Instruction	111
5.11 Theological Reflection and Response to the Underlying Causes of Knife Crime.....	112
5.11.1 Christian Faith Versus Church Leaders' Experience.....	113
5.11.2 Application of Christian Thought and Tradition.....	116
5.11.3 Future Implications or Outcomes.....	117
5.12 Chapter Five Summary	118

Chapter Six: Pastoral Roles During of BMC Leaders During Knife Crime Crisis 120

6.1 Chapter Overview	120
6.2 Preliminary Comments.....	120
6.3 Pastor	122
6.4 Father Figure	127
6.5 Counsellor	130
6.6 Confidant	134
6.7 Servant Leader	136
6.8 Authentic Leader	138
6.9 Autocratic Leader	140
6.10 Provider	142
6.11 Reflection of Pastoral Roles.....	144
6.12 Chapter Six Summary	145

Chapter Seven: Educational Roles of BMC Leaders During Knife Crime Crisis 147

7.1 Chapter Overview	147
7.2 Teacher/Educator	147
7.3 Role Models	151
7.4 Mentor	153
7.5 Coach/Trainer	155
7.6 Guarantor	157
7.7 Administrator	159
7.8 Reflection on Educational Roles.....	162
7.9 Chapter Seven Summary	163

Chapter Eight: Social Action Roles of BMC Leaders During Knife Crime Crisis 164

8.1 Chapter Eight Overview	164
----------------------------------	-----

8.2 Project Manager	164
8.2.1 Stage 1 Projects - Dependent Sector (0 – 12 yrs)	166
8.2.2 Stage 2 Projects – Dependent/Independent Sector (13 – 18 yrs)	166
8.2.3 Stage 3 Projects - Independent/Interdependent Sector (19 – 30 yrs)	168
8.3 Youth Advocate	169
8.3.1 A Second Chance?	169
8.4 Community Leader	171
8.5 Collaborator	173
8.5.1 National Collaboration	173
8.5.2 Council, Community and Church Collaboration	174
8.6 Street Pastor	175
8.7 Chaplain	177
8.8 School Governors	178
8.9 Peace Maker	179
8.10 Community Prayer Champion	181
8.11 Reflection on Social Action Roles.....	184
8.12 Chapter Eight Summary.....	184
 Chapter Nine: Key Areas of Contribution to Church Leadership Studies	186
9.1 Chapter Nine Overview	186
9.2 Key Underlying Causes of Knife Crime	186
9.3 BMC Leaders Overarching Roles.....	189
9.4 Servant Leadership Dominance.....	192
9.5 Collaborative Leadership Impact.....	194
9.6 Chapter Nine Summary	197
 Chapter Ten: Conclusion	199
10.1 Chapter Ten Overview	199

10.2 Overview of Research Process	199
10.3 Four Key Areas of Contributions to Church Leadership Studies	200
10.4 Limitations of the Study	202
10.5 Recommendations	203
10.6 Final Reflections	203

References	205
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Appendices	234
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List of Figures

Figure 1.1: Three Overarching Functions of Church Leaders During Crisis.....	9
Figure 3.1: Knife Crime Records 2010 to 2021 in thousands.....	45
Figure 3.2: Knife Crime Hotspots Cities in England.....	46
Figure 3.3: Knife Crime Committed in England and Wales.....	47
Figure 3.4: London Ethnic Demography 2021.....	50
Figure 3.5 Number of Police Recorded Knife or Sharp Instrument Offences in London from 2015/16 to 2023/24.....	52
Figure 4.1 BMC Leaders' Accounts: Steps to Methodological Approach.....	61
Figure 4.2 Key Stages in Pastoral Cycle (PC) for Knife Crime Analysis.....	79
Figure 6.1: Pastoral Roles of BMC leaders During Knife Crime crisis.....	120
Figure 7.1: Educational Roles of BMC Leaders During Knife Crime Crisis	147
Figure 8.1: Social Action Roles of BMC Leaders During Knife Crime Crisis.....	164
Figure 8.2: Stages of Projects Conducted by BMC leaders.....	165

List of Tables

Table 2.1: Servant and Transformational Leadership Compared.....	23
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Table 5.1: Themes relating to challenges of knife crime.....	84
Table 5.2: Themes relating to solutions of knife crime.....	85
Table 5.3: Analysis of Christian faith and Underlying Causes of Knife Crime.....	114
Table 8.1 BMC Leadership Models Demonstrated in Social Action Projects.....	184

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Abstract**Responding to Knife Crime: A Case Study of Church Leadership in a Community Crisis**

This study investigates the roles that Black Majority Church (BMC) leaders play when faced with knife crime crises in their respective British communities. Knife crime as a crisis has become a common feature in parts of British society, with a continuous rise in recorded knife crimes presenting severe concern to the public, church leaders, and the government.

Additionally, as a significant player in dealing with social problems in society, church leaders have been presented with the challenge that knife crime poses to society. Therefore, conducting a study on the roles of BMC leaders in a knife crime crisis is a potential field of study. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 49 BMC leaders drawn from three knife crime hotspots in England. These are London, Birmingham, and Manchester. Because of the interdisciplinary nature of research, data analysis comprises three key stages: the realist narrative approach, thematic analysis, and pastoral cycle methodology.

The research findings indicate four critical areas of contributions to church leadership studies. First, eight critical underlying causes of the knife crime crisis were inferred from the accounts of BMC leaders. Second, three overarching roles concerning knife crime are identified among these leaders: pastoral, educational, and social action. Further details revealed 23 broader roles they functioned in, which were not proposed by earlier scholars. Third, results affirm the proposition of many leadership scholars that servant leadership is dominant in church settings. Lastly, collaborative leadership adds efficiency to the servant counterpart.

Keywords

Knife Crime, BMC Leaders, Church, Crisis, Roles, Servant Leadership

Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 Chapter One Overview

This chapter introduces this study about the roles and behaviours of Black Majority Church (BMC) leadership in their communities by investigating their responses to knife crime crisis. Qualitative semi-structured interviews were conducted to understand their views about the underlying causes of knife crime and their roles and behaviours during knife crime crisis. The results were then examined using realist narrative and thematic approaches and the Pastoral Cycle of Practical Theology as an analytical framework. This chapter provides the background and context for this research and outlines the research aim, objectives, and questions. It also provides an overview of the entire research and areas of contribution to knowledge.

1.2 Background and Context

This research project, 'Responding to knife crime: A case study on church leadership in a community crisis,' addresses the particular roles and behaviours of Black Majority Church (BMC) leaders in times of knife crime crisis in the communities that they represent. BMCs are Churches whose members are composed of more than 50% of people of African or Caribbean heritage; they are African and Caribbean spiritual Churches and Black Churches within white (Pentecostal) denominations (Sturge, 2005; Adedibu, 2012). Handling the grave nature of crises requires effective leadership from all walks of life, including the political, business, community, and faith sectors. Context can shape leadership, personal characteristics, mindsets, and the actions of leaders during periods of crises that hugely impact the nations, communities, and organizations they represent (Tracey and Phillips, 2016; Wheeler et al., 2013). These human responses can impact both internal and external stakeholders. Therefore, examining leadership in different contexts is pertinent to provide leaders with new insights on how to better deal with crises.

Zhang et al. (2012) state that leadership effectiveness has been considered the most pivotal mechanism for various organizations in normal times and crises. Furthermore, prior studies have shown a paucity of research on crisis leadership (Wu et al., 2021; Bundy et al., 2017; Hannah et al., 2009; Brookes, 2011). Contemporary leadership research deals primarily with leadership challenges when there is no crisis. Additionally, Zhang et al. assert that there is a

broad spectrum of research on transformational leadership and leadership effectiveness in normal times; nevertheless, it lacks relevant research on leadership effectiveness in crisis. Hannah et al. (2009) affirm this and expatiate that despite a high frequency of stories on crises and extreme contexts, there is little knowledge in the field of leadership studies about how leadership functions in these contexts. They suggest that leadership in extreme contexts may be one of the least researched areas in the leadership field.

Leadership is uniquely contextualized in extreme situations where there are risks of severe physical, psychological, or material consequences (e.g., physical harm, devastation, or destruction) to organizational members or their constituents. For instance, in a study by Zhang et al., the behaviour of Mr Hu, the director of a local hospital in Qingchuan, China, where an earthquake claimed many lives, was found exemplary. Mr Hu could not find his only child and could not contact his wife, yet he persisted in leading the staff to rescue the injured victims. His behaviour amazed and motivated his thirty medical staff to rescue more than 3000 people over twenty days after the earthquake. It should be mentioned that while crisis situations are rare in some organizations, they are commonplace in others, such as medical, military, law enforcement, fire, and crisis response organizations.

To understand leadership in crisis, this study focusses on BMC leadership in crisis using knife crime as a case study. Although churches might not be in themselves or internally be experiencing regular crises, however, in some British communities where they are located, there are crisis situations that call for their attention and are of serious concern to them. This research therefore considers the roles and behaviours BMC leaders play in knife crime crises occurring in their communities. Knife crime encompasses offenses where knives or sharp instruments are employed to threaten or inflict injuries on others (Eades et al., 2008; Harding, 2020). The choice of knife crime is due to the fact that the challenges posed by knife crime have attracted significant attention to the public space due to the increasing number of cases on crimes being committed in British society (ONS, 2019; Tiratelli et al., 2018). In a significant number of British communities, there has been a continuous rise in the level of recorded knife crimes and a concomitant rise in the number of deaths, which is of concern to the public and government, Office for National Statistics (ONS.GOV.UK), 2019 Appendix I; Mackintosh and Lee, 2019). Official government figures show a continuous rise in crime figures attributed to the use of knives and sharp instruments in the past five years, reaching a 70-year peak by 2019 (Harding, 2020). Consequently, tackling knife crime is now a top priority for the UK government, and this is being executed by governmental agencies such as the Violent Crime

Strategy (HM Government, 2018), the Metropolitan Police and the Violent Crime Task Force (VCTF), and for Greater London, London Mayor Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC) (Harding, 2020). Although the government and police agencies have made significant efforts to tackle this ongoing problem, these efforts seem not to have yielded tangible results in curbing the crimes being committed in British communities (Tiratelli et al., 2018).

Furthermore, Tiratelli et al. (2018) carried out an evaluation of stop and search methods by the London police to tackle gun and knife crimes. They found that the exercise thus far has marginal effects in controlling crimes. Any significant impact of this exercise, if at all, might be on drug-related crime. Besides, the year 2019 witnessed a phenomenal increase in deaths due to knife crime, reaching 100 victims by May (Astrup, 2019). The problems caused by knife crimes have become a significant threat to peace and stability in communities and boroughs across the nation and a huge challenge to the national government, local councils, political and religious leaders, and other leaders in the nation. Peter Chesney, the father of Jodie Chesney, the murdered 17-year-old victim of an unprovoked knife attack in March 2019, described the pain and trauma he and others faced as a result of his daughter's death. He agonized that the vicious circle of knife crimes has to be broken as the problem is getting worse (BBC London, 2019).

Emily Thornberry (MP) brought the case of the murdered 17-year-old Vasilaki Kakko, to the Prime Minister's Questions. She noted that there was a "growing culture of drugs, gangs, and violence" in her borough and other areas of London (BBC News, 2015a). BBC News (2015b) also reported a protest march through Central London on the 22nd of November 2015, of the families of the murdered victims of knife crimes (Appendix II). They were chanting, "We are losing a generation," and "Enough is enough." The families of these murdered victims, 17-year-old Alfie Stone, 21-year-old Josh Hanson, and 24-year-old Sabrina Moss, were among the activists who gathered in Trafalgar Square before proceeding to New Scotland Yard via Downing Street (Appendix III). In addition, the Metropolitan police acknowledged a disturbing increase in the number of murders and stabbings, often with young Black men as the victims, and stated:

We will do all we can to reduce knife crime, to tackle London's gangs and take more knives and weapons off our streets (BBC News, 2015b).

Williams (2023) emphasizes that knife crime has entered a crisis stage in 21st-century Britain. The increase in the level of recorded crime reaching a 70-year peak by 2019 indicates a crisis. There was a decrease in the knife crime rate after 2019, but this is not because a permanent solution to the challenge of knife crime in British society has been found. Instead, it was due to a lack of social contact and temporary restrictions introduced by the government during the Coronavirus pandemic to limit the spread of the deadly virus. The rise in crime rate in 2021 again confirms these observations (ONS.GOV.UK, 2022).

A broad spectrum of research has focussed on the stories and narratives by the victims of knife crimes, while others focussed on the offenders. For instance, Heald (2020), Thomas (2017), BBC News (2015), Mackintosh and Lee (2019), and Heald (2020) discuss the narratives of some past victims' families of knife crimes and the impact these crimes have had on the lives of the families. Harding (2020) investigates the stories of the victims and perpetrators of knife crime. The sum of this research indicates significant challenges posed by knife crimes in British society. The narratives include stories of death, wasted lives, sorrow, bitterness, trauma, and health problems being experienced by the victims' families and the broader society in general.

Nevertheless, research on the stories and narratives of knife crimes by church leaders, particularly BMC leaders, which is the context of this study, has been limited, and Harding (2020) asserts that research on youth knife crimes, in general, has been inadequate and remains underfunded. For instance, there are only a few documented reports on knife crime or other violent crime crises that include some church leaders' narratives and carried out by the academic researchers that is worthy of mention. Aldred et al. (2008) conducted quantitative research utilizing 60 survey questionnaires to gather information from church leaders and other stakeholders on gun and knife crimes. He investigates the response to social disorder in British society linked to the problem caused by gangs, drugs, gun, and knife crimes. Also, Anderson (2015)'s work investigates the feelings and experiences of Black Young Men associated with crime and a focus group of nine BMC leaders' response to these in the city of Birmingham. The research, like many others (John, 2013; Gerloff, 1992) has left a significant gap in addressing the roles and behaviours of BMC leaders in the period of knife crime crisis. Therefore, the paucity of research on the reactions of church leaders provides a further significant rationale for this research.

Prior scholarship (McGrath, 2015; John, 2013; Aldred et al., 2008) suggests that the church, as a stakeholder and through its networks in local communities, could play a significant role in

tackling this major national problem. The church and its leadership have pre-existing and efficient structures, youth rehabilitation, and other charitable projects in their communities. They are stakeholders and significant players in dealing with social problems in society (Williams, 2018). Church leaders have also been faced with the challenges that knife crimes pose to society. These leaders, based on their experience of incidents of knife crime in their communities, would have their views, which are of noteworthy influence on ongoing conversations and narratives about how to deal with threats posed by knife crimes in British society. Furthermore, Grandy (2013) and Ronquillo (2011) agree that while there is a plethora of research on the leadership of for-profit organizations in organizational studies, there is still much to learn about leadership in the not-for-profit sector, specifically churches. Therefore, there are significant reasons to study how church leaders respond to crises in their respective communities in the context of knife crime. This argument provides additional rationale for this research.

1.3 Research Aim

Building on the earlier discussion about the rationale for this research, this study aims to explore, through stories and narratives, the views of BMC leaders on the underlying causes of knife crime in their communities, their roles and behaviours in crisis, and the interrelationships of these behaviours with contemporary theories on church leadership.

1.4 Research Objectives

- To investigate the views of BMC leaders about the underlying causes of the knife crime crisis in their communities.
- To investigate the roles that BMC leaders play, specifically their behaviours in the knife crime crisis in their communities.
- To find out how BMC leaders' behaviours might impact contemporary theories of church leadership.

1.5 Research Questions

- What are the views of BMC leaders on the underlying causes of the knife crime crisis in their communities?
- What roles do BMC leaders play, specifically their behaviours in the knife crime crisis in their communities?

- How does the evidence about these behaviours and roles contribute to contemporary theories of church leadership?

1.6 The Interdisciplinary Approach to the Research

This study involves research into church leadership, knife crimes, and the communities where these crimes are taking place. Hence, the research draws on key ideas from the fields of theology, organizational studies, criminology, and sociology. Therefore, this study requires an interdisciplinary research approach. One such approach that has been used in similar settings is the Pastoral Cycle (PC), a methodological approach in the field of Practical Theology (PT). Anderson (2015) chose PC to explore and analyse Black young men's experiences and narratives to gain a better understanding of their situation. Ballard and Pritchard (2006) expatiate on PT as an aspect of theology that concerns itself primarily with Christian practice and how to operate in any given situation. Practical Theology (PT) deals with the contextualization of theology to the given situation relating to practice. Theologically, it points to the power of God who is found sharing the brokenness of the lives of people and communities. Ballard and Pritchard further state:

It is a theology which is more concerned with orthopraxis - that is, living out the struggle of faith – than with orthodoxy - that is, believing the right things (Ballard and Pritchard, 2006:4)

Willows and Swinton (2000) add that PT's 'way of being and doing' approach seeks to be reflective and thoughtful; it is concerned with how faith is made manifest in action.

Therefore, PT provides a means for reflection in theological research relating to practice. The Pastoral Cycle (PC) is Pastoral Theology's methodological tool that provides this process for theological reflection of experience, understanding, interrogation with other disciplines, and action. According to Green (1990), PC was developed in its earliest form in the 1960s by liberation theologians working from a model created by a Belgian priest, Father Joseph Cardijn, in an attempt to find ways of moving Catholic workers and students to an established way of analysis of their ministerial experiences by following a principle of analysis based on "seeing, judging and acting" on these experiences. Ballard and Pritchard (2006) discuss how the Latin American-based Christian communities developed this approach as a means to structure their theological and social critique and action. The approach, since the 1960s, has rapidly gained popularity outside circles of liberation theologians, extending to Europe, and including radical evangelical movements, Pentecostal BMCs, community developments, and industrial and

urban missions. Green (1990) expounds further on the development of PC into the four-stage process of 1. Experience, 2. Exploration, 3. Reflection, and 4. Action (response). This might be inspired by the four-stage experiential learning process developed by the American psychologist David Kolb (1984).

Because this research deals with Pentecostal BMC leaders whose worldview is shaped by the Bible and theological beliefs, PC provides the basis for understanding their stories and narratives as they share their experiences of knife crimes in the communities where they are based, whether in London, Birmingham, or Manchester. Anderson (2015) adopted PC in his Birmingham research on crime with Black Young Men (BYM) and Black Majority Churches (BMCs), which provides a similar cultural context to this research on knife crime. As a result, a modified form of PC was adopted as the research methodology. This research design PC encompasses three key stages: 1. Church leaders' experience, 2. Analysis and exploration, and 3. Theological reflection and response. The response expounds on the roles and behaviours of BMC church leaders during knife crime in their located communities. Further details of PC and how it applies to this research is discussed in chapter four.

1.7 The Researcher's Positionality

A researcher's positionality in qualitative research should be explicitly acknowledged and discussed because positionality can influence all aspects of the research process, including the research questions, literature analysis, research design, data collection, analysis, and inferences (Wilson et al., 2022). Also, qualitative research frequently involves

- the dialectic process of interviewing the participants,
- engaging in critical discussion on specific issues,
- sharing experiences,
- revealing the researchers' identities and
- developing their relationship with the participants.

This process can shape the research outcome as well as the trustworthiness of the research (Pezalla et al. 2012; Berger, 2015). Therefore, the researchers' identities and positions are essential elements that should be disclosed in the research. The next paragraph introduces us to how this is addressed in this study.

This study seeks to understand the roles and behaviours of BMC leaders when faced with crises in their communities by studying their responses during knife crime crises. The leaders were asked to share their stories and experiences on knife crimes that occurred in their communities. Since I am a senior leader in a BMC, and many church leaders interviewed are from the denominational strand, a conscious awareness and understanding of potential influences in the interview process is required. I was, therefore, mindful to be as neutral as possible as a researcher, seeking to be rigorous and critical in the analysis and evaluation processes. Goodson and Phillimore (2012) affirm the advantages of having prior understanding and insights into the community or group being studied and how these can influence the research process in certain ways. Whilst in agreement with Goodson and Phillimore, the reality proved challenging at times not to steer conversations or issues in certain directions, given that I had some prior knowledge, understanding, and relationship with some of the individuals involved in the study.

Consequently, 'ethical quality control' was considered to minimize the potential for invalid outcomes and discrepancies (Anderson, 2015). Such nonjudgmental attitudes and approaches, triangulation of results from the three cities, and working within ethical conceptual frameworks check negative influences or bias (Kumar, 2005). Section 4.3 examines the researcher and positionality further.

1.8 Thesis Overview

This research project, 'Responding to knife crime, a case study of church leadership in a community crisis,' investigated through the account of BMC leaders the roles of church leaders when faced with knife crime crises in their respective British communities. Chapter One presented the background and rationale for this research. It highlighted some cases of knife crime in British communities and how it has reached a record level and become a concern for church leadership. It stated the aim, objectives, and questions of the study, as well as the interdisciplinary approach of the study and the researcher's positionality. Chapter Two introduces the history and background of Black Majority Churches and their leadership, Black Pentecostalism, vision, mission, and beliefs. It introduces leadership models and discusses BMC leaders' roles and contributions to British society. Also, it examines one of the BMCs, the Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG), which provides the majority of the respondents for this research.

Chapter Three explores the history and problem of knife crime in British society. It also explores demography and knife crime cases in the research cities of London, Birmingham, and Manchester, which were chosen for the study. Chapter Four presents the methodology of the research. The research took place for six months from November 2020 to April 2021 during the global coronavirus pandemic. Therefore, in line with the requirements of research ethical considerations, interviews were conducted through video conferencing via Zoom instead of face-to-face contact. The analysis of data is comprised of three key stages: the realist narrative approach, thematic analysis, and pastoral cycle methodology. Chapters Five to Eight present the analysis and findings of the study. Chapter Five unpacks eight critical factors underlying the knife crime crisis as inferred from thematic analysis of the accounts shared by BMC leaders. Also, Chapters Six to Eight explore inferences from data analysis of the roles these church leaders played during the knife crime crisis and their reflections. Figure 1.1 illustrates the three

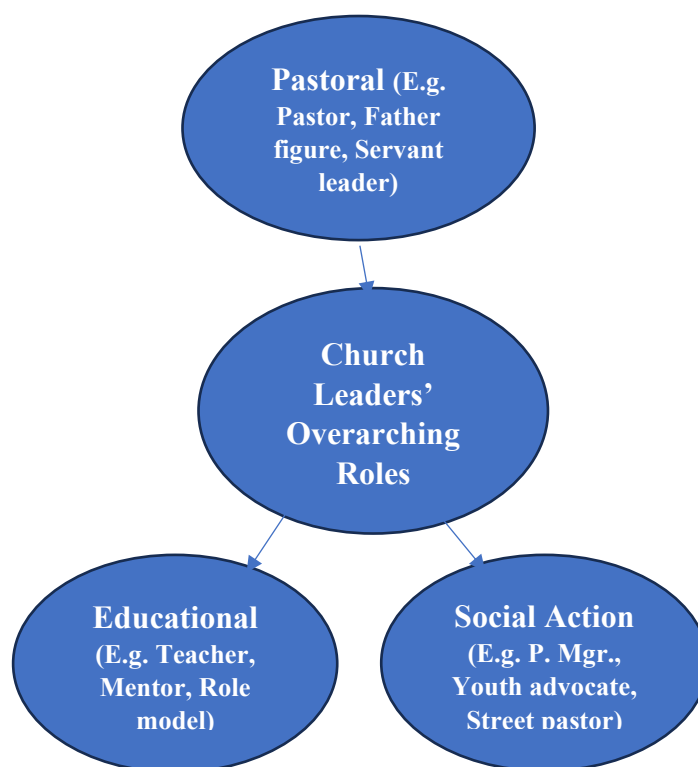


Figure 1.1 Three Overarching Roles of BMC Leaders

categories of overarching roles are Pastoral, Educational, and Social action roles.

Chapter Nine discusses the data analysis findings of BMC leaders' accounts of the underlying causes of knife crime crises and their roles. Also, it outlines new contributions to knowledge on church leadership studies in five key areas. This research has extended the current limited knowledge of the church leaders' views on knife crimes in British society and church leadership studies in general. Chapter Ten summarises the whole research and provides the conclusion of

the study. Also, it presents some recommendations, the limitations, and a reflection of the whole research process. This study affirms the proposition of many scholars on church leadership that there is something to learn about leadership in the church context because organizational studies and practices are significantly informed or structured by theological concepts (Grandy and Sliwa, 2017; Sorensen et al., 2012).

1.9 Chapter One Summary

This chapter introduced this research's background, rationale, aim, and objectives. The problems posed by knife crime in British communities have reached a crisis and a severe concern to governments, church leaders, and other stakeholders. Hence, investigating the response of church leadership in knife crime crises occurring in their communities is timely. Also, the chapter introduced the interdisciplinary approach of the study, the researcher's position as an insider, and an overview of the whole study. In the next chapter, Black Majority Churches (BMCs) and black Pentecostalism are explored to gain an understanding of these churches, their leadership, and operations.

Chapter Two: Church Leadership and Black Pentecostalism

2.1 Chapter Two Overview

This study examines the roles and behaviours of Black Majority Church (BMC) leaders in periods of knife crime crisis in their communities of operation. To this end, this chapter reviews available literature on church leadership, particularly of BMCs, their historicity, theological and doctrinal beliefs, their roles, behaviours, and contributions to the communities in which their churches were located. As stated in Section 1.2, the BMCs are defined as Churches whose members are composed of more than 50% of people of African or Caribbean heritage. The information gathered from this review provides a basis for this study, and further interrogation with methodology and fieldwork whereby empirical data are gathered from what church leaders interviewed were sharing about their roles and behaviours during the period of knife crime crises in their communities.

A scholastic review is preferred to the interventionist (systematic) review (Hart, 2018; Booth et al., 2016) because it allows dialectical reasoning to examine propositions, challenge them, and make inferences through stringent conceptual analysis. According to Hart, a scholastic review is preferred when a researcher seeks to integrate existing knowledge on a particular topic, find boundaries and assumptions, and examine a topic's historical development. The scholastic review of this study considers the following key areas of church leadership in British society.

- The history of church leadership in recent decades
- Leadership in BMCs: common models and theories
- The strands and theology BMCs.
- The activities and contributions of BMC Leadership in their communities
- The impact of knife crime in British society and
- The underlying causes of knife crime in British communities

The first four areas will be considered in this chapter, and the last two in the following chapter.

The study focuses on Black Majority Churches (BMCs) church leadership. Therefore, this literature review seeks to discover the historical antecedents of church leaders from this background and their roles and behaviours in British society.

2.2 Black Majority Church Leadership

2.2.1 The Church and Society

Churches exist to fulfil spiritual, moral, and community responsibilities in the society where they are located and studying church leadership provides insight into the role of values, the role of members, and those of leaders. This insight gives an understanding of the enactment of leadership, culture, strategy, and decision-making in not-for-profit and other socially responsible organizations (Grandy, 2013). The following briefly overviews the Church and its role in society. The institution of Church is a religious organization that propagates the ideals of Christianity and has been in existence since the early 1st Century (McGrath, 2015). McGrath indicates that the Church comprises a group of believers or a Christian community that gathers in a particular location or building to worship God.

On the other hand, when viewed from the perspectives of geographical and societal influence, Giddens and Sutton (2013) consider the Church, such as the Catholic Church or the Church of England, as a religious body that has grown large and become well-established with many branches. These religious organizations, because they have expanded to so many other places nationally and globally, apart from their roots, have become universal and coterminous with the broader society and can be referred to as denominations. These established denominations enjoy the support and goodwill of the government in their state or nation, as is the case in British society. Nevertheless, Wilson (1970) and Giddens and Sutton (2015) agree that smaller and less organized religious groups are independent of state power or support, self-governing, and voluntarily run. This category of churches include the evangelicals and Pentecostals where the BMCs, the focus of this study could be situated.

Wilson (1970) expatiates that like the Orthodox churches, their significant characteristics include voluntary participation, a strict sense of identity, and claims to supernatural truths. However, these Christian groups hold a significantly divergent opinion concerning their teachings, instructions, and rituals from the orthodox or mainstream churches. For example, the evangelicals and Pentecostal groups also believe in the Holy Bible and but differ in interpretation in some areas. BMCs include churches such as The Redeemed Christian Church of God, The New Testament Church of God, The Foursquare Gospel Church, and Assemblies

of God. Many of these evangelical churches have grown to become denomination churches (Kay, 2011).

2.2.2 The Recent History of Black Majority Churches (BMCs)

Since this research focuses on the Black Majority Churches (BMCs), particularly their roles and impact on British society, this literature review concerns recent developments from the 21st Century. This particular gap in history represents a period of immense, significant impact of BMCs on the United Kingdom. Although scholars such as Adedibu (2012) and Olofinjana (2012) highlight that the first Pentecostal BMC in Britain started in 1906, the Summer Chapel, Peckham, pastored by Reverend Thomas Kwane Brem-Wilson, I will discuss the major impacts under three significant expansions of BMCs from 1948 to date. The first wave represents the period from 1940s to 1950s, the second, 1980s to 1990s, and the third, (Millennium)2000s to the present (Francis, 2021; Christian Enquiry Agency (CEA), 2022).

2.2.2.1 The First Major Wave of BMCs: 1940s – 1950s

There was a period in the United Kingdom's history when the British government saw a lack of workers in the economy to help in the nation's rebuilding process, particularly the destruction of buildings and other structures that the nation experienced during the Second World War. Additional workers were needed, for instance, in the areas of London Transport, National Health Service, and the Hotel/Hospitality industry (Francis, 2021).

Therefore, the government started to recruit commonwealth citizens from the Black Caribbean nation to come and assist in the task of nation-building in the 1940s and 1950s. The Caribbeans who came from Jamaica to the United Kingdom during this period are referred to as the Windrush generation. Francis describes this in his personal storybook, 'Windrush and the Black Pentecostal Church in Britain' and expounds on how the Caribbeans (West Indies), including his biological father, came in a massive ship, an old Second World War troop carrier called 'Empire Windrush' to the shores of the United Kingdom. According to the author, the British Nationality Act, promulgated in 1948, gave commonwealth citizens who wished to come to Britain and work an unrestricted right of entry and British citizenship.

However, the Caribbeans that came in the late 1940s and 1950s soon discovered that although they were welcomed to do menial jobs that the white British indigenes stayed away from, the indigenes did not welcome them to relate with them socially; they could not secure decent accommodation because no landlord wanted to give them their property to live in due to racial

prejudice. In addition, according to Adedibu (2012), the denominational and established Churches that these migrants thought would provide them respite, support, and encouragement for their plight in a foreign land were cold and hostile to them. For instance, their communicant membership cards of churches, which were expected to accord them the status of recognition and acceptability wherever they went, whether in the West Indies or the United Kingdom, were rejected by denominational churches such as the Anglican and Methodist Churches.

Therefore, many religious scholars indicate that Church leaders in leadership positions in British denominational Churches were complicit in these unexpected behaviours that discouraged most new religious migrants from attending the established churches. Adedibu stresses further that the claim by Church leadership of universal brotherhood of Christian faith as proclaimed by Christian leaders, where they expected a show of love and affection from their Christian brothers and sisters, was not encountered in the denominational Churches. Both the synods and the laity manifested a disturbing gap between their public policy of benevolence and equality to all, notwithstanding their race or sex, and their private policy of racism and anxiety toward Black people. Francis corroborates the earlier proposition by sharing an experience of a new immigrant to the UK and a Black Methodist Minister as he visited the Church in Stoke Newington, East London, in the 1950s.

I have had negative experiences within the Church. I would say that most of the experiences of racialism are not unique. They are common experiences of my people. The depths of rejection that I felt when I came here. Think of a youngster who just arrived in a foreign country, which you were told is a Christian country, to be told by a minister with a dog collar on his neck not to come back to his Church. It was more than a bomb. I couldn't believe it. I went to this Church, where the congregation was white. I was not welcome because I was Black. You'd be surprised how people can be blunt (Francis, 2021: 40-41).

This challenge posed by an unwelcoming British denomination was exacerbated by the mode of worship encountered by the new immigrants. The distinctive way of quiet worship and prayer of the British congregants ran counter to the loud spontaneous worship back home in the West Indies. This brought about a huge cultural shock to these immigrants.

Notwithstanding, Adedibu noted that there were a few exceptions. For instance, a Congregational Church in Tottenham, East London, in the 1960s was led by Rev. Clifford and Mrs Monica Hill. The Church has a multicultural outlook and assists many new migrants in

job searches and getting accommodation. Also, Francis (2021) mentions Sybil Phoenix, one Black immigrant from Guyana (1956), a member of the Methodist Church, and another Black immigrant from the West Indies (1952), a New Testament Church of God minister who were both well received. Nevertheless, the majority of the Black immigrants in that era were made to feel unwelcome, shunned, and ostracised. This experience led to a considerable strain in the relationship between immigrants and their white Christian counterparts for many years until, in recent years, they acknowledged and repented their wrongdoings and unchristian behaviours (Francis, 2021).

Amongst the workers who came to join the work of rebuilding the British nation were Pentecostal Christians and Leaders who were passionate about their beliefs. The Pentecostal Christians and Leaders reacted proactively to this challenge their white Christian counterparts posed by forming prayer meeting groups. They together regularly to worship God in an informal way by singing, praying, and exhorting from the Holy Bible (The theology and belief of these groups of Christians are discussed in Section 2.2). These house groups developed into churches not soon after, where formal religious activities were held. They started to establish different churches and ministries in the land. This became imperative because of the difficulty of assimilation with the prevalent Church system. Amongst those BMCs that first started are the Calvary Church of God (1948), New Testament Church of God (1953), Church of God of Prophecy (1953), Wesleyan Holiness church (1958), and New Testament Assembly (1961) (Francis. 2021). The periods of 1960s to 1970s could be considered as the consolidation period. The religious and social life landscape of the communities where these churches were operating have been impacted and are being transformed by their activities.

2.2.2.2 The Second Major Wave of BMCs: 1980s – 1990s

The second wave came in the 1980s and 1990s with the advent of African and Caribbean Pentecostal Churches. These include The Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG), Angel, Trinity Baptist Church, South Norwood, and Church of Pentecost, London. These churches were founded in 1988 with Kingsway International Christian Centre (KICC), London, commencing in 1992. Also, around the same period, a new generation of Caribbean Churches that presented visionary, contextual, and entrepreneurial characteristics started evolving in London. Amongst these are Ruach Ministries (1994) and Christian Life City (1996). These BMCs have been observed to be expanding in congregational numbers and in branches they

established within and outside London. For instance, The Redeemed Christian Church of God, where I serve as a Pastor of a local branch in East London and also coordinate a significant number of the branches of this denomination as one of her Senior Pastors, has grown in numerical strength and branches over the past four decades since it started operations in London.

The official website of the RCCG (RCCG Europe Central Office, 2023) indicates 880 Churches in the United Kingdom alone as of the year 2023. Thus, RCCG, as a member of BMCs alone, has experienced unprecedented growth from one branch in 1986 to 880 branches by 2023. The researcher has personally been involved in the growth and expansion of this branch of BMCs since 1998. It could be noted that the Church's phenomenal growth is not limited to the United Kingdom alone. The Church denomination by 2023 has solid and vibrant branches in over 195 countries of the world.

Goodhew and Cooper (2019) assert that London has been experiencing desecularisation due to the impact of these BMCs across Greater London. The authors argue against the general conception that London is experiencing secularisation that is causing congregational church attendance to decline up till now. Desecularisation implies an attempt to counter secularisation. Although prior research reviewed by the authors indicates that there is a decline in the congregational attendance of many established denominational churches, such as many of the Church of England and Methodist Church circuits, however, there is a counter phenomenal growth of congregational attendance records in BMCs in London. This has brought about a net increase in attendance and growth of the totality of churches in London. According to Goodhew and Cooper, research findings by the long-standing researcher Peter Brierley and other scholars that gathered data on church growth indicate that the overall number of congregations in London has grown steadily for more than 30 years from about 3,400 congregations in 1979 to 4,791 by 2012. The total number of Sunday worshippers (of all ages across all churches in London) rose from 666,000 in 1979 to 722,000 in 2012.

2.2.2.3 The Third Major Wave of BMCs: 2000 - Present

The third wave came about recently from the early Millennium years of the 2000s up to the sudden 2020 global coronavirus pandemic and the Black Lives Matter movement. CEA states that:

These dynamic intergenerational churches distinctively represent the hybridity and nuance of Black British culture and are pioneering and inspiring a generation of Black

British millennials and Gen Z churchgoers which may have parted with traditional Pentecostal churches due to the disconnect with Caribbean/African culture and from intercultural, evangelical churches that didn't always honour their blackness - especially in the wake of the Black Lives Matter movement (CEA, 2022:1)

Examples of these Churches include the Arch Network of Churches, led by Pastor Peter Nembhard, and The Tab, led by Pastor Mike White, both based in London. These groups of the Church are more technologically savvy, make use of social media, and represent a generation of Black British who have grown up in an era of postmodernism, relativism, and religious pluralism. However, CEA fails to mention that a respectable number of the second-wave churches, such as some expressions of RCCG, for instance, Jesus House and KICC branches, are either upgrading themselves to catch up with current trends or opening up new expressions similar to the third-wave churches. This researcher was privy to this as one of the Senior Pastors in RCCG. Francis (2021) affirms this by expounding on African churches, part of BMCs, that they know how to grow churches in the modern age.

In addition, Francis stresses how African churches use modern communication, such as social media platforms, to register their presence, proclaim their messages, and attract the young Millennial and Gen Z generations to their events. They know how to transform a warehouse, former bingo hall, or any other cinema or pub house into a beautiful place that communicates that something 'big' is happening in the Church and new attendees should be part of it. They are opening up fresh expression churches intentionally to avoid losing their younger generations, who are dissatisfied with their parents' churches and the traditional structures and practices prevalent in these places. A sizeable number of these fresh expression churches are located in cinema halls open for hire and college campuses. Section 2.3. discusses the impacts of these churches.

But what is the theology, what are the beliefs of these BMCs, and what are the vision and the mission that produced the motivation that made them grow and make such huge impacts in British communities? The following seeks to answer these inquiries.

2.3 Leadership in BMCs: Common Models and Theories

2.3.1 Church Leadership in General

Church leaders are respected authorities in the Church and society because of the general belief that their authority comes from the almighty God, who commands the ultimate power over the

earth (Woodhead, 2004), although this proposition is increasingly being challenged in the present increasingly secular British society. There is a great need to study leadership in non-profit organizations and specifically churches because organizational studies in church leadership and management development have been burgeoning again in recent years due to efforts to improve organizational effectiveness, retain and grow church memberships (Grandy, 2013). Further, the Church faces the challenges of the age of secularism and new generations who are losing interest in the Church. The sustainability of the Church in the 21st Century is in jeopardy as the Church suffers from dwindling levels of attendance and memberships, through which means it generates the significant resources that drive the organization (Voas and Watt, 2014). As an organization that is driven by values and a pro-social mission as opposed to profits in a for-profit enterprise, the power is diffused, and there is a myriad of stakeholders' interests to manage.

The influence of churches and leaders on the community or society they represent is hugely significant and manifested in various social or community projects and events they are always directing and executing, or issues they are dealing with in counselling. For instance, Williams (2018) reports a key finding of the largest social action survey conducted by the Church of England research centre (Research and Statistics, 2018). Williams states that 6000 churches in England ran over 13,100 community projects in 2017, including food banks, community cafes, and night shelters. Most of these projects are done in collaboration with the local council authorities. Williams explicates that according to the Bishop of Rochester, Rt. Reverend James Langstaff, 30 years ago, local authorities would not have dreamt of working with the Church in these areas, and the new moves could be partly out of desperation because their budgets have been cut down.

Nevertheless, there has been a significant cultural change in the attitude of local authorities toward faith groups in recent years, and this has been one of the reasons behind the increase in Church-led social action. Williams adds that in another survey conducted in 2015 by Cinnamon Network - a UK-based Christian faith charity, the research reveals that from the estimated number of 2000 churches including BMCs and other faith groups involved in social action projects, 3.5 million people could be estimated to have benefited. A church leader alone cannot plan and execute social projects without mobilizing the church members to volunteer or serve in one capacity or another to impact the broader society or community.

This raises the question of which leadership concepts do the leaders employ in the church context to be able to drive the vision, goals and objectives of the church organisation or mobilize volunteer members to participate in order to realize their social action goals.

2.3.2 Church leadership Models

Church leadership differs from that which is obtainable in secular or business organisations because resources (human, money, or time) available are often volunteered, and the relationship between church leaders and members is interdependent (Adedibu, 2012; Green, 2001). Therefore, leadership in churches is particularly challenging and requires leaders with diverse skills and abilities to drive the value-driven mission of the organisation.

Considering the leadership style to adopt in this unique setting of a nonprofit category of organisations, Ronquillo (2011) states that

Many, if not most of the prominent leadership theories applied in public and business organisations can be applied as well in nonprofit organisations (Ronquillo, 2011:345)

Ronquillo expounds this proposition further by expatiating that the leadership traits of executive directors and other leaders vary greatly, and the methods they employ in guiding the organisations to achieve notable results are often related to their personal leadership styles. Leaders often demonstrate flexibility in displaying their leadership skills, sometimes shifting from one practice to another depending on the situation. This is in tandem with situational and contingency theories of leadership emphasising that effective leadership is not about adhering to a fixed set of behaviours but about adapting to the specific demands of the situation and the characteristics of the team (Green, 2001).

Sendjaya (2015) seems cautious and limits his discussion of applicability to servant, transformational and transactional leadership styles for both business and nonprofit organisations, particularly churches. However, while discussing in significant details the applicability of servant leadership theory in both business and nonprofit organisations, stresses five key domains this has to be considered. These are contextual, anecdotal, empirical, philosophical, and cross-cultural dimensions. Addressing just the contextual dimension of servant leadership, he opined that other leadership models are performance driven, they sacrifice people at the altar of profit and growth which are not sustainable in the long run as the relational, ethical, emotional, and spiritual needs of both the followers and leaders are often neglected. This is where servant leadership model resonate with church leadership style as it

focuses on those virtues that are of high interests to churches' beliefs and principles (Pugh, 2013; Adedibu, 2012).

The business sector, being profit driven, employs mostly transformational and transactional leadership styles while the church settings consider mostly servant, ethical and spiritual dimensions. However, Crossman (2010) asserts there are the inspiration dimensional characteristics of transformational leadership that provide common grounds with spiritual (which include church) leadership such that both styles have appeal to values driven goals as distinguished from transactional leadership that is grounded in more mundane exchanges that occur between leaders and followers. Based on the foregoing discussions, and a significant weight of evident from leadership scholars, it seems that servant leadership is dominant in church leadership settings and transactional leadership in secular leadership.

The transformational leadership provides a middle ground between these two fields of leadership. Also, there are significant degree of overlap and flexibility of leadership styles in many cases of leadership operation based on the situation and contingency theory. Nevertheless, recent developments in business sectors indicate increasing interests and adoption of servant leadership due to scandals in organisations and the need for closer considerations on ethical dimensions of leadership (Crossman, 2010; Sendjaya, 2015).

Further, literature on church leadership suggests some key leadership models that are prevalent in church settings. These are servant (Greenleaf, 1977; Pugh, 2013), charismatic (Stewart, 2008), transformational (Druskeat, 1994; Grint, 2000), paternalistic (Hiller et al., 2019), contemplative (Grandy and Sliwa, 2013), authentic (Northouse, 2018, 2021), autocratic (Harms et al., 2018; Day, 2019), and collaborative leadership styles (Brookes and Grint, 2010; Head, 2022). The following expounds further on these eight key leadership models and thereafter Section 2.3.3 discusses the leadership models further, specifically how they relate to dealing with knife crime crisis which is the context of this study.

2.3.2.1 Servant Leadership

One of the most dominant models of leadership that church leaders imbibe is servant leadership. The servant leadership concept aligns with theological principles due to the moral and ethical beliefs that church leaders are stewards of faith (1 Corinthians 4:1-2, Colossians 4:12); they are first not driven by the need for power, but rather by that need to serve others with their talents/abilities before leading them (Greenleaf, 1977). According to Greenleaf who first muted the idea of servant-leader in 1977, in a servant-leader, there is the desire to serve

first; not to lead first. This is followed later with a conscious choice that brings one to lead. This is clearly different from someone who wants to lead first, perhaps because of a deep desire for an unusual power drive or to acquire wealth by coercive or manipulative means. For such it will be a later choice to serve others. Servant leaders are humble-minded, have concern for human dignity, and have a deep sense of faith or purpose. Pugh (2013) infers from the teachings of Jesus Christ in the Bible a principle of leadership which he called "leadership from below." When the disciples of Jesus were arguing amongst themselves about who would be the greatest, Jesus then came in and stated that anyone who wants to attain leadership or be the greatest must first humble himself/herself by serving others first (Mark 9: 33 -35).

In other words, to be a leader among people, you must start from the low level of servanthood. This is what the author means by the "leadership from below" principle. However, this servant leadership style, according to Pugh, is contrary to the understanding of what was obtained about the leadership at the time of Jesus in a Greco-Roman cultural setting where it is a common phenomenon that a leader exercise his authority over the followers and demands their obedience. He argues and states that:

All of this subversion and inversion of societal norms was on the basis of one very significant shared memory: Jesus Christ, who himself came not to be served but to serve (Mark 10:45) and was remembered in an early Christian hymn as the one who took the form of a slave (Phil. 2:7). The New Testament writers saw leadership as the supreme opportunity for the imitation of Jesus Christ. New Testament leadership is Jesus Christ (Pugh, 2013:137).

That is why majority of church leaders both within orthodox and Pentecostal denominations including the BMCs as followers of Jesus subscribes to the servant leadership (Bolden, 2004; Sendjaya, 2015). Eva et al. (2019) suggest that the servant leadership style delivers promising results to organizations that implement this approach as it deals with the challenges of the modern organization and yet attracts consumer interest.

However, Sendjaya (2015) argues that servant leaders would rather focus on sustainable performance over the long run than sacrifice followers on the altar of profit and growth, as seen in performance-driven leadership. This might also count as a weakness in servant leadership style as decision making takes time due to a conscious effort to carry followers along and processes in the organisation are less structured than in other leadership styles such as transformational or autocratic leadership. As a result, servant leadership might not be suitable

in such organisations such as military establishment where precision and timeliness are critical to organisational success.

2.3.2.2 Transformational Leadership

Anheier (2005) states that transformation leadership involves the motivation of followers to perform the routine tasks necessary for achieving the objectives and goals of the organization. The transformational leader inspires followers to put aside self-interest for the common good of the organization and to believe in their ability to achieve the set goals on behalf of the organization. Ronquillo (2011) believes transformational leadership style, unlike servant leadership, focusses more on pursuing organizational goals. It inspires followers to pursue and fulfil a set of organizational goals. This research focuses on the societal impact of church leaders and the roles that church leaders play during community crises. Therefore, Servant leadership styles might be more pronounced in church leadership than transformational leadership in periods of crisis. This is because setting an example of service motivates members to act.

Yukl (1999) argues that there are a number of weaknesses associated with transformational leadership, including ambiguity about underlying influences processes, overemphasis on dyadic processes, and omission of essential behaviours. Both Ronquillo (2011) and Grandy (2013) agree that both servant and transformational leadership concepts are applicable and prevalent in church settings. Both leadership styles, because they seek to represent result-oriented leadership, could have significant roles to play as the church leaders seek to respond to the challenge that knife crimes pose to the communities that they represent. Ronquillo (2011) compares transformational and servant leadership styles, as illustrated in Table 2.1 below.

The table highlights the observable characteristics of the servant and transformational leadership styles, their influence on followers, groups, societies, and differences. It should be noted that some characteristics present in one leadership style are absent in another and that the impact one style could have on individuals, groups, and societies is distinct. Further, one leadership style might be better suited to one environment than the other, and one might not necessarily be preferable to the other. The given context where a leader finds himself/herself might inform the nature of the leadership style most suited for application (Green, 2001).

Nevertheless, Yukl (1999) argues that there are eight inferred weaknesses in transformational

leadership, including ambiguity about underlying influence processes, overemphasis on dyadic processes, and omission of essential behaviours.

Table 2.1 Servant and Transformational Leadership Compared

Style Characteristics	Servant Leadership	Transformational leadership
Nature of theory	Normative	Normative
Role of leader	To serve followers	To inspire followers to pursue organizational goals
Role of follower	To become wiser, freer, and more autonomous	To pursue organizational goals
Moral Component	Explicit	Unspecified
Outcomes expected	Follower satisfaction, development, and commitment to service and societal betterment	Goal congruence, increased effort, satisfaction, and productivity; organizational gain
Individual level	Desire to serve	Desire to lead
Interpersonal level	Leader serves followers	Leader inspire followers
Group level	Leader serves group to meet member needs	Leader unites group to pursue group goals
Organizational level	Leader prepares organization to serve community	Leader inspires followers to pursue organizational goals
Societal level	Leader leaves a positive legacy for the betterment of society	Leader inspires society to pursue articulated goals

Source: Ronquillo (2011)

2.3.2.3 Charismatic Leadership

Charismatic leaders employ a vision-based approach to communicate their message to people. They lead and provide a sense of meaning and motivation by the assurance of a great future if followers commit to the vision's goals (Lovelace et al., 2019; Mumford, 2006). According to Grandy (2013), many scholarships on charismatic leaders derive from the work of Max Weber, who cited "charisma as a certain quality of an individual personality by means of which he could be viewed as extraordinary and treated as being imbued with supernatural powers." Grandy adds that this personal quality can influence the behaviours and emotions of followers persuasively.

Based on Grandy's work in three evangelical churches in the USA and Brazil, he concludes that charismatic leadership has broad appeal across cultures and churches during periods of stress or social change. Nevertheless, although talented and individualistic leaders might be attracted to charismatic churches, they might experience difficulties maintaining stability, integrity, and internal control. This is due to individual pursuit of personal vision to the detriment of organisational goals and overall wellbeing.

2.3.2.4 Paternalistic Leadership

The paternalistic leadership concept is based on the typical parent (father) and child relationships and is characterized by leadership behaviours of personal care, genuine concern, and kindness at all times while yet maintaining legitimate authority and control over the followers (Hiller et al., 2019; Aycan, 2006). Paternalistic leadership is far more prominent than maternalistic leadership because the African/Caribbean cultural background of BMCs is seen to be patriarchal (Adedibu, 2012; Sturge, 2005). Recent developments with younger generations of dynamic church leadership are changing this practice. The form of behaviours of a paternalistic leader differs from other relational-based models in that it is patterned to occur both within and outside workspaces with emphasis on the care and well-being of the follower. Although this form of leadership thrives in Asia, the Middle East, Africa, and Latin America, it has been observed that this is the norm in Western industrialized and economically developed nations, such as the United Kingdom and America (Hiller et al., 2019) both in profit and church based settings.

According to Hiller et al., some researchers characterize paternalistic leadership as comprising three aspects of leadership: authoritarianism, benevolence, and morality (Farh and Cheng, 2000). Authoritarianism speaks of leadership behaviours whereby members do not question the authority of their leader. Benevolence reflects the care of a leader and a holistic concern for the leader, while morality speaks of a leader's moral character of selflessness and integrity. However, other researchers emphasise that paternalistic leadership brings elements evocative of family life into the workplace with five distinct aspects of the family atmosphere: close relationships with individuals, involvement in outside-of-work private issues, the expectation of loyalty, and status hierarchy (Aycan, 2006).

2.3.2.5 Contemplative Leadership

Grandy and Sliwa's (2017) recent research on leadership took place at varied denominational

church settings in Canada, involving interviewing 28 church leaders. Drawing on virtue ethics, MacIntyre's (1991) virtue ethics and ethics of responsibility and care (Gilligan, 1977; Levinas, 1985). They propose contemplative leadership as a virtuous activity that is relational, engaging, reflexive, incorporates knowledge within the context, and is practical. In addition, contemplative leadership bridges that gap for consideration of justice between individuals, organizations, and society (Moore, 2012). This is because of the consideration of morality in the exercise of duties. Grandy and Sliwa agree with Sims (2010), who critiqued the extant leadership literature about the absence of complexity in leadership studies. Sims proposes a definition of leadership as:

The exercise of a complex set of arts, usually requiring the collaboration of different sets of skills or arts (Sims, 2010: 258).

By this definition, leadership is an activity instead of a role or attribute that is relationship-based and involves several participants. Hence, he adds that "leadership is a contemplative art." Grandy and Sliwa extend Nolan's (2013) work on contemplative leadership, which is believed to be the most comprehensive conceptual model, and her qualities of contemplative leaders, which include calling, compassion, care, and clarity. They argue that Nolan failed to incorporate the ethics of leadership in her proposition. Therefore, the main aim of their work was to overcome this inherent weakness in Nolan's work and that of others.

Their findings suggest, amongst others, a redefinition of what leadership is that leadership should be an activity with ethical consideration and with the understanding that leadership goals must include a set of practices with an overarching objective of a broader community and societal good. When church leaders are more open-minded to a contemplative style of leadership, they will be proactive in responding to the challenge posed by knife crimes rather than reactive, which seems prevalent in the Church presently (Williams, 2018).

2.3.2.6 Authentic Leadership

The failure in leadership revealed by global economic and political crises at the turn of the 21st Century has called for reflection and response as to the right kind of leadership of organizations and nations that are consciously ethically aware. One contemporary model of leadership being popularised is authentic leadership (Northouse, 2018). The term 'authentic' describes the genuine, fundamental elements of positive leadership (Luthans and Avolio, 2003). Authentic leaders are known to be (1) self-aware, humble, always seeking improvement, aware of those

being led, and look out for the welfare of others; (2) foster high degrees of trust by building an ethical and moral framework; and (3) committed to organizational success within the construct of social values (Whitehead, 2009).

Further, George et al. state:

Authentic leaders are "genuine people who are true to themselves and to what they believe in. They engender trust and develop genuine connections with others. Because people trust them, they are able to motivate others to high levels of performance. (George et al., 2007:129)

However, different conceptualizations of authentic leadership can be viewed based on two different criteria (Nikolic et al., 2020). The first concerns the distinction between intrapersonal, interpersonal, and developmental perspectives on authentic leadership (Northouse, 2013). The intrapersonal perspective is focused on the leader himself and includes self-knowledge and self-regulatory behaviours (Shamir and Eilam, 2005). On the other hand, the interpersonal perspective emphasizes that authentic leadership is a relational construct that emerges because of the relationship between leader and followers (Eagly, 2005). It is a process based on reciprocity, in which the leader acts on followers as well as followers on the leader. The third perspective proposes authentic leadership as a developmental leadership trait that is constructed over time and not fixed (Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Gardner et al., 2005; Walumbwa et al., 2008).

In addition, the developmental perspective resonates with the church leadership perspective that expects a leader to grow in leadership knowledge and experience and, with these attributes, serve his/her Church and the community he/she represents more efficiently. The second criterion for distinguishing leadership definitions relates to their theoretical underpinnings and philosophical antecedents. Initial conceptualizations of authentic leadership that ignited the interest of scholars encompassed the knowledge from positive organizational behaviours, transformational leadership, and ethics. Consequently, their definition of authentic leadership implies positive psychological traits, self-awareness, self-regulation, self-development, and a highly moral character (Nikolic et al., 2020; Cooper et al., 2005).

2.3.2.7 Autocratic Leadership

Autocratic leadership reflects a style of leadership where power and authority are concentrated in the leader (Harms et al., 2018). It reflects a domineering style that generally has negative

connotations (House, 1996). The leadership literature describes three broad power styles of leadership within groups, namely autocratic, democratic, and laissez-faire (Bass, 1995; Yukl, 1999). In application to public good dilemmas, autocratic leaders will do whatever they feel is necessary to provide the common good. They decide what activities group members, or an organisation would carry out, including going to war or starting a manufacturing project without asking anyone for input. In contrast, democratic-style leaders will involve group members in the decision-making process (Van Vugt et al., 2004).

Despite a long history within the field of leadership, the subject of authoritarianism and how it influences leadership and leadership processes has been neglected in recent decades (Harms et al., 2018). However, recent global events make it clear that a better understanding of authoritarianism is needed and that leadership researchers would benefit from a renewed interest in studying why followers embrace autocratic leaders. Harms et al. (2018) stress that autocratic leadership might reflect the desire of authoritarian subordinates for strong leaders. Based on contingency theory, situational conditions might advise which model of leadership would be appropriate or effective in getting the best results that the community or the organization might require. Crisis conditions might require an autocratic style of leadership where urgency is critical to survival and averting disaster. On the other hand, the history of autocratic leadership, particularly when a leader stays so long in power, has not been favourable to the followers and the groups that they led (Van Vugt and De Cremer, 1999).

2.3.2.8 Collaborative Leadership

Knife crime as discussed in Section 1.2 is a societal multi-faceted problem that seems to defy solution and has led to crisis in some British communities which has been a challenge to governmental agencies, church leadership, and other stakeholders. Based on the discussion of leadership scholars on leadership and problem resolution, and Ritter and Webber's typology of problem categories, two major categories, 'tame' and 'wicked' problems were identified (Grint, 2010; Clegg et al., 2013). Tame problems could be resolved by a single linear solution but not wicked or complex problems. Knife crime based on discussions in Section 1.2 and further expounded in Chapter Three, is a socio policy problem which could not be solved by a single linear solution and thereby classified as a wicked problem. Therefore, to solve complex problems, leadership scholars that focusses on wicked problems have proposed such concepts as collaborative or collective or new public leadership. This leads us to consider further the

need for collaborative leadership (Clarke and Stewart, 1999; Brookes, 2007; Brookes and Grint, 2010).

Brookes and Grint (2010) state that public leadership is

A form of collective leadership in which public bodies and agencies collaborate in achieving a shared vision based on shared aims and values and distribute this through each organization in a collegiate way that seeks to promote, influence, and deliver improved public value as evidenced through sustained social, environmental, and economic well-being within a complex and changing context
(Brookes and Grint, 2010: 2).

Collective leadership implies that leadership 'is the property and consequence of a community rather than that of an individual leader' (Grint, 2005) that it can be construed as extending across organizational boundaries (Ansari et al., 2001) as well as encompassing leadership both 'with' and 'without' authority. It thus denotes collectivity as a means of defining a shared purpose. Collectivity is preferred to collectivism as the former infers a quality or condition rather than the latter, which denotes a movement. The two terms do share common features (the public good, social justice, and the idea of positive government), but the role of individual agency remains prominent within a collective response, mitigated by responsible followers exercising constructive dissent (Grint, 2005) within the context of collective leadership (Brookes, 2011).

According to Brookes and Grint, attention has been turned in recent years to new public leadership; the concept borrowing a leaf from new public management principles which require managers to often operate across organizations as well as within hierarchies in carrying out their day-to-day running and decision making (Agranoff and McGuire 2003: 1). The new public leadership seeks to emphasise collaboration or collectivism in decision making; that leadership relationships be shared across public services or spread within individual services. Also, leadership relationships carry out this principle within four contextual conditions of the individual, organization, community, and political leadership, and under varying accounting mechanisms. Further, these leadership relationships will engage collectively to seek the mutual benefit of the individuals, organizations, and societies involved (Brookes and Grint, 2010; Brandsen, T. and Pestoff, V., 2008; Brookes, 2007).

Brookes and Grint believe that context is critical in practice of public, collaborative or collective leadership. The operations of collaborative leadership in individual, organisational, community or political arenas are likely to have differing styles within them and reflect differing accountability and governance requirements. For instance, community leadership might involve developing a vision for the locality, working in partnership to deliver that vision, and guaranteeing quality services for all (Clarke and Stewart, 1999), and its link to building social capital. Knife crime viewed as a community crisis and a complex problem requires the domain of community collaborative leadership in the first instance.

Nevertheless, this will extend to organisational and political domains as the government seeks to enact policies to mitigate against the crime or leaders in different sectors, faith, police, justice, and so on network to deliberate and plan programmes of action to deal with the crime. Further, scholars indicate that these operations could take place in both horizontal (shared between organisations) and vertical (distributed throughout each organisational hierarchy) boundaries (Denis et al., 2001). The former will require leaders to think about how they lead even when they are not directly ‘in charge.’

Head (2022) affirms the need for collaborative leadership based on his professional experience in public policy work and consulting that has spanned several sectors: universities, government, not-for-profit organizations, and communities. The experience has enabled him to work on complex and wicked problems, which highlighted the need to strengthen links between practitioners and researchers and promote collaborative networks in societies. Aldred et al. (2008) 's research on church leaders' response to knife and gun crimes in British communities confirms the views of earlier scholars on collaborative leadership. The authors expatiated that the most frequently identified type of initiative in dealing with knife crime was multi-agency work, including collaborations with schools, local councils, independent advisory groups, and the police. About 40 percent of respondents in the online survey carried out identified this sort of involvement. One commented,

We try to facilitate joint work between our congregation and other organizations, including local schools, welfare and education officers concerned with this terrible issue (Aldred et al., 2008:12).

2.3.3 Church Leadership Models in Dealing with Knife Crime Crisis

Knife crime rates as discussed in further details in Section 3.3 reached a crises level by 2019 because of the number of stabbings and murders reached a 70-year peak (Harding, 2020).

Knife crime crisis has the characteristics of harmfulness, disruption and change. It is a form of societal crisis that weakens or causes degeneration of the systems and people. It brings about a significant disruption to the individual, family, organisation and community normal functioning. It calls for urgent corrective action on the part of various stakeholders in the society, be it the government, the faith leaders, the educational institutions, the law makers, the families represented in the communities. Leadership deals with social influence in which an individual guides or motivates members of a group or an organisation towards achieving a goal (Northhouse, 2010; Antonakis and Day, 2018:5). As discussed by Yuen et al. (2021), there is therefore a need for effective leadership which is critical for organisational survival due to the unexpected nature of crises, coupled with their salient and potentially disruptive implications for organizations and the broader community.

Mitroff (1994) proposes five phases of crisis including signal detection, probing, prevention, damage containment, and recovery. Fink (1986) from medical perspective suggests four stages: prodromal, ii. crisis breakout or acute, iii. chronic, and iv. resolution. However, Coombs (2015) and Bundy et al. (2019) simplify the phases of a crisis to generally three primary stages. These are precrisis prevention, crisis management, and postcrisis outcomes. Knife crime crisis can be divided into these three stages. When a knife crime incident occurs, the first aid responders, the ambulance service and the police force are the first point of call that involve themselves in crisis management. Church leaders and their organisations are found to be involved in mostly in postcrisis outcomes and precrisis prevention. For instance, regarding conducting funerals for the victims of knife crime in their communities, Freeman-Powell (2021) shared the account of one the BMC leaders, Andrew Wignal.

Sadly, for me over the last few years, there have been quite a few funerals I've had to conduct of young people and victims of knife and gun crime. "Normally the place is flooded with young people, you know, their friends who don't know how to channel that horrendous grief." He says the church offers these families a 'safe space and safe haven' to support them in their journey and ensure they do not feel alone (Freeman-Powell, 2021:1)

Also, Adedibu (2012) expounds on the activities of BMC leaders. Reverend Nims Obunge, a BMC leader and an MBE sets up a local initiative in Haringey, London to train ex-convicts of knife crime and provide opportunities for them while another BMC leadership in Brent Cross sets up another Church Social Responsibility (CSR) initiative and Manna project to support the poor and underprivileged in the community where they are represented. There is the Street Pastors initiative set up by BMC leaders across United Kingdom which deals with serving the communities by showing their presence and assisting school children going to School in the areas where knife crime seems pronounced. Although, there is no direct reference to the leadership models being used here, it could be inferred by these activities the prominence of servant leadership, and often transformational and charismatic leadership styles in carrying out all these initiatives. To be able to conduct a funeral service or serve as street pastors in the community, a church leader employs servant leadership mostly to mobilise other members of the church and leaders to volunteer and serve in one capacity or the other (Freeman-Powell, 2021; Adedibu, 2012).

This research seeks to find out what church leaders are saying about ways they react to knife crime crises in their communities and what models of leadership they employ in their operations. Although there is a paucity of research regarding the models of leadership that BMC leaders employ during periods of knife crime crisis, this research would give further insights in this regard as these leaders share their stories and experiences of knife crime in British communities. The foregoing discussion has given some insights about leadership models prominent in church settings and their relationships. The next section will now examine a specific group of church leaders; these are the Pentecostal BMC leaders, which concerns this study. It examines their theology, beliefs, vision, and mission.

2.4 Theology of BMCs

BMCs fall under two significant expressions. These are the Pentecostal Christian Churches and non-Pentecostal Christian churches. This study concerns itself with the BMCs, which are Pentecostal Christian churches. This is majorly because of two reasons. First, the researcher is of the Pentecostal Christian expression and thereby focuses his study on the area of his familiarity. Second, research indicates that most of the significant impacts of BMCs on British society are traceable to those of the Pentecostal strand (Adedibu, 2012; Goodhews and Cooper, 2019). Olofinjana (2021) adds that Pentecostalism is one of the fastest-growing

expressions of Christianity in Europe and other nations of the world. Pentecostalism is a form of Christianity that believes and emphasizes the work of the Holy Spirit in reviving, energizing, and helping the Christian believer (Cartledge, 2006). This belief is not a ritual religious belief but something experiential, the personality of God the Holy Spirit powerfully coming in to fill a believer with the evidence of speaking in an unknown language as demonstrated in the early Church, which is the first Church that had this encounter on a festival day of Pentecost in Jerusalem, Israel (Acts 2:1-11, NKJV). Olofinjana affirms and states:

I have defined Pentecostals as an expression of Christianity that has its origin in Acts 2:1–13, when the disciples of our Lord were filled with the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost. It is a modern church movement characterized by glossolalia (speaking in tongues), use of the gifts of the Spirit, Spirit-filled experiences, belief in miracles and healing, and free and ecstatic worship (Olofinjana, 2021:5)

These experiences taken together are what is commonly referred to by Christians as the Baptism in the Holy Spirit. BMCs of Pentecostal expression are known to be energetic and dynamic in their worship and activities, and they believe they are driven by the power of God within them.

Beckford (2000) expounds on four distinct theological hallmarks of BMCs. First, they considered themselves a place of salvation or rescue from the kingdom of darkness and the dangers of eternal damnation. They believe that they are being sent from African and Caribbean nations by God for the work of reverse mission to the Indigenous British communities of bringing Jesus Christ, the Son of God back into the Church through an experiential encounter with the Holy Spirit (Colossians 1:12, John 16:7-1, NKJV). Second, this has to do with the radical inner transformation of an individual, which results in a change of attitudes and way of viewing life. The Bible says if any man is in Christ, old things pass away, and all things become new (2Corinthians 5:17, NKJV). The transformation dictates a new course of living to an individual and imbibes a life after the nature of God, such as love, joy, and peace (Galatians 5:22 & 23, NKJV). However, as Paul puts it in Romans 6: 11-13, NKJV, the individual has to make a conscious effort to yield his/her body unto God as an instrument of righteousness because the individual is still in the human flesh, notwithstanding becoming a Christian by inner transformation. This leads to the third point about the operations of the Holy Spirit in the life of an individual.

Third, BMCs believe in the power of the Holy Spirit as the driving force of the Church, guiding the members in their daily living to obey their master Jesus and represent him in this challenging world. Their belief emphasizes that the Church of Jesus was born on the day of Pentecost when there was an outpouring of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:1-4, NKJV). This belief, according to Beckford (2000), is manifested in the worship life of BMCs, where the worship life is characterized by speaking in new tongues or tongues of the Spirit, sensitivity to the operations of the Spirit through declarations of word of knowledge, prophesying, and laying on of hands by spiritual leaders to pray for the sick or transfer spiritual power for the empowerment of an individual. The Holy Spirit is at the heart of the Church in strengthening, empowering, reviving, inspiring, and directing the leaders and the led in daily Christian living.

Nonetheless, Pugh (2017) cautions that the Pauline pneumatological discourse of the Holy Spirit focuses on the sanctifying power of the Spirit, rather than the excitement of speaking in tongues and other signs of Holy Spirit baptism. Further, as indicated in 1 John 4:8, NKJV, the Holy Spirit as the Spirit of God who is “Love” helps unite members of diverse cultural backgrounds and persuade together. This creates a family environment in the Church, leading to Beckford's last point about Pentecostal BMCs. Finally, BMCs consider each branch location and the whole body as a family. Beckford argues that BMCs can be viewed as a family based on four considerations. First, when a person becomes a Christian and joins as a member of a BMC, he or she is addressed as a brother or sister. The Bible tells us that all believers are children of God (Romans 8:16-17, Galatians 3:26, NKJV). Second, as a follow-up to the first, those that are children of God are also addressed as one body of Christ with many members (1 Corinthians 12:27). The BMC is therefore family-oriented in disposition because the message being preached is based on family values and God's desire to raise many families and generations. There are many instances in the Bible where the Church is said to be a family or that members should relate to each other just like in a typical family setting where you have the parents and children (Ephesians 3:15, Ephesians 4:4-6,14, NKJV).

Typically, in the formation of a BMC, a group of families normally come together for prayer and support in a forum called house fellowship, as mentioned in the Bible (1 Corinthians 16:19, NKJV). This fellowship eventually grows into an established church. This researcher agrees with this proposition by Beckford based on his experience as a Pastor of a BMC. The Church started as a house fellowship with a few families coming together. Within a few months, the house fellowship grew and became an established full-fledged Church with

memberships exceeding a hundred adults at some point and fully registered with the United Kingdom Charity Commission. On the other hand, Adedibu expatiates the heterogeneous and dynamic nature of BMC Pentecostalism and infers that this has led to many denominational strands of BMCs that exist today. Further studies on the history and formation of different strands of Pentecostal BMCs are examined by scholars such as Beckford (2000), Liardon (2006), Robeck Jr. (2006), Althouse (2009), and Kalu (2008). To provide a context for this study, the following examines the history and a brief overview of a key Pentecostal BMC, The Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG), to which this researcher belongs, and which provides a substantial number of respondents for this research.

2.4.1 The Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG)

The Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG) is a global Pentecostal church with representation and branches in over 190 countries. The Church has its roots in Nigeria, a West African nation where it started in 1952. According to RCCG.ORG (2023), the Church's official website, the Church started in a dramatic and supernatural way by a vision that God showed to the unlearned founder of the Church, the late Reverend Josiah Akindayomi, who was formerly a member of an African Instituted Church, called Cherubim and Seraphim. In the vision, God showed him the name of 'The Redeemed Christian Church of God' on a blackboard, which he could not read or pronounce. He had to call somebody else to tell him what that meant. Reverend Akindayomi went on by the leading of God to start the RCCG in Lagos, Nigeria where God later revealed to him that a young man who was educated would join the Church and take over the mantle of leadership after his death. Subsequently, Dr. Enoch Adejare Adeboye, a young Nigerian university lecturer who became one of the pastors in the Church, was appointed and consecrated to take over the leadership of the organization in 1981.

This unique experience and further divine encounters by the new leader, addressed as 'General Overseer,' led the Church to develop six unique mission statements. Part of these mission statements include taking the church to all the nations (RCCG.org: Vision & Mission). The vision and mission assignment of the Church requires autocratic and servant leadership models for accomplishment. The followers and Pastors have to believe in the divine guidance received from God by their General Overseer as to where to go and when to plant churches. They have to follow these instructions in line with the autocratic leadership model, such that a leader literally makes decisions that the followers and Church leaders

receive and carry out. However, in their locations, these Church leaders who represent RCCG Church and the General Overseer work as servant leaders to actualize the vision and mission of the Church. In addition, the uniqueness of the missionary goals and beliefs of RCCG, coupled with a new, dynamic young spiritual leader, set the stage for the spread of this sect in Nigeria and globally. The RCCG London followed the same pattern that the Nigerian root took in its formation.

Further, Burgess (2009) indicates that the transition of leadership in 1981 to Pastor Enoch Adejare Adeboye is a significant event in the history of RCCG because the Church began to experience rapid expansion in membership and branches. Burgess suggests that this transnational Nigerian Pentecostal denomination has close to 400 congregations in Britain as at 2009. Adedibu (2016) adds a sect of fewer than 20 branches in 1981 had by the year 2012 grown to a global organization with over 14,000 branches nationwide in Nigeria and other branches spreading to over 140 countries. By the year 2014, there were 266 branches in London, representing 40% of the total branches in the UK (i.e., an overall figure of 665 branches in the UK). Thus, it has become one of the fastest-growing African-led Pentecostal churches in Britain and may be one of the fastest-growing Pentecostal churches in the world. However, the Church UK/European recent Website (rccgeurope.church, 2023) indicates that the denomination now has 880 branches in the UK and has spread to 195 countries worldwide.

The UK and Europe branches now have a dynamic, charismatic leader in Pastor Leke Sanusi, a Lawyer turned Preacher and Pastor who is now motivating the next drive of the Church's growth and expansion. The mission has a spacious property in Stevenage, England, and a well-established administration office that is being used to organize its operations in the UK and Europe. Recently, the Church bought a 35-acre piece of land in Farnham, Southern England, with existing residential properties and event halls for their camping and retreat centre. The RCCG's beliefs align with those of other Pentecostal churches. These include the belief in the authority of the Bible as the written and revealed will of God. The belief is that the inspiration of the Holy Spirit wrote the entire Old and New Testament Scripture. All the Christian teachings and the Christian attitude of the Children of God are established in the Holy Bible. Also, there is the belief in the 'Trinity,' God the Father, God the Son, and God, the Holy Spirit. There is the distinguishing belief of many Pentecostals in the Baptism of the Holy Spirit with the evidence of speaking in new tongues.

The RCCG's social orientation has been motivated by its Biblical belief, Pentecostal experience, and external social context. The evangelism strategy of the Church is simple. The Church, apart from full-time ordained pastors, employs and empowers the lay ministers in pastoring or shepherding its branches. This, coupled with the church planting drive, helped the Church to spread rapidly to new territories. Members are encouraged to plant a branch of the sect, with the workforce rapidly trained to serve in the Church, whether on a volunteer or permanent basis. Burgess explains that RCCG was able to experience significant growth and popularity in the UK because of the social and spiritual support given by RCCG Churches to African migrants so they could settle and be integrated into British society.

In addition, Pastor Adeboye's positive disposition toward gender equality, which was not the case before he took over, paved the way for the ordination of female pastors and ministers occupying strategic positions in the RCCG leadership at various levels. Early in establishing the UK churches, one female pastor was appointed to the board of trustees of RCCG UK. Also, many women were being ordained as pastors, and new church branches were being formed. This has helped the growth and spread of the Church significantly in the UK and other nations of the world. Nonetheless, Adedibu (2016) observes the sect has been experiencing mono-cultural growth in the UK, and recent government regulations that seek to limit entries from African countries have been hurting the growth of the Church. The extent of this impact is yet to be assessed appropriately.

2.5 The Activities and Contributions of BMC Leadership in their Communities

As well as shaping the UK's spiritual and religious landscape, BMCs have contributed to the socio-political landscape of the UK and have participated in national and local governmental policy/initiatives to ensure the flourishing and common good of all (CEA, 2024:1)

The significant impact of the activities of BMC leaders on the religious and spiritual lives of the British communities has been observed by various researchers and academic scholars such as CEA (2024), Francis (2021), Goodhews and Cooper (2019), Adedibu (2012), Kalu (1998), Kalu (2008) and Gerloff (1992). In recent years, BMCs having evolved both in congregational numbers and influence, contributed significantly to varied fields of public life in the communities in which they are located in the UK. CEA (2024) chronicles the invaluable achievements and contributions of BMCs to the UK religious, political, and economic sectors of the nation. These achievements and contributions are not unconnected

with the influence and dedicated commitments of their leaders in bringing about the growth and impact these churches are making in British society.

CEA asserts that the churches have come a long way in attaining to this level. Gerloff, in her opening summary, explicates that the immigration of Caribbeans and Africans has led to the emergence and growth of many independent churches, which flourish in the cities and attract an increasing number of people. The Christian communities being formed now play an increasing active role in the social and ecumenical life of the nation. This is reflected in cooperation being built with the existing denominational British churches. The roles and behaviours of BMC leaders could be felt across a considerable number of sectors in various communities in the UK. The following section discusses some of these sectors.

2.5.1 Support for Immigrants

Prior research indicates that BMC leaders have been known to be committed to supporting and caring for immigrants, particularly those who attend their churches (Beckford, 2006; Adedibu, 2012). They believe in Gerloff's statement that in terms of social groupings, BMCs in Britain are noted for human rights, combating racism, empowerment of people, peace, and intercultural empathy in the multicultural society of the UK and other European nations. The migrant communities from the Caribbeans and Africans have faced many challenges in settling down in the UK. They faced the problems of accommodation, racism, rejection, and European wintry weather conditions as opposed to the African and Caribbean tropical climates. The surprising elements of these challenges are that they occurred in places such as established denominational churches, such as the Anglican and Methodist churches to which they belonged and identified with back at home, where messages of love, care, compassion, and family were being preached (Francis, 2021). This is where the BMC leaders came in and set up praying groups that metamorphosized into churches where they could meet, pray, and share their experiences, refreshments, or meals.

Further, these places provide support networks for new immigrants to find identification with people who share their cultural background and religious beliefs and are willing to help in their journey to settle in a foreign nation. This service by BMC leaders has been considered by scholars as one of the key factors that led to the emergence and continuing growth of BMCs (Beckford, 2006; Adedibu, 2012). This is in line with the relative social deprivation theory (Gerloff, 1992). It interprets the 'religions of the oppressed' from their social milieu or, in the case of social achievement, from real or imagined deprivation. The behaviours of the

immigrants associating with BMCs seem to be in tandem with the relative social deprivation theory that suggests with regards to outcomes involving individually oriented behaviours as a result of social deprivation; the victim can engage in achievement behaviours involving religious or academic activities that help cope with the situation the person is going through (Smith et al., 2020).

2.5.2 Revitalization of the Nation's Spiritual life Through Reverse Mission

LSE (2017) expounds on the "Being Built Together project, research undertaken by Andrew Rogers that investigates the number, places, and priorities of new BMCs in the London Borough of Southwark over 2011-13. It acknowledges that BMCs have experienced periods of rapid growth in Southwark in recent decades, although it is difficult to precisely determine the characteristics of that growth over time with the limited empirical baselines before *Being Built Together*. The London Church Census reports a 58 percent growth in total Pentecostal congregations in Southwark across 2005-12 and a 44 percent rise across Greater London. Putting Southwark Borough BMC growth in context and considering how it relates to the broader picture of church growth and decline in the UK, one can get an idea of the work of the reverse mission of BMCs and their leaders. Although the 2011 census indicates an overall Christian decline in England and Wales, the sector of Black African Christians grew by over 100 percent. Further, The British Social Attitudes survey, from 1983 to 2014, reports a steady decline for denominational churches such as the Church of England and Roman Catholics and a considerable increase in other churches, primarily BMCs (Clements, 2014).

Also, Olofinjana (2012) discusses numbers of BMCs making waves in the UK and attracting large followership in their thousands, thereby impacting the spiritual landscape of their communities. This includes new Pentecostal BMCs in London, such as Kingsway International Christian Centre (KICC), led by Pastor Matthew Ashimolowo, RCCG Jesus House, led by Pastor Agu Irukwu, and New Wine Church, started by Pastor Tayo Adeyemi. These BMCs are making many contributions and are bringing renewal to a nation that is fast losing its Christian roots and values and going secular. Apart from religious life and church growth, the contributions of BMCs can be seen in the following areas: Social cohesion among ethnic minorities, community development, women's ministries, immigration services, diaspora studies, and a host of others. Freeman-Powell and Gerloff state the impact of Pentecostal BMCs this way.

For many in the Windrush generation, the Black church was the only space they could call their own. The churches became cultural hubs where they could support each other spiritually, emotionally, and sometimes financially - and are thriving in the UK (Freeman-Powell, 2021:1). The gist of the Black Church movement in Britain lies in its outspoken 'sense of mission' to their people as well as wider society: mission understood as human care, not cultural arrogance (Gerloff, 1992: 25).

Although BMC leaders in the communities they represent are making their impact on society, they do have numbers of shortcomings. These weaknesses include a lack of ecumenical partnerships, transplanting African Christianity to the UK without contextualizing, mono-ethnic mission strategies, abuse of prosperity theology in some cases, and lack of sufficient or theological education for their leaders. Nonetheless, according to Olofinjana, it must be mentioned that these BMCs, compared to British missions in Africa, have only started in the UK for a relatively fleeting period and are still in the process of adapting and acclimatizing to their new environment. The future seems promising for greater strides and a positive impact on British society. The following highlights some examples of the contributions of BMCs and their leaders in British society.

2.5.3 Networking during Coronavirus Pandemic

According to CEA (2024), throughout the global coronavirus pandemic, BMCs have significantly contributed to vaccine information dissemination and mobilization for UK ethnic minority communities. Over 60 of the UK's most senior Black church leaders from established denominational churches and BMCs joined hands to counter false information about the vaccine and encourage their members and the public to participate in the vaccination exercise to curb the spread of the deadly virus. This is quite a necessary and commendable step as UK ethnic minority communities have been disproportionately impacted by COVID-19 due to health, economic, and social challenges that the majority of their people were facing. Apart from holding regular Zoom meetings and webinars (in which I actively participated), BMC leaders turned their Church buildings into vaccine centres. The sitting Prime Minister, Boris Johnson, visited Jesus House RCCG UK's vaccine centre and commended their work.

The alliance of Christian leaders, which included Bishop Rose Hudson-Wilkin, Bishop Tedroy Powell, Reverend Canon Yemi Adedeji, Bishop Mike Royal, Reverend Yinka

Oyekan, and Bishop Dexter Edmund, encouraged the BMCs on how getting the vaccine is a way to show love for their neighbours.

2.5.4 Social Action Projects

Researchers such as CEA (2024), Francis (2021), and Adedibu (2012) catalogue a considerable number of social action projects being run or actively engaged with by BMCs and their leaders. These include the foodbank being run by Kingsborough Family Church of Hillingdon, England, the Manna Project being run by RCCG Jesus House, London, and The Peace Alliance being run by Freedom Ark Church, Tottenham. The following expounds on The Peace Alliance project, which relates to knife crime, the subject of this research.

The Peace Alliance project is a community initiative in Haringey, London. It was started in 2001 by a church leader, Reverend Nims Obunge (MBE) of Freedom Ark Church Tottenham, and is a voluntarily run organization dedicated to tackling gun and knife crimes. The charity organization is well known for its work in gun and other violent crimes, youth crime, and working with victims and families of victims of crime as well as young people to reduce crime in communities (thepeacealliance.org.uk, 2020). It has key partners ranging from the Church, the Home Office, the Metropolitan Police, the Haringey Borough Council, local MPs, and community leaders who have pledged to work together to promote peace in Haringey. Rev. Nims is the recipient of the MBE (Member of British Empire) Medal for his contribution to community services. Adedibu states that:

The initiative is based on working with community/statutory/faith organizations, trying to ensure that there is a holistic response to the challenges of criminal justice in Britain. Peace Alliance makes use of educational, social-religious, and institutional approaches towards the challenges of knife and gun crime in Britain (Adedibu, 2012:166).

The British government has recognized the Peace Alliance as a successful model for partnership working on gun and knife crimes and is currently working across London and the United Kingdom with several other key organizations. It now works nationally with key statutory agencies such as the Home Office and the Metropolitan Police, advising on key policy issues (thepeacealliance.org.uk, 2020).

2.5.5 Reduction of Knife and Gun crimes

John's (2013) research on knife and gun crimes identifies six key areas in which church leaders have acted or responded to knife crime cases in their communities. These areas include multi-agency partnerships, activities for young people, training and education, counselling, street pastors' initiative, and prayer. CEA (2024) discusses the role of BMCs in partnering with local authorities to intervene and reduce gang and youth violence and domestic abuse, provide free counselling services for the community, offer debt counselling and consolidation, and run hundreds of food banks across the country. Also, they have administered befriending services, prison and hospital chaplaincy, and pastoral care. BMC leaders have also contributed to the UK's educational system by establishing schools and colleges in varied levels to support the educational needs of the communities and the nation.

In conclusion, BMCs and their leaders have contributed immensely to the well-being of the communities where they are represented and the whole British national life in varied sectors. The extent of their activities and impact have not been fully measured. The activities of BMC leaders continue to evolve and grow in capacity and scope. However, there is a paucity of research on the extent of these activities. This study on 'knife crime as a case study of BMC leadership response' provides an avenue to explore this area more closely. The following chapter examines the problem of knife crime in three British hotspot cities of knife crime considered for study in this research.

2.6 Chapter Two Summary

This chapter examined Black Majority Churches (BMCs), their leaders, history, theological beliefs, vision, and mission. It considered the history of the global Church, particularly the BMCs, in recent decades. It expounded on the growth of the BMCs amid adversity, the rapid growth propelled by the immigration of Africans and Caribbeans to the United Kingdom, and the influence of the BMCs in recent decades. The literature reviewed the significant impact, social action, and contributions of the BMCs, particularly the Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG), to which the researcher belongs and whose church leaders took a significant part in this research. The next chapter discusses the problem of knife crime in British society.

Chapter Three: The Problem of Knife Crime in British Society

3.1 Chapter Three Overview

Chapter two discussed the history of BMCs, their leadership models, strands, theology and beliefs, vision, and mission. It examined the growth, activities, and contributions of BMCs to British society. This chapter examines the problem of knife crime in British society. It introduces a brief history of knife crime in British society and discusses how the concept and labelling of knife crime evolved. Further, this chapter examines the cases of knife crime in the three chosen cities of this study: London, Birmingham, and Manchester. Lastly, it outlines how knife crime has become a persisting problem in British society and a challenging crisis, pleading for the immediate attention of the leadership and stakeholders of knife crime problems.

3.2 Evolution of the Terminology of Knife Crimes

The challenge posed by knife crime has been a case of grave concern for church leaders, the governments in the United Kingdom, and other stakeholders in the communities they represent across British society. Research indicates that knife crime has been on the increase and reaching a 70-year peak level by May 2019 (Harding, 2020). The global Coronavirus pandemic problem that set in 2019 caused people to be constrained to their homes, and that significantly curtailed the activities that might typically lead to knife crime incidents in British communities. Subsequently, the record crisis level of knife crime decreased within the same year. Post-COVID-19 records have revealed a bounce back of knife crime rates to nearly pre-covid period (Clark, 2024). Knife crime is a critical challenge to British society and has become a crisis of the 21st century in the United Kingdom (Williams, 2023).

The terms 'knife crime' and 'knife culture' were first established in British crime discourse at the turn of the 21st century and represent a particular re-making of youth in post-industrial Britain. Knife crime is of increasing concern for the governments, the politicians, the police, the community and faith leaders, families of the victims, and residents of British communities. The Knife Angel, the only British national monument created from used weapons (Appendix IV), is a good reminder of the problematic nature of knife crime in British society. A sculptor, Alfie Bradley, created the vast contemporary 27ft high and 3.5-ton sculpture at the British Ironwork Centre. It was made from over 100,000 confiscated knives

from 43 Police Forces across the UK (British Ironwork Centre, 2022; Visit Stoke, 2022). The Knife Angel serves as a vehicle to voice the concerns of the citizens of British communities, their families, and the victims who have tragically been affected by the knife crime crisis. The "Knife Angel," produced under the 'Save a life, surrender your knife' campaign, exists to spearhead change and encourages a more focussed early intervention, awareness raising, and education throughout the UK (Visit Stoke, 2022).

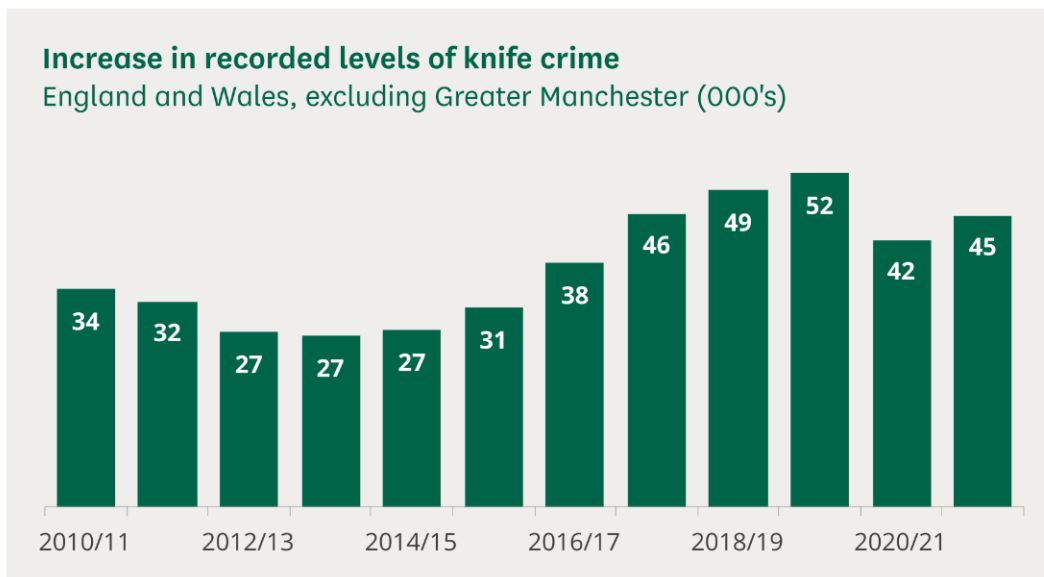
The British Ironwork Centre believes that the 'knife angel', apart from acting as a catalyst for rejecting violent and aggressive behaviour, acts as a significant memorial designed to celebrate those lives that were lost to knife crime and other violent behaviours. "Knife crime" is a label for a crime category in the United Kingdom and has a recent history. It was initially referred to as a form of knife-enabled violence until the early millennium when it was first publicly used to refer to a new wave of knife-enabled crime emerging in England (Williams, 2023). Therefore, since the early 2000s, the authority of reference to knife-enabled violence as knife crime has grown in such magnitude that the history of the label has been obscured. Additionally, this contemporary use of 'knife crime' is a collective noun for knife-related offenses and an adjective that denotes a criminal culture.

As a result, British news headlines commonly refer to knife-related violence and practitioners in phrases such as 'knife crime youths', 'knife crime thugs', or 'knife crime gangs' without justification of the label's meaning. Prior to these new developments, Williams (2023) states that at no point in the Crime and Disorder Act (1998), The MacPherson Inquiry (1999), the 'Blueprint for Reform' White Paper (2001), the first National Policing Plan (2002), The Policing Reform Act (2002) or any of the parliamentary acts of this period do the words 'knife crime' appear. However, behind the scenes, there are early signs of a mobilization, specifically toward knives as expounded upon by Hall et al. (2013) in their landmark book, "Policing the Crisis: Mugging, the State, and Law and Order". Other scholars such as Barnard (1979), Schlesinger (1979), and Reiner (1978) discuss further on this early mobilisation. The policy reform aims at tackling youth violence with tougher measures has two-pronged responsibility on individuals and government intervention.

Further, government attention was focused on youth surveillance and control, from the Crime and Disorder Act (1998) to the Police Reform Act (2002). These measures extended the capacity of the state to intervene and increase the range of behaviours considered criminal

during this period. In addition, the above measures were backed up by a fast-paced gentrification program across many prime commuter areas of the city of London that were previously dominated by publicly owned housing blocks of estates. The mass movement of affluent middle-class families to working-class areas of the city was facilitated by the 'right to buy' initiatives (Williams, 2023). This commenced under the Conservative Government in the 1980s but was extended under New Labour's 'regeneration' housing policies of the late 1990s and 2000s. The leeway provided by the government gave council tenants the 'right to buy' council houses and, thereby, transfer public housing stock to individuals or private ownership. In addition, and perhaps the most significant sign and change that occurred in knife crime labelling in 2001 when a new policing 'feature code' was introduced to the police system of the Met Police to specifically register 'knife enabled offenses' (KEO) on computerized crime records (Williams, 2023).

Knife crime labelling was further accentuated by the murder case of Luke Walmsley by a schoolmate in 2003 (Lane & Wheeler, 2003; BBC News, 2004). This unfortunate incident triggered a concerted news media response that brought together authorities in charge of schools, heads of teaching associations, and high-ranking police officers, providing a public definition of 'knife crime' for the first time in the history of UK knife-enabled violence (Williams, 2023). The publicity of knife crime was heightened by the death of a city lawyer, Tom Rhys-Pryce, due to a stabbing by two male youths in 2006. This mugging and death of Tom Rhys-Pryce generated a great deal of media attention and questions about what the government is doing about the rising tide of knife crimes in British communities (BBC News, 2006). The challenge of knife crime continues to be problematic to government, community and church leaders to date. The following recent chart, Figure 3.1 illustrates knife crime records in England and Wales, excluding Greater Manchester for year period 2011 to 2021. According to ONS.GOV.UK (2022), Manchester records were unavailable at the time of preparing the report because Greater Manchester Police indicated they found there was an error in the undercounting of knife crime offenses and had to allow for comparison over time. The knife crime chart indicates the ONS published data on police-recorded crimes



Source: ONS, [Crime in England and Wales: Other related tables](#), Table F3a.

Figure 3.1 Knife Crime Records 2010 to 2021

(Source: ONS.GOV.UK, 2022)

involving a knife or sharp instrument for a selection of severe violent offenses (ONS.GOV.UK, 2022). There was a continual decrease in the knife crime rate from the year 2010, with 34,000 selected offenses involving a knife or sharp instrument in England and Wales (excluding Greater Manchester Police Force), to 27,000 offenses by the year 2012. The year 2012 remains stable till the year 2014. However, knife crime offenses began to rise from that year until a record 70-year peak of 52,000 offenses by the year 2019 (Harding, 2020).

In addition, Butcher et al. (2019) investigated the cities that are most hit by knife crime challenges and came up with 25 hotspots of knife crime in England and Wales. Among these cities are London, Birmingham, and Manchester, where this research's case study was carried out. The results indicate that London boroughs have the highest concentration of the hotspots of knife crime, with 16 out of the 25 hotspot cities listed (Figure 3.2).

However, the results from the analysis of police figures reveal that the rate of knife attacks in some regional towns and cities is higher than in many London boroughs. Also, the rate of serious knife crime offenses is rising sharply in some areas outside London and surpassing some of the city's boroughs in places like Slough and the city of Manchester. Serious knife crime is defined as any assault, robbery, threat to kill, murder, attempted murder, or sexual offense involving a knife or sharp instrument (Butcher et al., 2019).

Knife crimes per 10,000 people in England and Wales

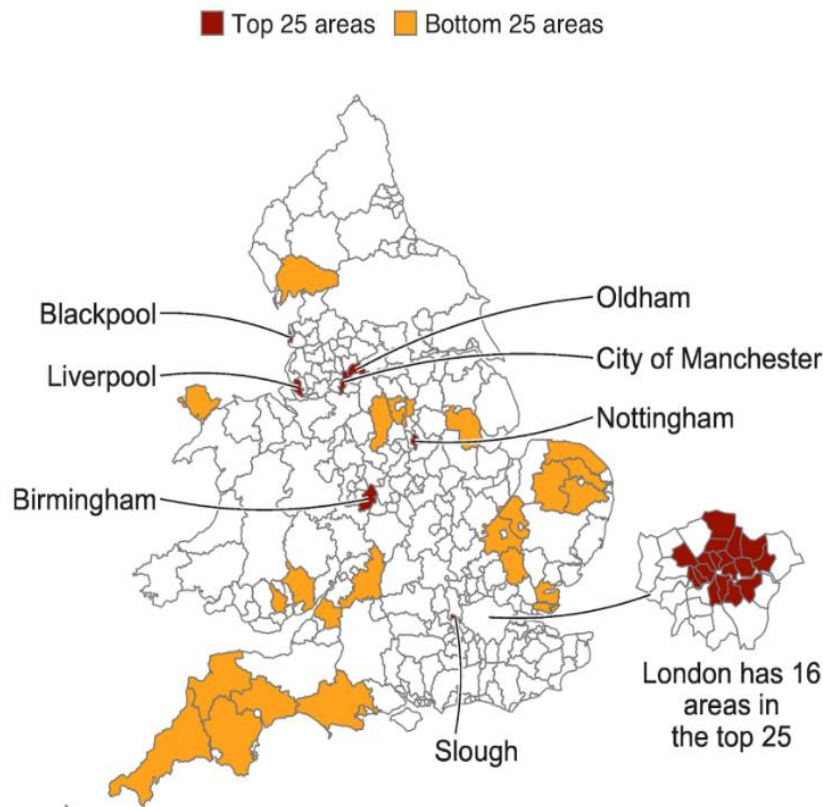


Figure 3.2 Knife Crime Hotspots Cities in England and Wales

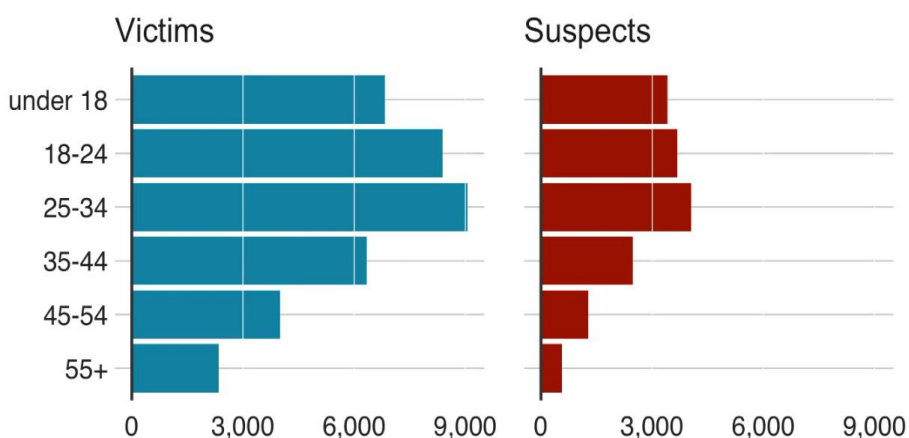
Source: Butcher et al. (2019)

Conversely, the research indicates the safest areas with less than one crime per 10,000 people include Dorset, the Cotswolds, Monmouthshire, and the Malvern. Butcher et al. state:

Knife crime is committed mainly by young people on young people (Butcher et al., 2019: 1)

Statistics indicate about half of the crimes committed involve young people under the age of 24 (Figure 3.3). Although boys and young men are prominent in knife crimes, girls and young women are increasingly being involved. In 2018, police data indicated that 15% of people involved in knife crime were of the female gender. Anti-knife crime campaigner Ms. Lydia Lawrence of West London, who has herself survived two stabbings by two different women, agrees that knife crime is on the rise, and girls with low self-esteem are being emotionally exploited.

Number in each age group 2018



Data from 33 of 43 regional police forces in England and Wales

Figure: 3.3 Knife crime committed in England and Wales 2018

(Source: Butcher et al., 2019)

She experienced knife stabbings at the ages of 12 and 21. She was stabbed through her kidney and liver, nearly dying of the wounds sustained. Dr Mike Rowe of Liverpool University, cited in Butcher et al., state:

Girls and young women are being exploited to carry weapons because they are much less likely to be stopped and searched by police. The attention on male suspects may lead to the deliberate recruitment of young women (Butcher et al., 2019:1).

The research indicates that the reasons and triggers for this trend include issues relating to drugs and gangs, school exclusion, poverty in deprived areas, unemployment, and cuts to services. Children and teenagers who are living in deprivation do whatever they can to earn money and support households, whether legally or illegally. The underlying causes of knife crime are examined further in Section 3.4. The following section provides a brief overview of knife crime in British communities to provide context for this study,

3.3 The Crisis Situation of Knife Crime in British Communities

A crisis can be considered as "a process of weakening or degeneration that can culminate in a disruption event to the actor's (i.e., individual, organization, and/or community) normal functioning (Williams et al., 2017:739). Gigliotti (2019) asserts that everyone's perspective of crisis is advised by everyone's professional role and responsibilities, personal encounters with crisis-like situations, and the experience gained. He stresses an understanding of crisis as a social construction could be useful in better understanding the dynamic nature of these types

of occurrences. For instance, Wu et al. (2021) describe the societal impact as events that happen unexpectedly, without any foreseeable plan or preparation, referred to often as abnormal events for which leaders have little experience or knowledge in managing. This understanding helps to consider the ways in which people, including leaders, perceive an event or situation as a crisis, and the adoption of a social construction lens encourages a shift in how we understand the crisis, distinguishing external phenomena that are "out there" from those constituted within the organization. This could be between leaders and followers or the media and internal and external stakeholders.

However, Wu et al. (2021) suggest that crises can be distinguished from normal community or organizational incidents because of three unique characteristics (Bundy et al., 2017; Pearson and Clair, 2009; Shrivastava et al., 1988). First, they happen unexpectedly, without any foreseeable plan or preparation, referred to often as abnormal events for which leaders have little experience or knowledge in managing. For instance, crises such as the recent Covid-19 global pandemic (Wu et al., 2021:2). Second, crises are highly salient events. Salience refers to the perceived significance of the impact of the crisis and the urgency of the response (Bundy et al.). Third, crises are also distinct from other normal occurrences in terms of their significant potential for causing disruption to individuals, communities, organisations, and other stakeholders. Citizens living in a community and stakeholders where knife crimes are rampant are entities that can both influence and be influenced by crises caused by knife crime. The crises can potentially engender detrimental impact and heavy emotional toll on these groups of people and the communities where the crises are taking place (Bundy et al., 2017; Pillai & Meindl, 1991).

Therefore, based on the definition and characteristics of crisis, persistent knife crime in British communities is assumed to be a crisis. Knife crime has the characteristics of harmfulness, disruption, and change. It is a form of societal crisis that weakens or causes degeneration of the systems and people. It brings about a significant disruption to the individual, family, organization, and community's normal functioning. It calls for urgent corrective action on the part of various stakeholders in society, be it the government, the faith leaders, the educational institutions, the lawmakers, and the families represented in the communities. The BBC Channel 4 News aired a program, "Is the UK in Knife Crime Crisis?" in February 2018, to brainstorm on the nation's challenging situation of knife crime. Many discussants agreed that knife crime in the UK has entered into a period of an 'emergency'

situation or crisis (BBC Channel 4 News, 2018). Williams (2023) and Hall et al. (2013) agree on this proposition and describe the events around knives in British society as a crisis. The fall in the number of knife crime rates witnessed between 2019 and 2021 indicates that government laws and restrictions on social contact were introduced during the global coronavirus pandemic to curb the spread of the deadly SARS-CoV-2 and all its variants that cause COVID-19.

However, Hall et al. posited a cautionary note in the statistics on knife crime. The authors stress that regarding criminal statistics, the accounts presented are not sure indicators of the volume of crime committed. Some main reasons include: 1. Crime statistics refer only to reported crime; they cannot quantify the 'dark figure'; 2. Different areas collate their statistics differently; 3. Police sensitization to, and mobilization to deal with, selected, 'targeted' crimes increase the number of police turn up and public reports, and 4. Public anxiety about 'highlighted' offenses also leads to 'over-reporting' (Hall et al., 2013: pp. 13-14).

Nevertheless, there is a significant weight of evidence to indicate a record increase in the rate of knife crime in British society with the exclusion of Scotland (Astrup, 2019; Harding, 2020; Gliga, 2009; Haylock et al., 2020) up till the year 2019; just before the global coronavirus pandemic kicked in. McVie et al. (2018) expound on the knife crime crisis that hit Glasgow, one of the British cities in Scotland known for severe cases of knife crime in the mid-2000s that led to many violent deaths. The number of violent deaths became so high that by 2005, the World Health Organisation (WHO) reported that Scots were three times more likely to be murdered than people living in England and Wales.

Additionally, Glasgow has informally been named the 'murder capital of Europe.' The knife crime challenge was considered a 'wicked problem' (Clegg, et al., 2020) and an emergency or crisis. The Scottish government funded the Strathclyde Police Force to set up a unit, the Violence Reduction Unit (VRU), to address this problem. The VRU took a radical approach by addressing the crisis as a public health rather than a criminal justice problem in order to arrest the crisis. As a result, the negative story has changed for Glasgow presently (McVie et al., 2018), and knife crime growth rates have curtailed. On the other hand, recent research suggests this is not the case in England (McVie et al., 2018; Haylock et al., 2020). The following section discusses further knife crime situation including demography and religion in the three hotspots chosen for this research: London, Birmingham, and Manchester.

3.3.1 London

3.3.1.1 London Demography

The Greater London region, generally called London City, was created by the London Government Act of 1963, and formally established in 1965. London comprises 32 boroughs, most of which are inhabited by a number of cities, towns, and villages. The economist.com (2012) observes the changing face of London that situations are rapidly changing against former trends of London importing the young generation and exporting the old. The city is now growing younger and older, and above all, bigger in population size. This might be due to those coming for studies and work who would typically go back to their countries are now staying, and at the same time, there is a significant increase in the birth rate in the city. The 2021 census indicates a population of 8.8 million people. The city has grown from a primarily mono-ethnic white British community to a multi-ethnic community with non-white British, surpassing the white British ethnic group by a sizeable proportion (Figure 3. 4).

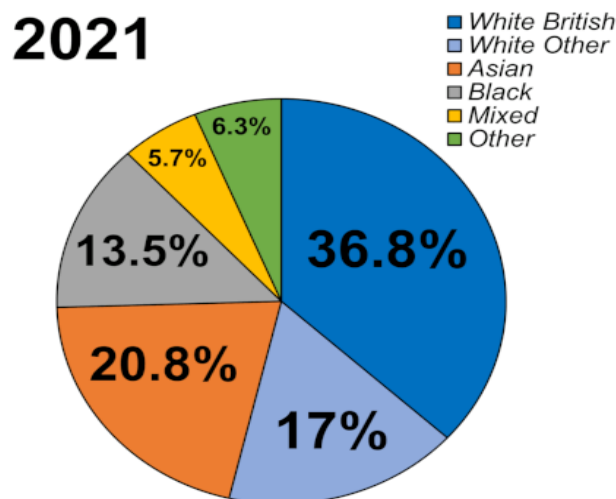


Figure: 3.4 London Ethnic Demography 2021

Source: ONS.GOV.UK (2022A)

The Asians, Black Afro Caribbeans, Mixed and others ethnic groups have also grown in proportions thereby making London city the most ethnically diverse city in the world. The ONS data confirms that there has been an increase in the population of Greater London residents from 8.2 million (2011) to 8.8 million (2021), representing a notable change (Damman, 2022). This result is the third highest rate of increase in any region and is higher than for England. However, this is significantly lower than the increase from 2001 to 2011,

when London's population saw the most significant growth of any region between the censuses. Nonetheless, Damman observes that Londoners might be appreciably undercounted in Census 2021 results and should be treated with extreme caution. There is the longstanding challenge in overpopulation counting in the capital, and many London residents relocated out of London during the national lockdown when the census took place.

3.3.1.2 London Crime

The interview Susan Hall (Chair of the London Policing and Crimes Committee) held with the London Mayor and Police Commissioner for London, Sadiq Khan, on 20 July 2023 reveals that crime rates are still increasing and of grave concern to the nation and her citizens (GLA, 2024). Susan Hall asserts that crime rates are rising, surpassing one million recorded crimes in a year. Also, Figure 3.5 illustrates the record growth of knife crime rates in London, reaching a peak in 2019. The impact of Covid-19 brought the knife crime growth rate down between 2019 and 2021. Subsequently, it could be seen from Figure 3.5 that the Knife crime rate has been significantly increasing. Trustforlondon.org.uk (2024) adds that recorded crime is more prevalent in communities with higher levels of income deprivation. For instance, 40% more crimes were recorded in most income-deprived areas compared to the least income-deprived of 10% in 2023. In addition, issues relating to drugs and weapon offenses are found to be 2.2 times more prevalent in the most income-deprivation areas than in the least income-deprivation ones.

However, it is observed that there is a population growth increase in the most deprived areas than in the least deprived areas of London. Moreover, the growth falls more on the younger generation than the older ones. In addition, according to John (2009), Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR) 2017 published report indicates a link between school exclusion and social exclusion. IPPR report states that 'Excluded children are the most vulnerable: twice as likely to be in the care of the state, four times more likely to have grown up in poverty, seven times more likely to have a special educational need and ten times more likely to suffer recognised mental health problems'. Yet our education system is profoundly ill-equipped to break a cycle of disadvantage for these young people. Yet official figures suggest that every day, 35 of the most disadvantaged children – equivalent to a full classroom of pupils – are permanently excluded from school, with disastrous personal and societal consequences. The social exclusion paves a way for these children to be involved in gangs and crime activities.

The optimism about dealing with the growth in crime rates in the city is that Londoncouncils.gov.uk (2022) reports that the London government has now developed a new approach to tackling serious crime by considering a multi-agency public health approach. This approach seeks to understand the drivers and impacts of serious violence and focus on preventative and early interventionist measures. The impact of this new measure is yet to be assessed.

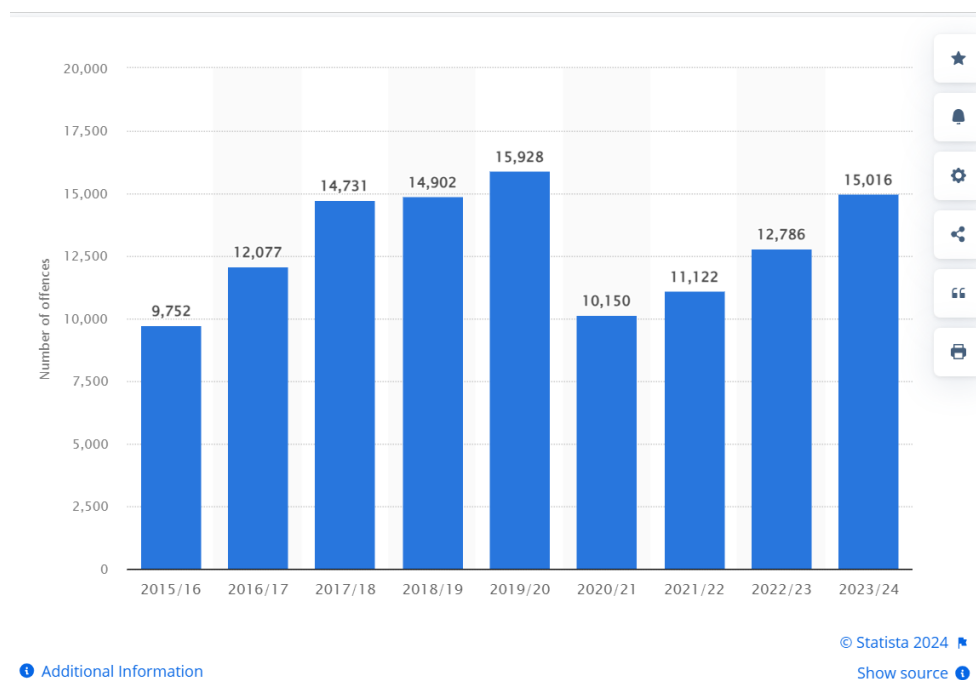


Figure 3.5 Number of police recorded knife or sharp instrument offences in London from 2015/16 to 2023/24 Source: Statista.com (2024)

However, recent research into knife crime reveals some critical factors as the underlying reasons or triggers of knife crime in British society. These factors are discussed in Section 3.4.

3.1.1.3 London Religion

ONS.GOV.UK (2024) states

London remains the most religiously diverse region of England in 2021, with over a quarter (25.3%) of all usual residents reporting a religion other than "Christian"; the Northeast and Southwest are the least religiously diverse regions, with 4.2% and 3.2%, respectively, selecting a religion other than "Christian" (ONS.GOV.UK, 2024:1).

Goodhew and Cooper (2019) examine the religious life of London from 1980 to 2019 and conclude that it has been a paradox or complex phenomenon. There are indications of growing secularism, and simultaneously, there are indices of de-secularism being spearheaded by BMCs and their leaders. The authors' findings suggest that a considerable number of London denominational churches are experiencing membership decline, and there is secularisation of the city based on the beliefs that the residents are claiming. Simultaneously, there is another counter movement led by BMCs and their leaders that is bringing religious life back and desecularisation to London. For instance, in terms of ethnicity, London's churchgoers are more multi-ethnic diverse than the population of London. The percentage of Black people who are churchgoers is markedly higher than the percentage of Black people within the overall population. In Inner London, almost half of all churchgoers are from the Black population.

The role of BMC leaders in London is manifested as they spearhead church activities, including social action that impact and grow the religious life of London's people. One area of impact is the care for church members and communities in the London Borough of Southwark by BMCs (at times addressed as nBMCs' – new Black Majority Churches). Goodhew and Cooper state:

It should also be recognized that many nBMCs serve dispersed communities across London that few other agencies can reach. They provide a 'safe haven' for migrant communities, meeting their spiritual needs alongside assisting with issues such as family, health, law, and order. nBMCs are therefore a spiritual, social, and economic asset to the city (Goodhew and Cooper, 2019)

Nevertheless, the increasing youth population, coupled with factors that trigger knife crimes mentioned earlier, may be playing significant roles in the increasing rate of knife crime in the city of London. This research would unravel further insights into those factors that are critical to knife crime as church leaders share their experiences on knife crimes in the city of London.

3.3.2 Birmingham

3.3.2.1 Birmingham Demography

Birmingham is the next largest city in the UK besides London in terms of population based on the 2021 census, with a population of 1,144,900 (ONS.GOV.UK, 2024). This indicates a noticeable increase of about 70,000 people compared with the 2011 Census. This is moderately higher than the growth rate seen in the rest of England. Research pitches this growth rate to an increasing population of young adults in the city of Birmingham. However, regarding the ethnicity of Birmingham, there is an increase in the multi-ethnicity divide in the 2021 population census result compared with that of 2011. The 2021 population estimate indicates that the Black, Asian, Minority Ethnic (BAME) group overall overtook their White counterpart.

3.3.2.2 Birmingham Crime

Birmingham is considered the most dangerous major city in the West Midlands and is among the top 20 most dangerous overall out of the West Midlands's 44 towns, villages, and cities (crimeraite.co.uk, 2024). Lodgeservice.com (2024), another notable research organization on crime, supports these findings, stating that in 2022, Birmingham's overall crime rate stood at 145 per 1,000 people. This figure is notably higher than the West Midlands' average crime rate of 124 per 1,000 residents, making Birmingham stand out as one of the most dangerous major cities in the region. Birmingham ranks as the second most dangerous major city compared to the entire United Kingdom, including England, Wales, and Northern Ireland. Regarding knife crime, the focus of this study, West Midlands area (which has Birmingham as one of her major cities) has the highest rate of knife crime offences in England and Wales in recent times.

Further, offenses involving a blade per 100,000 of the population in the force area in 2023 totalled 180, up from 167 in 2022. This is significantly higher than 165 recorded offenses in the London Metropolitan Police Force area (Gall, 2024). One of such harrowing offenses was cited by Jones (2022). A 24-year-old man of 24 years old, Ryan Passey, was fatally stabbed during a night out in 2017 at Stourbridge. The father of the knife crime victim, Adrian Passey, sponsored the installation of a metal knife bin on Duke Street where young people could find a safe place to drop their knives. The Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC), Simon Foster, confirms that knife crime rates have doubled within the past decade and that tackling the

crime is at the top of his agenda. He believes in collective joint efforts with stakeholders in the communities of Birmingham and others in the West Midlands region and plans to work more with schools to stop or reduce school exclusions, so vulnerable children are not on the streets, improve statutory safeguarding, and invest in Violence Reduction Units (Gall, 2024).

3.3.2.3 Birmingham Religion

The Christian religion was the most common response in the 2021 census, although it has decreased in proportions when compared with 2011 census (Datopian.com, 2024). Islam and those professing “No religion” population have increased in population and proportions. This indicates an increasingly secular society with an increasing Muslim population. This might be traceable to an increasing minority population (Booth et al., 2022).

The events following the Second World War have seen Birmingham's population grow with immigration, particularly with people from the Caribbean, South Asia, and Gujaratis of East African descent. Also, census population analysis indicates that areas with a higher proportion of people from ethnic minorities are also more religious. This might not be unconnected with the activities and impact of the Pentecostal BMCs in Birmingham, which has witnessed tremendous growth in recent years (Olofinjana, 2021). Moreover, as the secularist population grows in Birmingham, it is unlikely that it will overtake that of the religious population since secularism is found to be predominant amongst the decreasing white population.

3.3.3 Manchester

3.3.3.1 Manchester Demography

Manchester city has grown from 503,100 people in 2011 to 551,900 people (Ons.gov.uk, 2024) while Greater Manchester records a lesser proportional increase of population growth increase from 2,682,528 to 2,867,769 (GMCA, 2024). However, this percentage increase is still more than the national growth increase. Greater Manchester has been experiencing a record growth in younger population that is higher than England rate and in terms of ethnicity, residents from BAME group have been experiencing record growth thereby making Greater Manchester an increasingly ethnically diverse region than England.

3.3.3.2 Manchester Crime

Manchester Crime rates have been on the increase since 2015. According to statistica.com, the crime rates, except for the Covid-19 pandemic period (2019/2020), have been growing steadily. These have grown from about 52,000 recorded crimes in 2015 to 141,000 in 2023. Butcher et al. (2019) record the statement made by Byron Highton, the brother of Jon-Jo, an 18-year-old victim of a knife crime, stabbed to death in Preston in 2014.

The whole country is suffering from knife crime, but small cities in the north like Preston get no mention (Butcher et al., 2019: 1)

Butcher et al. affirm further that a similar trend of the growing rate of knife crime by stating,

Overall, London remains the most dangerous part of England and Wales - but data, obtained from 34 of the 43 police forces shows the rate of serious knife crime offences rising sharply in some areas outside London, and outstripping some of the city's boroughs in places like the city of Manchester, Slough, Liverpool and Blackpool (Butcher et al., 2019: 1).

Therefore, the Greater Manchester crime record trend is a grave concern to the local government council of Manchester and other stakeholders dealing with the cases of knife crime in Manchester. The mayor of Manchester, Andy Burnham, while acknowledging the efforts of Manchester Police and the Violent Crime Reduction Unit, which have brought down knife crime rates by 16% between June 2022 and July 2023, still indicates there is still more work to be done because the city is still recognised as having one of the highest knife crime rates in England (Timan, 2023).

3.3.3.3 Manchester Religion

Ons.gov.uk (2024) reveals the decreasing trend of those who identify themselves as Christians while simultaneously there is an increasing trend of those who identify as Muslims. There is a strong indication of secularism as the residents ticking 'no religion' grew in sizeable proportion in the 2021 census compared with that of 2011. Nonetheless, the rise is still lower than that of England's percentage increase and North-West Regional increase according to research data. Ons.gov.uk (2024) suggests some factors that can cause changes

to the religious profile of an area, city, or region. These might include factors such as a changing age structure, residents relocating for work or education, and changes in how individuals self-identify between censuses. The following section examines the underlying causes of knife crime in British communities and particularly London, Birmingham, and Manchester.

3.4 Underlying Causes of Knife Crime in London, Birmingham, and Manchester

The challenge posed by knife crimes has precipitated one of the most significant national debates on UK adolescent crime in recent years, with various forms of narratives exploring the offender's motivation for committing this kind of heinous crime (Harding, 2020; Brennan, 2018; Traynor, 2016; Palasinski & Riggs, 2012; Beckford, 2004). Harding's recent research into county lines drug networks operated by London-based street gangs comprising interviews conducted between 2017 and 2019 on London males aged 16–25 years who were gang-affiliated and actively running county lines is quite revealing. The study acknowledges the underlying causes of knife crime to range from fear, protection, masculinity, victimization, and peer pressures to violent environments, actor relationships, social capital, respect, legitimization, and normalization.

Other underlying factors of knife crime, particularly in the research cities of London, Birmingham, and Manchester, include lack of father figure and poor parenting, drugs and alcohol addiction, community segregation and racism, lack of youth recreation facilities, and bullying (Aldred et al., 2008; John, 2013). Although limited, these are also accounts of the experiences of BMC leaders and faith groups on knife crime incidents in their communities. Professor John Gus's research on serious youth violence reports to the Church of England Synod about the underlying factors of knife crime in British society. He expounds specifically on the challenge of gangs, drugs, and county lines. County lines imply criminal exploitation by gangs who employ children and adolescents to travel through counties in organized networks to sell drugs with the use of dedicated mobile phones. The gangs would trick, groom, and bully these children and teenagers into trafficking their drugs. As these children and teenagers carry out these drug-selling activities, they are met with other gangs in other boroughs and counties who are not happy about them coming to their territories or postcode areas to sell drugs, and this normally exacerbates into quarrels, violence, and knife crimes being committed (John, 2013).

There are media accounts of knife crime (see Section 3.2), which seem to be overtly reported stories positing the kind of terror the knife crimes have unleashed upon communities and the attendant traumas experienced by victims' families and acquaintances (Heald, 2010; Thomas, 2017). Additionally, government policy interventions remain over-reliant on these underlying factors that they believe motivate youths in British society into committing knife crime (HM Govt., 2018). However, Harding argues that there is a need to reframe these contemporary narratives to access greater insight and advance debate because the present propositions have not yet significantly impacted policy formulations. Research on knife-enabled crime remains heavily focused on narratives of self-protection and self-defence. It is not cognisant of recent theoretical developments such as signal crime theory (Innes, 2004), and street capital theory (Harding, 2014; Sandberg & Pederson, 2011). Through such omissions, valuable insight into the underlying causes of knife crime is obscured or lost. However, those suggested new theoretical developments are not the focus of this study.

This research focusses on finding out what BMC leaders are saying about the experiences of knife crimes in their communities, what they consider as the underlying causes of knife crimes, what their roles and behaviours are in the incidents and crises of knife crimes in their communities.

Harding's research that seeks to find out the views of black youths involved in knife crime indicates male figures as the dominant gender in these crimes. Thus, gender debates centre on masculinity with attendant violence arising from masculinity challenges. Here, weapon-carrying facilitates the construction of a hypermasculinity, broadly seen as advantageous in navigating street life. Palasinski and Riggs (2012) affirm by stating that

In terms of young men's constructions of knife-carrying, then, the malleable nature of masculinities, as identified by Wetherell and Edley, means that there is a broad range of (often contradictory) rhetorical resources that young men can draw upon by which to legitimate knife-carrying behaviours (Palasinski and Riggs, 2012: 465).

The authors expound on the dilemmatic nature of knife-carrying for young men due to a complex account of factors dealing with vulnerability to street knife crime, fear of what is going to happen to them, necessitating self-protection, and a purported failure to protect by the police and other agencies.

Also, the belief by these young men in the operation of knives as signifiers of power and as agentic objects might not provide them with the safety and protection they crave. Palasinski and Riggs recommend that institutional authorities should take the concerns of the young men to protect themselves by carrying knives as legitimate and acknowledge the role that the broader society plays in allowing images of hegemonic masculinities that lie behind knife-carrying behaviours to be perpetuated. The authorities should consider working towards deconstructing these desires of knife-carrying behaviours. In addition, Basham (2012) argues against subtle militarisation of young male adults by the government as a way to curb the dominant trend of masculinity that causes violence and knife crime. She considers putting young adult males who tend to commit violence, labelled as "hoodies" (because these male youths are known to be wearing jackets with hoods), to military service through one means or the other is not only militarisation but also organized violence. The violence carried out on our streets by gangs or their members, Basham refers to as constituting disorganized violence. She was able to draw a link between the violence of war committed by these young male adults (organized violence) and the violence on our streets committed by the gangs (disorganized violence).

In addition, Basham stresses that recent research with British soldiers suggests that at least some see military service as an opportunity for the unqualified, a last resort for those unemployed, and as an escape from highly deprived towns (Basham, 2006). The vast majority of the young recruits to the very lowest ranks of the British Army are men with a significant percentage under the age of eighteen (DASA, 2009). Gee (2007) states:

The armed forces draw non-officer recruits mainly from among young people with low educational attainment and living in poor communities. A large proportion join for negative reasons, including the lack of civilian career options; a survey in the Cardiff area in 2004 found that 40% of army recruits were joining as a last resort (Gee, 2007: 7)

However, the Ministry of Defence (MoD) argues that do not target deprived areas of the UK that they do a country-wide recruiting that covers all sections of society regardless of their background. MoD claimed with no evidential support that roughly 30% of the same recruits were exceptionally motivated and qualified young people who had wanted to join the Army for a long time (DASA, 2009). Further, it is observed that the vulnerable children are

primarily from parents who lack father figures, live in deprived areas of the city or town, or suffer from economic deprivation. The gangs use this vulnerability of economic lack and the absence of father figures and role models to offer them alternatives in the form of food, money, jewellery, and other gifts to exploit them and use them for their criminal county lines' business. These tendencies affirm the sociological underclass theory, strain theory, and theories around illegitimate opportunity structures that reveal the roles of status frustration, domestic problems, risk-taking, school problems, and weak support structures in establishing delinquent norms among young people (Harding, 2020).

The foregoing discussion on vulnerable children and male youths from marginalised background provides some insights into the underlying causes of knife crime and what the BMC leaders would be sharing about their experience of knife crime in these marginalised areas of British communities. The following chapter examines the methodology for this research.

3.5 Chapter Three Summary

In conclusion, this chapter has examined the history of knife crime in recent decades in British communities. It considers how knife crime has grown in proportions, threatening the peace and stability of many communities in the United Kingdom, including the research cities of London, Birmingham, and Manchester. A record number of stabbings and killings has been observed that have brought sorrow and concern for families, governments, faith leaders, and other stakeholders in British communities. The Police Force and the Government have introduced different measures to curb the epidemic but have been found not to have a significantly practical impact.

Further, the underlying causes of knife crime have been discussed. The causes highlighted include fear, protection, masculinity, victimization, peer pressures in violent environments, lack of father figure and poor parenting, drug and alcohol addiction, community segregation and racism, bullying, and lack of youth recreation facilities. This study seeks to discover what BMC leaders share about their response to the knife crime crisis in the three hotspot cities chosen for the research.

Chapter Four: Methods and Methodology

4.1 Chapter Four Overview

Chapter three examined the challenge of knife crime in British society. This chapter provides a reflexive account of the theoretical position adopted and explains the methodological approaches that underpin data collection. This research seeks to find out how BMC leaders act and behave during periods of crisis in their communities using knife crime as a case study. A qualitative method of enquiry was adopted to hear their stories and narratives on knife crime.

The research is interdisciplinary in nature, encompassing some aspects of social science, humanities, and theological inquiries, hence a pragmatic approach of qualitative analysis has been considered. A realist approach in narrative analysis is chosen for the stories and narratives of church leaders with a pragmatic approach of data analysis comprising thematic analysis and pastoral cycle methodology of practical theology. The overall research process follows the methodological stages outlined in Figure 4.1.

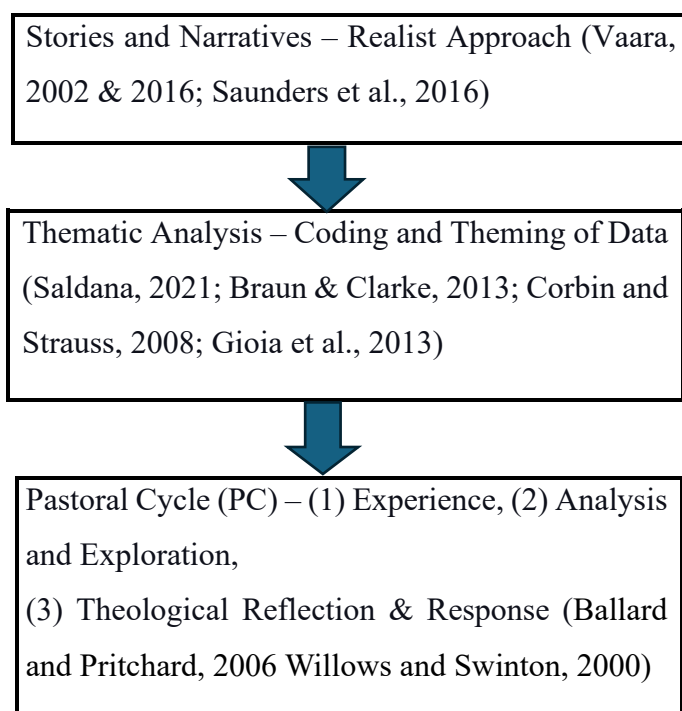


Figure 4.1 Church leaders' accounts: steps to methodological approach

The methodological stages of data analysis involve three steps. These are:

1. Stories and narratives are first analysed using the realist approach of narrative analysis.

2. Thematic analysis that involves data coding and theming.
3. Pastoral Cycle (PC) analysis encompassing three areas of i. Church leaders' experience, ii. Analysis and exploration, and iii. Theological reflection and response.

Further details on these key stages of methodology (Sections 4.2 and 4.3) and data analysis (Section 4.4 and 4.5) are discussed in subsequent sections of this chapter.

4.2 Research Design

4.2.1 Research Aim

This research project investigates the roles and behaviours of church leaders during periods of crisis by focusing on how they respond to knife crime incidents and crises in their communities as a case study. It gathers stories and experiences of knife crime by church leaders in their respective communities in England, and particularly in London, Birmingham, and Manchester. Through this means, relevant information and data on the behaviours and reactions of the leaders to knife crime are captured and analysed. The participants in this research are church leaders with worldviews significantly shaped by their theological beliefs. It is thereby consequential that a methodology be adopted for this study that puts into consideration these beliefs and worldview while at the same time negotiating their interaction with the outside world. Through this means, the research is able to understand and appreciate their stories and narratives and consider a practicable basis for data analysis and interpretation.

Pastoral Cycle (PC), a methodological tool in Practical Theology (PT) seemed to be an appropriate methodological approach for the analysis of data. The PC approach was mentioned Chapter One, and its application is discussed further in Section 4.5. However, as shown in Figure 4.1, the data needed for PC analysis has undergone realist narrative approach and thematic analysis. These stages are examined in subsequent sections of this methodology chapter.

4.2.2 Research Questions

The research questions informed the research design and methodology. The questions guide the choice of research strategy, data collection techniques, and the duration of the project (Saunders et al., 2016). The questions this research is seeking to answer are threefold as listed in Section 1.5. The research was designed as a case study of stories and narratives of church leaders about their roles during periods of knife crimes in three selected crime hotspots:

London, Birmingham, and Manchester. The three cities were chosen because they are among the top twenty-five cities in England with the highest knife crime rates, and for their geographical spread across the nation (Butcher et al., 2019). Further, these cities have the highest concentration of BMC churches in the UK (Goodhew and Cooper, 2019; The Open University, 2024).

According to Moon et al. (2019), a deeper understanding of the research design process enhances the quality of social science inquiry, increasing the potential to generate knowledge that can inform decision-making in specific fields of endeavour. Saunders et al. (2016) propose six-stage project methodology, whereas most qualitative research scholars simplify the methodology into three stages: research philosophies, research methods, and data collection and analysis (Creswell, 2013; Bryman and Bell, 2015; Reynolds, 2015; Jensen and Laurie, 2016). The subsequent sections evaluate these three key areas of my research design process.

4.2.3 Research Philosophies

The first of the three key areas of research methodology is research philosophies. Church leaders are human beings who can reflect on themselves, others, and events. They possess an ability of self-consciousness (Benton and Craib, 2011; Burrell and Morgan, 1979). This informs the qualitative research design. This research seeks answers to the question about the roles that church leaders play in crisis and their reactions to the crisis. Hence, the research is underpinned by a realist ontology and a pragmatist epistemology (Saunders et al., 2016; Creswell, 2013). A realist ontological choice is preferred to interpretivism because the interview data is employed objectively in the subsequent analysis of the data (Spencer et al., 2003; Bryman and Bell, 2015; Jensen and Laurie, 2016). Interpretivism involves placing emphasis and value on the human interpretative aspects of knowing about the social world and the significance of the researcher's views (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003).

A pragmatist epistemology allows either or both observable phenomena and subjective meanings to provide acceptable knowledge, which is dependent upon the research question for the study (Saunders et al., 2016). The observable phenomena in this research are inferred from data collected based on the stories and narratives that the church leaders shared during their interviews. In related crime research, Anderson (2015) employed a pragmatic approach to study what should be the response of Black Majority Church (BMC) leaders to Black

Young Men (BYM) associated with crime. In addition, the strategy of qualitative data analysis or methodological logic chosen for this study is Thematic Analysis and followed by Pastoral Cycle (PC) as indicated in Figure 4.1. This framework that guides analysis of data is preferred than analytical induction because this study deals with systematically gathering data, analysing, and drawing inferences rather than starting with a set of propositions or hypothesis as in analytical induction (Bryman and Bell, 2015).

Corbin and Strauss (2008) observed that the primary purpose of doing qualitative research is discovery, not hypothesis testing, not trying to control variables, but discovering them. By employing the realist approach to narrative analysis, the stories, and narratives that the church leaders shared were taken as the data employed for the thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is further outlined in detail in Section 4.4.7.1. This research is not seeking a universal explanation of some phenomena as in analytical induction; rather, it seeks to gain further insights and understanding of the behaviours and roles of church leaders from a set of data collected during field investigation (Bryman and Bell, 2015; Glaser and Strauss, 1967). The next section discusses the second key area of project research methodology, which is research methods.

4.3 Research Methods

This study focuses primarily on understanding and analysing the words and attitudes of the participants, rather than measuring the number of participants, which is common in quantitative research (Bryman and Bell, 2015). Therefore, a qualitative research approach is preferred over a quantitative one. Additionally, qualitative research offers unique opportunities to gain insights into people's social lives, experiences, and the foundations of their worldviews (Jensen and Laurie, 2016). Similarly, a wide range of research on stories and narratives, including Boje's seminal work (1995), Riack et al. (2016), Varman and Al-Moudi (2016), and Dailey and Browning (2016), all employed qualitative methods. This supports the choice of a qualitative approach. However, Jensen and Laurie note that achieving the standardization necessary for valid generalizations in quantitative research is challenging in qualitative research. To address this limitation, a triangulation of data collection techniques was used by conducting similar inquiries and gathering data in three locations with high rates of knife crime and a broad geographical spread across the nation.

Andrews et al. (2013) explicate that contemporary narratives employed in social research could be situated in two parallel academic developments. The first strand is the post-war rise of

humanist approaches within Western sociology and psychology that could be considered holistic, person-centred approaches, often focussing on individual case studies and life histories, as opposed to positivist empiricism. The second strand was developed by the Russian structuralist and, later, French poststructuralist, postmodern, deconstructionist, and psychoanalytic approaches to the narrative within the humanities. Nevertheless, Andrews et al. believe that there are still significant areas of convergence between these humanist and poststructuralist traditions. In contemporary narrative research, most research is affected by both conceptual histories. For instance, to map individual biographical accounts of crimes committed in a community, Hollway and Jefferson (2000) employ what they have called 'free association narrative interviewing.' The free narrative association interview is a methodology developed to capture fully past experiences of the interviewee without allowing the idea of the interviewer to distort it. This was based on four principles: 1. Use of open-ended not closed questions, the more open the better, 2. Elicit stories - the particular story told, the manner and detail of its telling, the points emphasised, the morals drawn, all represent choices made by the story-teller - such choices are quite revealing, 3. Avoid 'why' questions, and 4. Follow up using respondents' ordering and phrasing.

4.3.1 Narrative Approaches

Vaara (2002) and Vaara et al. (2016) agree on three major approaches to narrative analysis in organisational studies. These are the realist (Sonenshein and Dholakia, 2012), the interpretative (Vaara, 2002; Skoldberg, 1994; Reisner, 2011), and the post structural (Vaara et al., 2016; Sonenshein, 2010 and Boje, 1995) approaches. It is important to note that the church leadership and their organisations are not in crisis themselves. However, this study investigates the knife crime crises occurring in their environments and how they react to these crises. The stories and narratives are not in themselves being studied critically as in structural or visual narrative studies. This study does not consider the sensemaking or sense-giving of church leaders' narratives. Rather it takes the stories and narratives as data Vaara et al. (2016) for determining the behaviours of church leaders in a crisis, and by employing thematic analysis, it looks for patterns of behaviour or reaction of the leaders during knife crime crisis. Hence, the realist approach seems to be the most appropriate approach to narrative analysis rather than an interpretative or post structural approach.

According to Vaara et al. (2016), organization narratives can be analysed using three approaches: the realist, the interpretative, and the post structural approaches. The realist approach involves studying things that exist independently of the narratives (Sonenshein and Dholakia, 2012) and hence adopting realist ontological and positivist epistemological assumptions. Narratives in the realist perspective represent other phenomena instead of being the foci of study and could occur in two categories: narratives as a representation of cases and as data (Vaara, et al., 2016). The researcher's written account is his or her representation of what has been heard or observed. This is opposed to the interpretative approach, which places greater stress on subjective impressions than on objectivity. For this study, the stories and narratives shared by BMC leaders on knife crimes serve as the data to investigate how the leaders reacted to the knife crime crisis in their respective communities. Therefore, the realist approach is considered more appropriate and chosen for the analysis of data in this study. The realist approach provides the data useful for the next stage of project methodology which is data analysis. Before proceeding to this stage, the researcher's background and positionality are discussed in the following section. In addition to discussion on positionality in Section 1.7, giving insights into the researcher's positionality would give further understanding into the worldview of the researcher and the reasons behind the perspectives he might be sharing in his discussions.

4.3.2 Understanding the Researcher's Background

In her seminal book, "A Plea for British Black Theologies: The Black Church Movement in Britain in its Transatlantic Cultural and Theological Interaction," Gerloff states one of the key premises on which her research was based as:

All our arguments and performances are conditioned, dependent on the interests we pursue, the emotions we hide, and the choices we make. All of us carry the burden of cultural history and gain 'evidence' only according to the questions we ask (Gerloff, 1992:4).

She asserts that all theologies are shaped by their contexts, and there is nothing wrong with this. However, it is important to acknowledge this context to clarify the perspective that our theology reflects. She believes that we can develop theologies suited to our unique situations only by maintaining a creative tension with the broadest possible perspectives. For British Christians, this means recognising Black modes of worship, including their music, art, protest, healing, and community engagement, as legitimate forms of theologising that are equally

valuable to the theology gained through academic knowledge. This theological approach aligns with reflexive, interpretative social science, therefore, the following section discusses the researcher's background in five key areas: culture, religion, education, theology, and church position.

1. **Culture:** I am a Black British individual who was born and raised in Nigeria, West Africa, where I lived for over 30 years before moving to the UK. My home country has experienced a history marked by slavery, colonisation, struggles for freedom, and eventual independence. It has also faced significant political challenges, including military regimes, coups, and counter coups, ultimately transitioning to a democratic government that exists today. Due to these experiences of instability, many citizens have migrated to other countries, particularly in Europe and America, seeking security, educational opportunities, and a better quality of life. These migrants have brought with them their culture, religious beliefs, and various life experiences. I am a Black British born and bred in Nigeria, West Africa.
2. **Religion:** I was born into a family that belonged to the African Orthodox Church. My father gave me the Christian name Phillip during my church dedication on the eighth day, and I have been involved in Christian activities ever since. I completed my primary education at a Catholic school, where I participated in church activities, before moving on to a state secondary school, where I was introduced to the Anglican Communion style of worship. However, it was during my time at university that my Christianity truly came alive. I had a personal encounter with the Lord, which led me to become a Pentecostal Christian and experience the baptism of the Holy Spirit. This Pentecostal experience is further discussed in Section 2.3. It has motivated me to be fully active in the work of God and the Church.
3. **Education:** I earned my first degree in Civil Engineering in March 1989 in Nigeria. I applied the knowledge I gained by working for a reputable, international construction firm, primarily composed of Nigerians, British, and Dutch citizens. During my time there, I developed valuable leadership, management, and interpersonal skills as I advanced from an Engineer to an Assistant Technical Manager. My thinking and worldview were significantly shaped by various management and technical training sessions organised by the company and my professional association, the Nigerian Society of Engineers. I was a registered practicing engineer in Nigeria with seven years of professional experience before relocating to the United Kingdom in 1997.

My leadership and management skills were further enhanced when I became the pastor of a Black Majority Church (BMC) in the UK in 1999. I later pursued additional education in Business and Management, earning a master's degree in management from the University of Hertfordshire by 2018. I am currently enrolled in a PhD Management program, which I began in 2019, providing me with further knowledge in management and leadership studies through academic research, practical research engagement, and participation in seminars and conferences.

4. **Theology:** I serve as a senior church leader in one of the fastest-growing Pentecostal BMCs in the UK, specifically at the Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG). My experience includes shepherding a BMC, preaching Biblical theology, teaching, and engaging in theological training. I have formal training in Pastoral Theology at both the diploma and master's degree levels, with these experiences primarily within BMC communities. Additionally, I have participated in networking events, conferences, and activities with leaders from non-BMC congregations. I have held various leadership positions within my church denomination, including local church Pastor, Area Pastor, Zonal Pastor, and currently, Assistant Provincial Pastor. Beyond my role as a Parish Pastor, I also oversee several RCCG churches in the UK. The next section will explore the implications of these positions in greater detail.
5. **Church Position:** There are currently 850 RCCG churches in the UK. The organisational structure for pastors follows a hierarchy from the top down to the local parish level. At the top is the Chair, followed by Regional Pastors and their Assistants, Provincial Pastors and their Assistants, Zonal Pastors and their Assistants, Area Pastors and their Assistants, and finally, Parish Pastors. As an Assistant Provincial Pastor, I collaborate with the Provincial Pastor to oversee more than 50 churches within the organisation. The impact of my leadership position on the research will be examined in later sections. For more insight into the RCCG as an organization, please refer to Section 2.3.

This background knowledge and experience have significantly influenced this research on church leadership. For example, my familiarity with conducting interviews and the established network of relationships I have with many research participants facilitated easier access to them. However, as discussed in Section 1.7, I am aware of the potential impact this background may have on the research outcomes. To address this, I have

been mindful of ethical boundaries to minimise the risk of invalid results and discrepancies. During the interviewing process, I maintained a non-judgmental attitude and approach. Additionally, I conducted research across three cities instead of just one to ensure broader coverage and enable triangulation (Anderson, 2015; Kumar, 2005). Section 4.4 will delve into the final key area of project research methodology, focusing on data collection and analysis.

4.4 Data Collection and Analysis

The case study approach to data collection is exploratory and explanatory (Scapens, 1990). It allows for a rich collection of data on stories and narratives of knife crimes by church leaders (Vaara et al. 2016; Vaara, 2002). This research is a single and holistic case study as opposed to a multiple or embedded case study because it focuses on only the study of knife crime. A single holistic case study makes it easier to generate answers to the questions posed in the research inquiry (Saunders et al., 2016). Nevertheless, there is the limitation that a single case study may not be able to pass the tests of validity and generalisability (Saunders et al., 2016). This limitation was compensated for by carrying out field research in churches located in several locations, with records of high rates of knife crimes (Butcher et al., 2019). These cities are London, Birmingham, and Manchester.

In each of the three cities, church leaders were identified and selected for interview using non-probability quota and snowball sampling techniques (Bryman and Bell, 2015). The selected leaders comprised twenty-two in London, and fourteen each in Birmingham and Manchester. This brought the total number of interviews that were carried out to fifty. However, only forty-nine church leaders which were from BAME group and BMCs were utilised for analysis to allow for a more focussed research process. Having only one participant from non BMCs would not be sufficient enough as a consideration for analysis of both categories of churches. The number of research participants aligns with a general rule of thumb of not more than fifty participants for a single case study that involves individual qualitative interviews (Ritchie et al., 2003). This is supported by Saunders and Townsend (2016), who propose a workplace and organization research norm of fifteen to sixty participants, depending on the purpose of the study and the desired richness of data. The nature of the research requires carrying out interviews as it deals with qualitative analysis of the account of Church leaders' stories and narratives by employing realist narrative analysis, thematic analysis and pastoral cycle analysis.

Qualitative semi-structured interview is a suitable option for inquiry because the research does not deal with observation of a person or activities taking place in a location but a narrative account of the participants (Gertsen and Soderberg, 2011). The choice of three cities in data gathering ensures a set of triangulations of data, which is crucial in gaining a holistic view of a complex case and digging beneath the surface. Multiple locations would generate multiple results that allow for comparison and contrast to generate measurements that meet the criteria of trustworthiness and authenticity (Guba and Lincoln, 1989) or reliability, replication, and validity (Bryman and Bell, 2015; Denscombe, 2012). The qualitative data collection and analysis process were guided by Bryman and Bell (2015), Saunders et al. (2016), Jensen and Laurie (2016), and Silverman (2010). The research process could be aggregated into seven key areas which are discussed as follows: i. Initial interview design, ii. Making contact and negotiating access, iii. Interview schedule and data records, iv. Research Ethics, v. Research reflexivity, vi. Interviewing, and vii. Data analysis. The following discusses these stages in greater details.

4.4.1 Initial Interview Design

The interview process for this study entails asking questions from the research participants who the BMC leaders are. Reissman (2008) supports Mishler's proposition that the research interview process should be a discursive accomplishment, whereby the standard protocol (where question order seems rigid) gives way to a conversation where respondents can develop narrative accounts in a collaborative manner with the interviewer (Mishler, 1986). In other words, the facilitating interviewer and vessel-like respondent are replaced by two active participants who jointly construct the narrative and meaning to generate detailed accounts of the story rather than brief answers or general statements.

Gertsen and Soderberg (2011) support Reissman's proposition and assert that:

Interviewers act as co-authors of the narratives told to them, to the extent that the interviews are carried out on their initiative: they ask the questions and may influence the process by commenting. Nevertheless, in contrast to standardized interviews, the interviewers only asked very few open questions to set the scene in the two narrative interviews we have selected for analysis (Gertsen and Soderberg, 2011:5)

In the interviewing process, the specific wording of a question is less important than the interviewer's focus and engagement, and the level of reciprocity in the conversation with respondents and employing certain kinds of open-ended questions might provide narrative opportunities than others (Reissman, 2008; Rubin and Rubin, 2005). However, Andrews et al. (2013) expound on some diverse ways of approaching narrative research that the researchers need to determine before embarking on fieldwork. The first is the research focused on the narrative account of specific past events that happened to the narrator, which is basically the participant telling the story, classically described in Labov's work on event-centred narratives (Labov and Waletzky, 1997). The second is the experience-centred narrative which explores the life histories of the participants, and that may be about general or imagined phenomena, things that happened to the narrator, or distant matters they were told (Andrews et al., 2013). The third form of narratives addresses the jointly constructed narratives that evolve in conversations between people or exchanges in different modes of communication.

According to Andrews et al., narratives in this focus are considered forms of social code that address stories as dialogically constructed and not as expressions of internal states. The goal here is to examine the social patterns and/or functioning of stories, whether they are short, disjointed sequences of conversation or much more extensive, that exemplify broad cultural narratives. This study seeks to gather information from church leaders to determine their responses and behaviours in crisis situations. Knife crimes are situational occurrences or events that took place in different communities all over the UK where these church leaders are located. Nevertheless, these leaders might have their own personal experience of knife crimes, such as the emotional challenge of seeing an acquaintance or church member involved either as a victim or perpetrator of knife crimes. Therefore, there was an overlap of both event-centred (Labovian work) and experience-centred (Squire's work cited in Andrews et al., 2013) approaches in the interview and analysis processes of this study.

Based on the research topic and interaction with available relevant literature, some field questions were listed but kept as a reference during the interview process (Appendix X). The interview conducted was open-ended, and the respondents were allowed to share their experiences of knife crime in their respective communities, their roles, behaviours, and reactions before, during, and after the incidents of the knife crime crisis. The next step after the

initial interview design is to make necessary contact and negotiate access to the participants to be interviewed.

4.4.2 Making contact and negotiating access

Primary qualitative research requires physical access to people as it involves interviewing research participants in one format or the other. However, gaining physical access to would-be participants might be quite challenging, especially in unknown terrain. According to Saunders et al. (2016), this could be due to the need for organisations to decide amongst frequent requests which to honour or whether such requests made by researchers interest the gatekeeper to the participants or the participants themselves. This challenge was minimised for me because my research relates to the church organisation where I have worked for over twenty years. Although it took time and considerable effort, I was able to contact senior leaders of churches who served as gatekeepers and were able to connect me to other church leaders who subsequently volunteered to be interviewed.

The limited challenges I faced in negotiating access for my research were primarily due to the global coronavirus pandemic during which my fieldwork was conducted. Movement and face-to-face interactions were severely restricted, forcing me to rely on phone calls and emails to contact potential participants. This made it difficult to reach individuals who were unfamiliar with me; many either did not respond to my inquiries or required multiple reminders before doing so. A second challenge, closely related to the first, was that I could not meet some church leaders in person. Even those who belonged to my church denomination, the Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG), often did not respond to my messages. The lack of in-person visits made it challenging to explain the importance of my research and secure their participation. Once I successfully gained access to the research participants, my next step was to plan the interview process.

4.4.3 Interview schedule and data records

Initial contacts were made with the respondents with information about the research, the assurance of confidentiality, and seeking their consent to be interviewed. The documents were emailed to the participants. However, I discovered for quicker response, in instances where I could obtain to their mobile lines, it was better to send the documents via WhatsApp social media application. The participants were given the flexibility of deciding when to be

interviewed. The interviews were held online via Zoom video conferencing platform which provided flexibility in terms of location and timing. Interview questions have to be formulated in a way that will help to answer the research questions and, at the same time, be presented in a language that is comprehensible and relevant to the interview participants (Bryman and Bell, 2015). In carrying out the field interview, ethical issues were addressed and continued to be considered throughout the interview research process.

The data collected during the interview sessions were recorded, stored in electronic devices, and subsequently anonymised. According to Laurie and Jensen (2016), it is a standard practice to record interviews to increase the accuracy of the qualitative data that is being analysed. It also reduces the risk of biased memory, and the selection of which elements are written down. Furthermore, it allows the researcher to focus more fully on engaging with the respondents during the interview process. The interviews conducted via Zoom video conferencing were recorded after obtaining permission from the interviewees. Apart from Zoom recording, additional recordings for backup were employed by a small portable audio recorder and iPhone with a recorder app. The interview data collected were passed through a process of transcription and editing to ensure that the results used for analysis were the data that the respondents actually shared during the interview sessions.

There are fifty interview transcripts which were edited but 49 of them relevant to the study were uploaded to NVivo qualitative analysis software for coding and analysis. The editing process ensures that the texts of the transcript represent what the respondents shared during the interview session, and the NVivo coding helps with the organization of data for thematic analysis. This ensured that the authenticity and trustworthiness of the data and analysis were preserved.

4.4.4 Research Ethics

Research ethics deals with how a researcher formulates and clarifies his/her research topic, designs the research, collects data, processes, and stores the data collected, analyses the data, and makes inferences in a moral and responsible manner (Bryman and Bell, 2015; Cooper and Schindler, 2011). Cooper and Schindler explain further that ethics deals with standards of behaviours or practices that guide moral choices about our behaviours and relationships with others. Therefore, ethical issues are of huge importance in this research as it deals with

interviewing human beings who would expect the practice of the researcher to be morally defensible. The research ethics for this study was guided by four principles underpinned by the Nuremberg Code of 1947 (Grey, 2017).

Furthermore, ethical guidelines were provided by the University of Essex Ethics Committee (EEC) for the conduct of research. The guidelines specified requirements to ensure the privacy, anonymity, confidentiality of research participants and the option to withdraw from the research. I followed this ethical process provided by the EEC throughout the data collection, analysis, and dissemination stages. The period of this research (2020/2021) fell during the global COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, in order to protect the researcher and the participants from the spread and impact of the virus, the interview format, which was previously planned to be a face-to-face, was changed to a virtual format. Therefore, all the interviews were conducted remotely using Zoom video conferencing platform.

4.4.5 Research Reflexivity

A reflexive process is required throughout the research in order to appraise and gain further insights at the various stages of the research process. Laurie and Jensen (2016) view self-reflection as a significant aspect of quality assurance because it encourages the open acknowledgment of perspectives that all researchers inevitably bring to their study. This reflexivity could be achieved by periodically evaluating and writing down your assumptions as a researcher and other ways in which personal responses to your respondents and situation might affect the collection and analysis of your data. Riach (2009) believes that reflexivity is a priority on the research agenda and thereby applied this concept in her research by producing, apart from, digitally recorded interviews, post-interview field notes, and a research diary. These documents were revisited and used to question her epistemological assumptions and indicate a plot of how her research evolved as research subjects and themes changed under self-reflexivity.

However, Riach stresses that providing means through which those connected with your research could be an integral part of production and knowledge formation is not just a reflexive consideration but a crucial aspect of being an ethical, socially responsible researcher. Therefore, in this research, I engaged in self-reflexivity, preparing notes and memos from the experience of the interview process each day, self-reflecting, and considering myself regarding

the production of knowledge. Further, I discussed with my colleagues and engaged with my supervisors, lecturers, and other scholars actively through discussions, presentations, seminars, and feedback throughout my research process.

4.4.6 Interviewing

Interviews help a researcher to gather valid and reliable data that are relevant to the interviewer's research questions and objectives (Saunders et al., 2016). According to Brinkmann and Kvale (2018:576), interviews have become 'one of the most common ways of producing knowledge.' Miller & Glassner (2016) assert that interviews afford the opportunity to collect and rigorously examine narrative accounts of social worlds. Kvale and Brinkmann (2015: 3) add:

'The purpose of a qualitative interview is to 'understand the world from the subjects' points of view, to unfold the meanings of their experiences, to uncover their lived world.'

Interviews could take various forms depending on which one the researcher believes it will work best to answer his/her research question (Bryman and Bell, 2015; Douglas, 1985). This study employed semi-structured interviews with open ended questions Respondents were asked to share stories and narratives of their experiences of knife crimes in their communities, and their reactions to this ongoing crisis in British society.

The interviews were carried out with fifty church leaders participating in the longitudinal study over a period of five months and totalling 39 hours and 49 minutes. That means an average of 48 minutes was spent interviewing each participant for this research. Nonetheless, 49 of the 50 interview data were used for coding and analysis to allow for a more focussed study of BMCs. I was conscious of my position as a senior pastor and allowed research participants to be open minded with their views assuring of confidentiality and the need to be non-bias before each interviewing session starts. The interviews covered three major cities known as hotspots of knife crime in England. Also, further questions were generated as I interviewed the respondents, which shed more light on the discussion in one specific area or the other. Thereby, rich contextual data of stories and experiences of knife crimes in their respective communities in these cities were gathered from these leaders.

4.5 Data Analysis

Data analysis is a slow and painstaking process, and it requires attention to subtlety: nuances of language, audience, the local context of production, organization of a text, and the circulating discourses that influence what can be narrated and how (Reissman, 2008). There are four known major narrative interpretative approaches. These are thematic, structural, dialogic/performance, and visual analysis (Reissman, 2008; Mishler, 1986; Boje, 2001). Reissman (2008:53) states the following regarding thematic analysis.

"All narrative inquiry is, of course, concerned with content- 'what' is said, written, or visually shown-but in thematic analysis, content is the exclusive focus."

Furthermore, Reissman expounds on the other areas of narrative approaches. In structural analysis, the focus shifts to the structure, such as the genre, forms of symbolic expression, and some kinds of poetic statements. Dialogical/performance analysis concerns itself with how talking among speakers is interactively produced and performed (Boje, 2001). This type of analysis contains some elements of thematic and structural analysis. Visual analysis deals with the interpretation of images from different visual genres, such as photographs, paintings, collages, and videos, using some elements of both thematic and structural analysis.

This research employs a pragmatic qualitative methodological approach. Therefore, some elements of thematic analysis are employed in addition to the Pastoral Cycle approach to data analysis. Reissman affirms the possibility of a pragmatic approach to data analysis and states:

Honouring individual agency and intention is difficult when cases are pooled to make general statements. I believe, however, that category-centred models of research (such as inductive thematic coding, grounded theory, ethnography, and other qualitative strategies) can be combined with a close analysis of individual cases. Each approach provides a different way of knowing a phenomenon, and each lead to unique insights (Reissman, 2008:12)

The aspect of thematic analysis employed lies in the content of speech. The researcher interprets what is said by the respondents by assuming meanings for an utterance that any competent user of language would bring. There is no particular attention (as in other forms of narrative approaches) to language, form, or interaction (Reissman, 2008). The following expounds further on the thematic analysis.

4.5.1 Thematic Analysis

Gioia et al. (2013) expound on the need for ‘qualitative rigor’ in inductive research of this nature, in a way that would still retain the creative potential for generating ideas and new concepts. It is an idea whereby qualitative inductive researchers apply an orderly conceptual and analytical discipline that may provide credible data interpretation. Also, it aids in convincing readers and academics that the conclusions drawn are clear and defensible. Therefore, the authors propose a ‘1st-order’ analysis - an analysis using informant-centric terms and codes and a ‘2nd-order’ analysis - an analysis employing researcher-centric concepts and themes. Saldana's (2021) method of theory development with a first cycle of exploration and theming of data follows similar pattern. Braun and Clarke (2013) affirm the need to be systematic in qualitative analysis and expound on inductive thematic analysis, its flexibility, and as a method of identifying themes and patterns of meaning across a dataset in relation to a research question.

However, there is need to read data presented in the transcript actively, analytically, and critically. The analysis is not shaped by the existing theory but by researcher’s standpoint, disciplinary knowledge, and epistemology. Gioia et al.’s method of inductive research was therefore adopted in this study.

4.5.1.1 First Order Analysis

The ‘1st-order’ analysis comprises thematic analysis of the interview data. This involves familiarisation with the data collected from the interview transcript, generation of codes, generation of the initial theme, reviewing of initial themes, defining, and naming themes, and generation of results (Braun and Clarke, 2013). Anderson (2015)’s related research on Black Youth Movement involvement in crime employed thematic analysis to create a picture consisting of key issues and themes associated with crime that the youths were involved in. Similarly, the data inferred from the accounts of church leaders in the three research cities of London, Birmingham and Manchester were passed through the process of voice recording, transcription, and editing before being placed into files. The results from the files were subjected to the realist narrative analysis. Here the data that are relevant for thematic analysis were chosen based upon the guidance of realist narrative principles such as taking the data as they were without any further interpretation as expounded upon in Section 4.3.1.

The chosen files were entered into NVivo qualitative software for coding and thematic data analysis. The files of 49 respondents who are church leaders from BMCs when imputed into the NVivo start to generate most recurring words and themes. The NVivo software helps to arrange the data from these files into certain themes that are considered most relevant to the research questions. For instance, a research question such as ‘what the underlying causes of knife crime are’ brought about recurring words such as bullying, drugs and gangs. These were then explored further by grouping them into sections where all the information about bullying, gangs and drugs given by all the respondents are placed together for focussed analysis involving coding. Further, the thematic analysis enables the data to be organised to produce key themes and focal points upon which the next key stage of qualitative analysis, which is Pastoral Cycle (PC) methodology was applied. This is the 2nd Order analysis. The PC analysis is discussed in greater detail in subsequent sections.

4.5.2 Pastoral Cycle (PC)

The ‘2nd-order’ analysis due to pragmatic approach employed is the PC. The data inferred from thematic analysis is employed for PC methodology analysis. The PC as discussed briefly in the introductory chapter involves four stages as discussed by Ballard and Pritchard (2006) and affirmed by Willows and Swinton (2000). In closely related research that Anderson (2015) conducted while investigating the case of Black young men associated with crime and what could be the effective response of the Black Majority Churches (BMCs) employed PC in his methodology analysis. Therefore, I have also adapted for this study, a PC research methodology encompassing the following three key stages: I. Church leaders’ experience, II. Analysis and exploration, and III. Theological reflection and response. The response expounds on the roles and behaviours of BMC leaders during knife crime in their located communities. Figure 4.2 provides an illustration of these three adapted areas of pastoral cycle analysis.

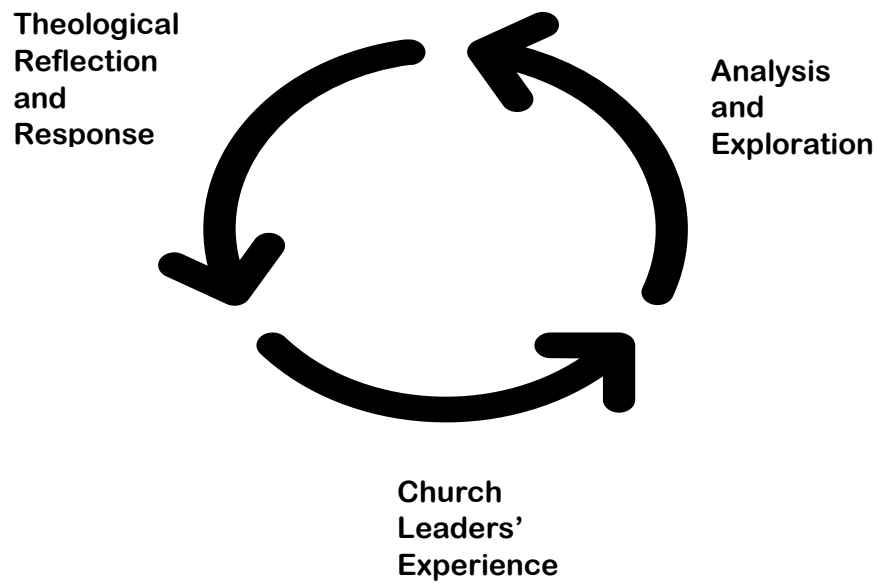


Figure 4.2 Key stages in Pastoral Cycle adopted for knife crime analysis

Source: Adapted from Ballard & Pritchard (2006)

I. Church Leaders' Experience

The starting point is the current experience or present situation that the church leaders are sharing on knife crime in their communities. Green (1990) discusses the experience stage and stated the tasks to accomplish in the experience stage. The first is to provide key themes around which analysis, exploration and theological reflection could be carried out. These key themes are generated from the results and inferences from the thematic analysis. This is the starting point of PC analysis, the present situation as articulated by narrative realist approach and thematic analysis. The stories and narratives by church leaders, their specific experiences and contexts, the interruptions, turns and twists in particular situations are presented here (Ballard and Pritchard, 2006). Section 4.6 provides the sampling data employed for narrative and thematic analysis, and the results from these analyses which provide data for PC analysis are presented as key themes illustrated in Tables 5.1 and 5.2 in Chapter Five. The present experience having been articulated leads to analysis and exploration.

II. Analysis and Exploration

The analysis and exploration stage of PC allows me to interact with other disciplines such as social sciences and arts which this study encompasses. In this contextual analysis and

exploration stage, Green (1990:60) proposes a framework of areas of investigation that a researcher could explore. These are 1. Historical, 2. Geographical, 3. Social, 4. Economic, 5. Cultural and 6. Religious. Some of these areas have been explored as I review prior work relevant to this study. For instance, the cultural context and the knife crime situation in the research cities of London, Birmingham and Manchester have been examined in Chapters Two and Three. The data acquired in the experience stage are then considered, explored, and analysed. The positionality of the researcher is also taken into consideration at this stage. As discussed in Sections 1.7 and 4.3.2, my past experience and position as a church leader was carefully and critically assessed as to guide against any bias on the research findings.

In making sense of the information arrived at during exploration stage or the social analysis of the data arrived at, three elements of approach is taken into consideration. These are observation of connections, values and causes in the data (Green, 1990). The findings here are then subjected to theological reflection and response in the third stage of PC.

III. Theological Reflection and response

At this stage, personal and communal beliefs about how the world works, the purpose of life, moral values from theological perspectives are taken into consideration (Ballard and Pritchard). Reflection stage is challenged by the Christian beliefs and tradition; the Bible, church history, experiences of worship, and Eucharist (Green, 2000; Cameron et al., 2010). This reflection include time of discovery and change (Ballard and Pritchard). This should lead to a different, more realistic, and creative stance. Further, there are different approaches to theological reflection. These include linear, correlation, praxis, and narrative approaches. The most relevant to this study is the praxis approach as it takes inspiration from the liberation perspectives of local and political theologies suited for the pastoral cycle (Ballard and Pritchard). These theologies hold together human experience and biblical theology in an organised cycle of learning. Willows and Swinton (2000:76) propose three key questions that could guide when the faith perspective is allowed to challenge the situational analysis and experience. For this study, these are modified to read

- What questions and analyses arise from Christian faith concerning what the Church leaders have experienced?
- How has Christian thought approached these issues raised?
- What possible practical outcomes may be brought to bear on the situation?

These guidelines help in analysis but have to be adapted for this study that focusses on church leadership instead of theology. Ballard and Pritchard stress the need to be aware of the wide range of possibilities in thinking theologically about practice, stating that

As Christians attempt to think theologically about practical issues and events, they will use methods which appeal to them for complex theological, temperamental, and cultural reasons (Ballard and Pritchard, 2006:128-129).

As the church leaders share their stories about their experiences of knife crimes in their communities, because they are human beings with abilities to reflect (Benton and Craib, 2011), they also reflect on their experiences based on their theological beliefs, and share on how they respond, their reactions, roles and behaviour during knife crime crises in their church local communities. Their experiences of knife crime with theological reflections are discussed in Chapter Five and their response, roles and behaviours are discussed in Chapters Six to Eight. Due to the experiences and reflections of these church leaders, some form of response and change might have taken place.

Ballard and Pritchard (2006:166-167) discuss six modes of change that those theological reflections could generate based on BMC leaders' response. These are: 1. Cognitive change, 2. Affective change, 3. Behavioural change, 4. Interpersonal change, 5. Social and political change, and 6. Spiritual change. It is worth noting that Ballard and Pritchard state that

Rarely will many of these modes be found all happening together but often there will be more than one type of change taking place. Moreover, it is clear that different situations lend themselves more to one type of change than another (Ballard and Pritchard, 2006:165-166)

These changes will be discussed further as the researcher reflects on the church leaders' roles and behaviours in response to knife crime crisis in Chapter Six to Nine. The following section outlines the sampling for the research.

4.6 Sampling

The fifty church leaders who were interviewed were drawn from three cities in England namely, London (L), Birmingham (B) and Manchester (M). The following table provides further information about the research participants. The listed names are pseudo names for the church leaders to protect their identity and ensure confidentiality. As indicated in Appendix

VI, there are forty-two male (42), and eight (8) female church leaders spread across London, Manchester and Birmingham who participated in the research. Their age categories range from thirty-five years to sixty-five years with the length of service ranging between four years and twenty-three years. The average length of service or experience as a church leader equates to sixteen and a half years (16 years and 6 months).

Generally, the church leaders are educated, have good educational background, and are in one secular job or the other. Many are professionals and work on volunteer basis for the churches they pastor. All the respondents except one are from Black Majority Churches (BMCs) background. These forty-nine (49) leaders from BMCs backgrounds were the only ones employed for analysis. The Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG) denominational churches have the strongest representation of the respondents of thirty-nine (39) church leaders in this study. This is because the researcher is a church leader within this denominational strand and has been able to build a network of relationship within this denomination for over twenty years.

This connection has enabled me to gain easier access to the church leaders and get more representation from this denominational strand than the others. The other ten (10) church leaders who participated in the study are from other BMC churches. These are church leaders from C of E, CTV, NCC, CTC, NBC, Reflecteen and CC/CCL. The BMCs were examined in Chapter Two of this study.

4.7 Chapter Four Summary

The research questions informed the research design and methodology. The questions guided the choice of research strategy, data collection techniques, and the period that the project could run (Saunders et al., 2016). The focus of this study deals with the stories and narratives that Church leaders are sharing about the ongoing knife crimes in their communities and what they share about themselves and others. Qualitative research design was chosen because these church leaders are human beings who can reflect on themselves, others, and events, apart from possessing an ability of self-consciousness. Furthermore, this research seeks to answer the question about the views and the roles that church leaders play in knife crime crisis in their communities. Hence, the research is underpinned by a realist ontology and a pragmatist epistemology (Saunders et al., 2016; Creswell, 2013).

Semi-structured interviews were conducted across three major cities that are noted to be hotspots of knife crime in England. These are London, Birmingham, and Manchester. These comprised twenty-two church leaders in London and fourteen each in both Birmingham and Manchester. However, it should be noted that only forty-nine church leaders who are of Black Majority Churches (BMCs) were considered in the analysis of the results. This is to provide a more focussed analysis of the results. Due to the interdisciplinary nature of research, a pragmatic approach involving three key research methodological stages was adopted. These key stages are 1. Realist narrative analysis of the data derived from the interview, 2. Thematic Analysis and 3. Pastoral Cycle (PC). Further, Section 4.6 discussed the sampling data of church leaders employed for the study. The following chapter presents the analysis on the underlying causes of knife crime in the three British cities that were investigated.

Chapter Five: BMC Leaders' Accounts of Issues Underlying Knife Crime Crisis

5.1 Chapter Five Overview

This chapter presents an analysis of the first set of findings in this research, which focusses on key themes generated from the thematic data analysis, and Pastoral Cycle (PC) analysis of eight key underlying causes of knife crime. Sections 5.3 to 5.10 follow the process of PC by analysing and exploring results from thematic analysis, interspersed with BMC leaders' reflections. Section 5.11 considers theological reflection and response, while Section 5.12 provides a summary.

5.2 Issues Underlying the Knife Crime Crisis

5.2.1 Key Stages 1 and 2 Data Analysis Results

Section 4.1 outlines the key stages of the methodological approach. The results of the first two key stages, encompassing narrative analysis of the accounts of church leaders and subsequent thematic analyses, are hereby presented in the following tables. Tables 5.1 and 5.2 present the most relevant themes inferred from the key stages 1 and 2 data analysis.

Table 5.1 Themes relating to challenges of knife crime

S/No	Theme	Frequency
1	Domestic Violence	7
2	Gun Crime	8
3	Music	9
4	Culture	19
5	Bullying	21
6	Identity	23
7	Multi-faceted issues	30
8	Lack of recreation facilities	31
9	Drugs	37
10	Post code	38
11	Originate from BAME	40
12	Economic problems	46

13	Stories of victims	47
14	Stabbing and killing	68
15	Policing and Justice	79
16	Challenges/Implications	94
17	Gangs	103
18	Family/Parental issues	212

Table 5.2 Themes relating to solutions of knife crime

S/No.	Theme	Frequency
1	Religion	11
2	The news media	13
3	Covid-19 Pandemic	45
4	Schools	47
5	Engagement	71
6	Collaboration	85
7	Local community	95
8	Education	103
9	Government and policy	135
10	Church	175
11	Church leadership roles	409
12	Leadership and role model	409

30 themes were chosen, labelled, and employed for coding in NVivo qualitative analysis software. The themes were mostly taken from the respondents' words and phrases rather than proposed by me. These themes are categorised into two areas as illustrated in Tables 5.1 and 5.2. Table 5.1, comprising 18 themes, lists those themes relating to the challenges of knife crime in the communities. Table 5.2, comprising 12 themes, relates to proffered solutions to these challenges. The frequency indicated in the table is the number of times these themes and words were mentioned in the interview with both the respondents, who are the church leaders, and the interviewer, who is the researcher.

A brief explanation of a key number of them as indicated in the tables follows for further understanding of the context. From the tables, twenty themes that relate to challenges of knife crime, and thirteen themes that relate to solutions to knife crime were employed in NVivo qualitative coding. For instance, the following select some of these themes and gives a brief insight. The theme of ‘church leadership roles’ gathers that significant information about what the church leaders in the BMCs were sharing about the roles they played pre-crisis, during and post-crisis period of knife crimes in their respective communities. ‘Bullying’ considers the negative behaviours or forms of harassments of the youths by their peers or others they had to interact with that caused hurting or harm. ‘Family and parental issues’ are issues that the youths experienced in their homes that impart on their behaviours toward others or that lead to knife crime.

Also, ‘collaborations’ as a theme refers to the networking of church leaders among themselves or with others regarding issues dealing with knife crimes. The theme ‘culture’ refers to the habits of the youths that they imbibed that have turned to norm in their daily behaviours. ‘Domestic violence’ shares on cases of domestic violence that the church leaders have heard, and that might have imparted on the behaviours of the youths. In addition, the theme on ‘causes of knife crimes’ gathers information from church leaders about their thoughts as to what could have been responsible for knife crimes in their communities. The ‘leadership and role models’ theme gathers stories of the church leaders’ behaviours as they seek to provide positive influence and guidance for the youths during knife crime crisis. The themes relevant to church leadership, which is the focus of this study are discussed further in detail in subsequent chapters.

Further, one of the key themes of this research is ‘causes of knife crime.’ This theme captures church leaders’ stories and narratives of underlying issues that are responsible for the knife crime crisis in their respective communities. Analysis of these underlying issues provides a critical background to the discussion of their behaviours and reactions to the knife crime crisis in their respective communities in the British society. Table 5.1 presents themes and discussions that consider the challenges of knife crime in the cities investigated. Family or parental issues have the highest frequency of 212. That implies that issues relating to the family, absentee father figure in the home, single mothers, lone parents, circumstances, and implications around this case were mostly discussed and gave a lead as to the underlying causes of knife crime in the British cities examined. Other key themes that might be inferred from

Table 5.1 as the underlying causes of knife crime include ‘gangs’ with a frequency of 103, ‘policing and justice’ with a frequency of 79, and ‘bullying’ with a frequency of 21.

Table 5.2 presents themes and discussions around solutions to the challenges of knife crime. This also x-rays the roles and behaviours of church leaders during knife crime crisis. Discussions about the experiences of knife crime centred mostly on Church leadership and role models as indicated by the highest frequency of 409 in Table 5.2. Also, that church leaders play key roles in dealing with challenges posed by knife crime in the British communities. They play critical roles in several ways before the occurrence of knife crime crisis, during and afterwards. They stepped into other roles apart from pastoral roles being exercised in their churches. Other overarching roles inferred from their accounts include educational and social action roles. These behaviours and roles of church leaders are examined in greater depth in chapters six to eight.

The first set of results from realist narrative and thematic analysis is presented in Tables 5.1 and 5.2. These provide insights into key areas of accounts of knife crime experiences that church leaders encountered and their responses to them. The analysis helped organised the accounts of church leaders into focussed areas that can be employed for PC analysis. They provide data for the first step of PC analysis; church leaders’ experience as explained in Section 5.2. Therefore, based upon the data of empirical evidence provided from what the church leaders shared about the stories and narratives of knife crimes in their various neighbourhood communities of London, Birmingham and Manchester, and the results from key stages 1 and 2 of methodological analysis, the following critical factors were inferred as the underlying causes of knife crimes crisis in the British society.

1. Family or parental problem
2. Gangs and drugs
3. Bullying
4. Absence of recreation facilities
5. Social media
6. Culture and identity
7. Policing and justice
8. Absence of religious instruction

These key factors are subjected to Pastoral Cycle (PC) analysis. The PC analysis follows the methodological procedure presented in Section 4.5. This procedure adapted from Ballard and

Pritchard (2006) and modified to suit this study of Church leaders' response to knife crime challenges in their communities, are in three key stages. Each of the Sections 5.3 to 5.10 considers each of the underlying factors of knife crime and examines these factors based on PC analysis. Prior to PC analysis, to provide cultural and contextual background, Chapters Two and Three have considered the background, and the cultural context of the church leaders and those involved in knife crime in London, Birmingham, and Manchester.

The respondents are BMC leaders with most church members being immigrants from African and Caribbean backgrounds who found themselves in mostly white dominated communities of the United Kingdom. Sections 3.3 to 3.5 expound on the experience of knife crime in the three British cities examined, their demography, religion, and crime statistics. Prior research indicates that knife crime is found to be prevalent in economically disadvantaged places and amongst the youths in Black and Asian Ethnic Minority (BAME) communities. Most of the youths who are involved in knife crime are from these BAME group. Analysis and exploration of the church leaders' experience follow from Section 5.3 to 5.10.

5.3 Family or Parental Problem

The accounts of church leaders and their experience on knife crime suggest that the first key underlying causes of knife crime in British communities is family or parental problems. This manifests in the form of family breakdown, lack of a father figure or lone parent. Pastoral Cycle (PC) analysis and exploration stage is guided by Green (1990) and Ballard and Pritchard (2006) as examined in Section 4.5.2. Areas of analysis and exploration might include historical, geographical, social, economic, cultural, and religious aspects of life. Factors such as connections, values and causes are observed as the researcher makes sense of the data in this exploration stage.

The condition of lone parenting, or absentee fathers was considered as a major precursor to raising up children and adolescents who are involved in knife crimes. Prior research indicates compelling evidence to support the proposition that children having adverse long term emotional challenges and lower educational results are mostly from single parenting (Zagel et al., 2013). Other concerns with children from lone parenting backgrounds are issues dealing with greater psychological and behavioural difficulties than children from co-parent families (Crawford and Henry, 2003; Covey and Tam, 1990). Zagel et al. state further that the problems might not be unrelated to the poor economic conditions of the lone parents and other significant factors that might be ongoing in their lives such as maternal/paternal depression, anxiety and

everyday stressors that could be attributed to their children's emotional and behaviour problems.

Based on the stories the church leaders have shared; the results of the data suggest that problems in the home where there is an absentee father or mother in the family may be considered as an underlying cause of knife crimes in the society. Where the father of a child is not available to offer guidance, direction or instruction to a child, the child tends to seek for an alternative father figure or mother figure out there in the world. An instance was stated in the following by Renny, one of the church leaders in London.

“Renny: Okay. The challenges are a multi-faceted. They are multifaceted there's an economic problem. There's a challenge. There's a social challenge. So, what we need to do is to stop the problem downstream. Now, what is the cause of the problem downstream. The problem is a function of: No.1. Family. Now we live in a community, where the majority are fatherless! Now, in my experience, most of the guys can be nice, or that. Right, so, so they got them. Why do you do drugs? There I was introduced to it in the estate or where they found themselves. But why do you need to do that because there's no mentoring. There are no kid parents, there's no father figure, there's no role model. So, it is easy for me.”

In the opinion of Renny, the number one underlying cause of knife crime in the British society is family problems. Renny was making this statement based on his long-term interaction with single parents that spans over two decades. Renny as a church leader has heard from mothers experiences in bringing up their children and specifically the struggles with male children. He has acted as a father figure, confidant, counsellor, prayer partner, provider, role model and a mentor to many youths and by empathy to their mothers as support. He has felt the pains and challenges these lone parents were going through with them. He has helped in many significant instances. Renny has weighed this specific trigger with other issues leading to knife crimes and has been able to conclude that the first most significant underlying cause of knife crime is the absence of a father figure in the home.

Renny's Point of Reflection

Renny in reflecting expatiated that the absence of a father figure means that a child lacks someone who could mentor him/her and give instruction and direction in life. This scenario creates a vacuum in the child's life which can easily be exploited by older male figure outside the home. Renny shared an experience of a single mother.

Renny: Now, if all of us take the responsibility and so many single parents who are working hard to put food on the table. Which is very difficult. One of the single mothers called me yesterday and said, I am almost going mad. I said what happened. She said to me, I can't. It's difficult to take it anymore. So, this all schooling is killing me. I must do the job. I'm supposed to do as a project person. I must do home schooling for a 10-year-old and 13 years old; I must wake them up. Sit on the bed, whatever I must cook for them. I had to pay the bills. And she started to cry. She's not connected or whatever. So, it's too much for me to even must take care of myself or something like that. So, I just need help; since their dad has gone for the last eight years in this UK nobody knows where is to be found!

The story being shared here by Renny indicates a higher weight of responsibility being placed on a single mother by virtue of the absence of a father figure at home. She was confronted with many issues at home that were stressing her to the extent that she felt she could not cope anymore. A church leader has had to step into the role of a father figure to help her out of the stressful situation that she found herself in. Analysing the situation this single mother was facing indicates she was financially challenged because she alone has to pay bills in her home that formerly two parties in the family handled. Besides, she alone has to do the school run and tutoring of these youths. In addition, she has to combine these responsibilities with her own challenging job of a project manager. Seriously, this would not be easy situation for a single parent. As a result, it would be quite difficult to monitor the activities and movements of her children. This kind of situation that presents itself to this lone mother provides a conducive environment for a child to be lured by peer pressure or an external member of the world of gangs into their criminal activities.

Further, it is worthy to observe in this situation that the female lone parent found herself, She became stressed and weary of her situation and could only remember to call the attention of this church leader to the rescue. This indicates some degree of being socially close to this church leader and could prove the effectiveness of church leadership in crisis.

Paul, another church leader adds a similar view to that of Renny about absentee father figure as a trigger to knife crime.

Paul: My records indicate that the gangsters who normally groom new young ones into gangs always look for teenagers without a father figure, those ones are easy prey for them. They know if the father is there, he will chase them up, and they try to avoid such problems. They tend to dodge those children with father. This comes to the role of the father in the home.

A situation where there is an absentee father figure in the family could leave a significant gap in the upbringing of a child. The whole responsibility of raising a child now falls on an individual instead of a couple. The lone parents, mostly women, now had to balance working to make ends meet with raising up adolescent youths who are under peer pressures and other forms of pressures that the social media world offers. Here a lone mother does not have enough time for her child while the child does not have a father figure or role model at home to guide him or her in the right way to pursue the issues of life that he or she is daily confronted with. This leaves him/her vulnerable to the external world of gangs. This is further affirmed by another church leader, Salmon. This is what Salmon has to share.

“Salmon: There are statistics that the youths go into any form of crime, not only knife crimes, when there is an absence of a father figure at home. So, the absence of fathers or mentors leads to these things. So, there is the solution to dive into. How can schools, colleges work with mentors because the schools, the colleges, the social service are aware that in this family, there is an absence of a father. So, there must be an integration of such youths, to have somebody to look forward to. it must be deliberate to have father or role model. There are reasons why we have some families who don't have the other party, it could be, maybe debt, it could be an upset, it could be single parent that does not work”.

Prior research indicates that this gap of absentee parent was being exploited by the world gangs and their leaders to lure many teenagers, mostly boys into their gangs through a well-orchestrated operation. The victims were then used to carry drugs for these gang leaders and drug barons through county lines across the country (Harding, 2020; Aldred et al., 2008). The stories and narratives from Renny, Paul, Salmon, and other church leaders affirm what earlier research propositions are indicating that the problem of absentee father or mother in a family do have a significant potential influence on children from that family background being involved in gangs and drugs and subsequent links to committing knife crimes in British society.

This gang and drug problem as an underlying issue of knife crime crisis in the British society will be analysed in the next section.

5.4 Gangs and Drugs

Gangs and drugs problems are another underlying issue relating to knife crime in the British society. Where gangs are in operation, drugs are in circulation; the two phenomena cannot be separated. Harding (2020) carried out empirical research on eighteen young males who were part of the London-based street gangs involved in carrying drugs along county lines – drug

business network across the UK. Harding's research considers contemporary narratives of the underlying causes of knife crimes in the UK and then seeks to reframe these narratives by examining how knife-carrying and knife-enabled crime is also a signifier of street 'authenticity' and thus might be, an agentic route for promotion or recognition within the social field of the street gangs. The concept of the street gangs operating within a defined social field is a key interpretive lens by which to unpack the symbolism and utility of knife-carrying and usage. Harding expatiates that within the social field of the street gang, there is an internal hierarchy which privileges the long-standing "elders" (aged above 25), while "olders" (aged 18–24) below them and "youngers" (aged 12–17) below them struggle for recognition and promotion by employing strategic tactics such as carrying knives even if just for protection (Harding, 2014).

However, carrying a weapon with or without the intention to cause harm could be a potential danger in itself to the carrier and the public. For instance, a church leader, James shared his lived experience of a member of his church who was attacked by a member of the gang that was carrying a knife. He has to visit this young adult member in the hospital immediately the incident happened to start praying for his survival.

"James: Yeah, I have quite a number of stories about knife crime, and a member of our church was involved, and thankfully when he was stabbed, he survived. He was, he was brutally stabbed by may be a member of a gang. We thought all hope was lost, but God helped us, and he came back to life. And I have heard a few other cases, in fact, one of our churches, don't want to mention the name, that someone was stabbed, and the boy died. There are quite a number of cases we have seen or heard about knife crime and only praying that the Lord will help us to wipe it away. Yeah, it was very traumatic for the, for the parents, that the boy was stabbed, in the stomach, the stomach and intestines, everything came out, it was terrible, and the police were called, the boy was rushed to the hospital. To be very honest with you, nobody knew he was going to survive it!"

The story shared by James about the experience of a youth in his church with the terrible world of gangs in his community shows the dangers involved when you are part of a gang. Here the young man attacked sustained a terrible injury which might have led to his death. The church leader believed that the prayer he offered the youth might have saved his life. Another observable phenomenon here is that the closeness of the church leader to the parents of the young adult victim cannot be overemphasised. Because the church leader was socially close to these members of his church, he was able to offer help during knife crime crisis that this family

experienced. This would mean a lot to the family of the victim. The near fatal injury the young man sustained must have caused a lot of emotional traumas, anxiety and fear for his parents and the church leader.

Further, the persistent presence of gangs in a community and increase in stabbing and deaths at a 70-year peak level is a crisis level and demands urgent attention by the governments, both local and national. It demands urgent attention from the church leaders and other community leaders in British society. The church leaders' stories indicate that these gangs are sustained by the amounts of hard drugs that they are able to sell to others. The more the business of selling hard drugs are allowed to thrive in the society, the more likelihood the operations of knife crime gangs would continue. The following is another account of one of the church leaders about a member of his church who witnessed a fatal knife crime near the church through the operations of gangs in the area of his church community.

Matthew: That's the point so, that is the most traumatizing part of this killing with knife (explaining the case of two children who witnessed the incident of stabbing and killing of another youth being negatively emotionally impacted). That's why we've got to pray because this is terrible, and this is real, if you ever consider it as a story, it's all yours truly, it's something that is happening live! So, from that moment on, I realized that we are entering to another phase, you know, and I realized that we've got to join together with all other leaders in the community, to see to you know how we can deal with this danger in our community.

Unfortunately, it's a young chap, young people that are perpetuating this; yet this looks like jobs to them, and what is, what is it that is fuelling it, it is drug! The main problem behind knife crime is drugs! And what comes to my mind, is we've got to go to the bottom of it, it is long enough to look at the crime we've got to look at what is it that is driving the crime. I realized that unless we tackle the issue of drug, you're never going to get out of it now from you know. From my studies and analysis and observations when you say drugs, a lot of people think that they are taking drugs, no, it is because they are engaged in distributing and selling drugs. Majority of the crime committed among these people occurred because they are being unfaithful in the business to each other.

Here Matthew was sharing the story of a member of his church and her children who have just witnessed a fatal stabbing of another youth before their very eyes. They were coming to church and close to the bus stop near the church they saw another youth running and attacking another youth with a knife and the youth slumping down in cold blood. The incident was not only

witnessed by the adult but by the children also. The children were shaking because of what they have just witnessed as they might be terribly surprised and could not understand that such should be happening around them. The church leader explained that the family had to go through some counselling and prayers because of the emotional impact that terrible experience might have had on them.

Matthew's Point of Reflection

Matthew reflecting on the incident he shared connected what was happening to activities of the gangs when selling their drugs. Conflicts arising in the world of selling hard drugs might lead to fighting and killings among gang members. Matthew strongly believes that to deal with the challenge knife crimes poses to the communities the governments and other stakeholders, the problem of selling hard drugs and gangs have to be concretely addressed. In addition, another challenge with selling hard drugs by gangs is that it leads to other vices in the society. For instance, Peter has this to share about other resultant effects of gangs and drugs.

Peter: There was a time my wife served in the jury service last year and she handled a case for five weeks involving a girl from Leeds sent by her sister but was raped for three days by gang members. Knife crimes also lead to rape and fraud. They raped her for three days. The crimes are not just for knife crimes, it moved to rape and fraud. Also, the unfortunate thing is that when these boys are sent to prison, they are not remorseful. They called prisons, free hotels.

These stories reveal the interrelationships between gangs, drugs, and knife crimes. Most knife crimes that are being committed in the communities of the British society are due to the operations of gangs, and fuelled by the drugs they take or sell, and fighting for dominion in their area of location in the British society.

The challenge of gangs and drug peddling, and the attendant knife crimes have reached a peak level in recent years and came to crisis dimensions. This challenging situation is motivating church leaders for interdenominational meetings and collaborations to consider several ways of tackling the knife crime crisis and what solutions are available to the various stakeholders and the government. Another underlying cause of knife crime, and one of the means that gangs recruit their members is bullying as discussed in the next section.

5.5 Bullying

Research indicates there is no consensus as to the legal or standard definition of bullying, although some forms of bullying behaviours may constitute a crime, for example, assault (Long

et al., 2020). Jenkins et al. (2012) affirm this and state that the term “bullying” has to be approached with caution. This is because it is not often clear whether the term is being used to explain some behaviours which, although have some relationships, are not necessarily bullying. Jenkins et al. list three specific elements that distinguish bullying from other conceptually similar constructs. These are 1. Repetition of negative behaviours, 2. Power difference existing between the target and the perpetrator, and 3. The behaviour has the potential to cause harm to the bullied.

However, Long et al. provide the following definition of bullying.

Bullying is behaviour by an individual or group, repeated over time, that intentionally hurts another individual or group either physically or emotionally. Bullying can take many forms (for instance, cyber-bullying via text messages, social media, or gaming, which can include the use of images and video) and is often motivated by prejudice against particular groups, for example on grounds of race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, special educational needs or disabilities, or because a child is adopted, in care or has caring responsibilities. It might be motivated by actual differences between children, or perceived differences (Long et al., 2020:6)

An academic review of 165 articles on bullying and mental health indicates robust evidence that suggests causal relationship between bullying victimisation and mental health problems such as depression, anxiety, poor general health, and suicidal ideation and behaviours. Probable causal relationships existed between bullying victimisation and tobacco and illicit drug use (Moore et. al, 2017). Someone suffering from mental health problems and illicit drug use is easily prone to be involved in knife crime at the least provocation. Bullying as one of the causes of knife crimes in the British society is evidenced by the experience of a church leader, Angela. Angela as stated below narrates her experience of a pupil with a pseudo name Whitaker, who was being bullied by her school mates, and how that resulted in her being involved in knife crime.

“Now, I want to share another experience apart from the personal one. There is a girl called Whitaker. I got interested in her to understand. It’s a case of being bullied. On her way to School, this girl was being bullied every day. It’s a case of being bullied and if you can’t beat them, join them. It’s like my son too that must join them. A group of girls humiliated her every day, calling her names, bad girl, hoary head, rubbished her shoes and her attire. This is not her fault that is dressed that way but what her mum could afford and there was no dad around.

For more than a year she did nothing. We are talking about serious bullying here, one under my roof and one outside. This continued until she reached a tipping point.

She then began to use the money for Violin class to buy drugs, cannabis. She didn't join anybody but started buying and selling cannabis and started a gang of her own. She went from one extreme to the other. She started selling cannabis and gained a following from those she sells cannabis to. She formed her own gang and began a serious violent bully and bullied the girl who had been bullying her.

There are some inferences that could be drawn from this story to indicate that there is a close relationship between bullying and knife crimes. Firstly, Angela described Whitaker as a student who was going to a secondary school and much engaged in her studies, and a good extracurricular activity, violin training. Unfortunately, she encountered some schoolmates who were involved in a gang and who were abusing her because she refused to belong to their gang. She was called by various abusive names because of her dressing. Secondly, the matter continued to impact her emotional wellbeing. She reported the matter to her schoolteachers and authorities without any solution. Lastly, when she could not bear it any longer, she decided to react back in a negative manner by forming another gang of her own to counter the gang that has been bullying her. She moved from one extreme of a peaceful and focussed school teenager to a violent street girl.

Angela's Point of Reflection

Angela shared her point of reflection as stated in the following.

Whitaker moved from one extreme and switched to another. She started harassing and beating girls from other gangs. When asked what you feel now. She said 'power.' It made them feel they had gained identity. She said it is okay I am somebody now! Don't forget that dad walked out when she was young. At times children feel responsible for what happens to their parents. Now she believes her voice is being heard. It is not just an issue of this or that and not being listened to. Now the streets are awake, and she is now being listened to. Her voice is now being heard. They were not listening to her before; somebody is listening now; the law enforcement, the school, and others are not listening until she starts speaking the violent language. Am I making sense? She is being reported, the school, law enforcement agencies, and family were not listening before when she was being bullied and complaining and they did nothing about it!"

Perhaps, Whitaker may have experienced emotional upset before and has challenges with her identity because her father was into drugs and left her family home early when she was young. Therefore, a situation whereby she was trying to live a normal life notwithstanding an early traumatic experience of her parents' marital separation, and then she was later being bullied must have triggered something radical in her to do as a way of feeding the emotional upset that she was encountering at the time of being bullied. Moreover, due to the influence of drugs and a heart set on a revenge mission, she engaged in knife crimes and other societal ills to prove her point. There are many stories of bullying such as this and the resultant impact of this leading to knife crimes in the society.

Additionally, the sensitivity of the school authorities and law enforcement agencies to the plight of a student like Whitaker is called to question. Where there is little or no response by the authorities placed in position to ensure the protection and security of the children and youths placed under their care could lead to dire consequences and undesirable outcomes as we heard in the case of Whitaker. Bullying has been shown from the stories shared by church leaders as one of the underlying issues responsible for the rise in knife crimes in British society. Another key underlying issue shared by church leaders is absence of recreational facilities for the youths.

5.6 Absence of Recreation Facilities

One noticeable and repeated proverbial statement that many church leaders use as they share their stories and narratives of knife crimes crisis in their communities on this particular factor is "An idle hand is devil's workshop." For instance, Peter mentioned this phrase in the following response.

Peter: I think they need to improve the police presence. I know there has been cuts in the budget of the Police. This is not the right time to cut their budget because the rate of crime among the youth age group is going higher and higher up every year and the only way is that police presence is needed, recreation activities are needed for the youth and the children, and also education is needed because when they are ignorant, and they capitalise on the ignorance but if you offer them better education, when they go to college, university by that you occupy them and they can be taken off the street. When they are unoccupied, they become idle, and an idle hand is the Devil's workshop. They should provide those facilities and educational facilities. In those days when they were working in McDonald's and other things were available for them, you didn't see them on the streets back then.

This proverb encapsulates the thoughts of church leaders when they are sharing of the stories of lack of recreational facilities that could occupy the attention of the youths in their communities. When there is an absence of responsible or productive activities for the youth to be engaged in their communities, they become restless and then resort to negative activities such as drugs and gangs, knife crimes, stealing, fighting, drunkenness, and other vices that exist in the society today.

Peter's Point of Reflection

Based on this story that Peter shared, he pointed attention to the reduction of budgets for the provision of youth recreation facilities such as community sports centres, athletic and football fields, after school club and activities and other engagement centres where the youths can unwind and interact in a responsible and productive ways. Moreover, there is also the absence of places where they could learn some form of life skills or work; some of which were available before but either cut down or folded up due to lack of resources to maintain them. The result of the lack of these recreation facilities is reflected in criminal activities such as the carrying of hard drugs, gun and knife crimes, and other forms of evil vices that cause fights, injury, and deaths. Because of these noticeable problems in the communities, Peter was therefore advocating that this issue should be revisited by the relevant governments if we were to stem the tide of rising level of the rates of knife crimes in the British communities.

Salmon, another church leader stressed the need for the government to realise that these youths have a lot of energy to expend and therefore, the important issue of engaging these youths in their idle moments with activities is so critical if we were to arrest the dangers that knife crimes pose to the society.

Salmon: Now the third one, is to really identify you see, we cannot deny the fact that we church leaders, we parents, we are once teenagers, we are once children, nobody's born an adult and the challenge with youths, is energy. Excess energy is synonymous with youths. How do we channel their energy? Because they get a lot of energy to use. The answer is not to ask them to sit down. It is not for church leaders to box them. The answer is not appearing to box them up. The answer is not for the police to say, do not go out. So, we need to acknowledge that youths have energy. They need to try something new; they have got time in their hands and what do we do with that? There must be a deliberate effort to channelling of the time and energy.

Therefore, Salmon added that there must be a deliberate effort or strategy by the government in the local communities and other stakeholders to channel the burning energy of the younger

generation in the right direction. In order to deal with this challenge, Salmon's church provides a youth centre for them to unwind, to take them off street during critical times when these youths are unoccupied and vulnerable to mischief or social vices in the communities they belong. The following is the full narration of what Salmon, and his church did to arrest the attention of the youths in his community.

Salmon: Let me just briefly touch on your needs while we tend to do which we are proposing is there must be adequate facilities, there is possibly, there is one in Dagenham is called the futures, we are trying to get a centre constructed, we're putting up a youth development centre, "Dreams" into the community. As I mentioned this issue of image, there must be facility available to positively channel the youths, and for them to apply themselves wherever, there is energy, excess energy. All you need is facility, youth centres. There is need for more if we really want to protect our future, next generation. We have to do more, calling on faith leaders, calling on local authorities, calling on the government to look into the dare needs of facilities, that must be funded. The point is we need, we need to fund now. I so much believe wherever we asked the leaders whatever we're doing at the moment, we can create more. Let me give an example, we have what is called "unwind," that's all we do to un-wind. What is un-wind?

Statistics shows that high crime rates among youths, that is, from Saturday night to Sunday night, so while we got the statistics, meaning that Monday to Friday, because of the school, the rates tend towards the minimum you know. So, from Friday after school, they tend to have more time, in the end so we create what is called 'unwind.' We have the youths in the church inviting their other friends, to the church every Friday 7pm to 9pm. What is the purpose? Come and unwind yourself. There you can chat with one another and also discuss issues because you can never change someone until you change their mindset. So, create an environment as simple as you can just rent a small hall, which will not cost much or youth centre, you see where they can gather and make friends. What you do you need is finger foods and drinks. They can come and watch films that are educative, not about those films that does not help but films that can teach values, sense of direction. You can create an enabling secure environment, games, where there are adults watching them, mentoring them. So, you're already got a set of people out of crime. Meaning that they cannot be the perpetrators, they cannot be the victims.

Salmon narrated here the efforts that he and his church members were making to engage the youths in after school activities in the periods when these youths are idle and do not have anything to do or to go for recreational activities. Obviously, Salmon observed that the

recreational facilities were lacking in his community and there was an urgent need to provide some sort of activities to engage their youths. The rate of knife crime was on the increase and one way to arrest the situation is to set up some projects in his community such as the ‘dreams’ as he mentioned. These sorts of activities are helpful not only in keeping the youths off the street where they are engaging the wrong kinds of people and carrying hard drugs or causing harm through knife crimes, it serves to educate them on the right kinds of values to imbibe in life. As a result, he and other church leaders are making significant contributions to the issue of dealing with the challenge being posed by knife crimes in their respective communities. If these church leaders were to be engaged and supported financially by the governments, it would go a long way in providing the right kind of recreational facilities and other resources that could engage the youths and reduce the rate of knife crimes in British society.

Luke’s Point of Reflection

Luke, another church leader reflected on the issue of lack of recreation facilities for the youths.

Luke: So, this is a lesson for the leadership about how we engage these youths so that they will be away from committing knife crimes. I have some youths in my church, and I have been involved in governments both here and in Nigeria. You see if the youths carry and conceal the knives, which is a crime in itself, but if they do not use it, it will not cause injury. They use it when there are no activities for them, when they are engaged in arguments and fights. So, if you engage them and give them activities, if there is investment in youth clubs and activities, the rates of knife crimes would go down. An analogy is petrol is dangerous, as knife is. If petrol stays in the right place, there is no problem. So also, if the knife stays at home, it will not cause knife crime.

Luke argued that if the youth are engaged, if they are involved in an activity that occupies their time, they would not be able to carry knives into the streets to cause harm. If we place responsibility in the hands of these youths, they will perform. If we understand the issue, understand the trigger points, and find ways to engage the youths, we can nip knife crime in the bud, before their activities lead into arguments, fights, knife, and gun crimes. Twenty-one (21) church leaders commented on the issue of recreational facilities thirty-one (31) times. The data indicates a common consensus that governments, church leaders and other stakeholders in the communities need to do more in the provision of recreational facilities to occupy the youths and to deal with a knife crime crisis in society.

In addition, there is an observation that due to economic reasons, there is less spending or investments by the national and local governments on recreational facilities, and this has impacted on reduced facilities for the youths in their communities over the years. Further, absence of recreational facilities might lead the youths to spend more time on social media platforms and on music. This is another identified underlying issue of knife crime and would be examined further in the section.

5.7 Social media

Salmon aptly describes the power that the social media world has on the teenage youths of this age.

Salmon: I was having some training with the youths, and we will find out that with only our phones now you can check how many hours they've spent on social media. The last time that I had seminar with them and I'm having another one on Saturday. I asked them guys, bring out your phone and check. The least spent not less than the minimum six hours on social media in a day. That is dangerous! Now we're now analysing the implication, one of the things they told me was that it impacts on their performance at School. You can't be on social media for six hours and you perform very well. The words they shared about what is the implication of that, when they showed me, they are under serious pressure because of feel among them to belong; so, they are in this platform and that platform. Then they are on the Twitter, on Instagram, and that, and before they left, they've spent more time on that side to belong, neglecting their schoolwork. Once this got them into pressure from school.

Salmon threw some light in his response to what is happening amongst this generation of youths. Seriously, this portrays the life of the youths in this digital age. This is a life in which everyone is in possession of a mobile phone from the teenage years onwards. The mobile phones open the opportunities to these youths to use the gadgets for whatever might bring them pleasure or satisfaction. One of these means is through social media. Undoubtedly, this is quite revealing; based on what Salmon shared, that many youths today could spend a quarter of the entire day on social media. Perhaps, invariably, they spend this period on unproductive activities, such kinds of activities that they thought could bring them pleasures and satisfaction but unfortunately, it leads to undesirable ends or consequences. It leads to the neglect of their academic work and other productive activities they should be engaging in.

Salmon expounds further on how this could potentially lead to drugs and knife crimes.

Salmon: Now starting to blame their teacher, getting into wrong hands, some of that is because of the issue at school that leads them into drugs; either using drugs or selling drugs as an alternative, because they're not doing well at school. Drugs leads to county lines, there's a link between drugs and county lines, drugs, and gangs. But look at how do we get into drugs, because there is lack of focus and discipline or time management. What is pressure apart from peer and social media? So, our youths are under serious pressures, financial pressure, economical pressure, pressure from family. So, this is the world in which our youth live in. A world whereby they want to impress. I told the youths that social media is a fake life, social media is very good if you can use it positively to do what you want to do. Nobody puts their failure on social media.

Some videos and such other things you want people to know. Some people would pick some pictures and see if there's any way you can turn it round. I said to a particular group last week, there's a picture that was sent to me on WhatsApp, you know. The picture looks like someone, a young guy posing to, around the plane, it looks like he is on the window of a plane. So, he tried to give an impression online that day he was traveling to Dubai for holiday. Then, the second side now show the full picture and what was it? The person was upfront, the washing machine, the door of the washing machine as a plastic, he posed by the door.

Salmon's Point of Reflection

Salmon in reflection on the impact of social media on our youths has this to say.

To that guy who saw the first picture would say I need to get money out, to go to Dubai or to go to Greece! Fake life! That's the world our youths live in! So, there is a need for us to engage and communicate, that's just the point I'm trying to raise, where they can speak out and they can be mentored and be engaged.

Salmon argues that social media presents a fake life. Most of the postings on social media do not present a balanced view of life. People would show you what they want you to see or to know. The other side of their lives would not be shown. Some stories they present might even be misleading. Therefore, many young people, the upcoming generation because of inexperience of life are being misled about the true reality of life or of living. In addition, these youths follow role models or influencers on the social media platforms who have no good records in their private lives that are worthy of emulation. Further, based on what Salmon was saying, social media could be an underlying cause of knife crime because it accentuates the weakness in the youths not to do their schoolwork. This can lead to failure and failure could

lead to potential drop out from school and the pursuit of some other things such as a life of drugs and gangs.

Generally, opinions are divided about the impact of social media and music on the youth and the influence on knife crimes. For instance, Salmon believes strongly that social media has negative impact on the youth while Luke, another church leader argues this might not be the case. Luke argues that social media is just a tool of communication. The same way it is easy for youths to connect with the drug barons, so it is easy for police to track them down. Even serious drug barons do not use social media. According to Elsaesser et al. (2020), there is increasing evidence which suggests that social media is playing a role specifically in the realisation of community violence. In a burgeoning area of research that examines the role of social media in youth violence, scholars now contend that neighbourhood violence is no longer limited to face-to-face arguments that may occur on the street (Densley, 2013; Patton et al., 2013; Patton et al., 2019). Pyrooz et al. (2015) found that individuals who self-identify as part of a particular gang, and actively use social media, are more likely to be involved in online crime than their non-gang counterparts, and that social media is commonly used to promote the symbolic needs of a gang. As conversations that once happened offline move into a larger, faster, public online domain, there is concern that conflict that happens on social media can more quickly turn into a more threatening ecosystems where online behaviours may also incite on street violence (Moule et al., 2014).

Additionally, Ruth, a church leader shared the story of a young male that was into music before he was stabbed to death. Music plays a vital role in the lives of the youths of this digital generation. There are some genres of music that have the undertone of violence embedded in them. There are many youths who ended up committing knife crime not because they desired to do so, but due to the inciting genre of music that they were listening to on the social media platforms. Joseph, another church leader discussed the uncensored nature of songs in the social media space.

Joseph: Music, because the way you know they sing is the way they are, they put songs into the social media community, people like that because they are doing these things, they do it in their own language, young people's language, you may not know and you'll find it on YouTube you see a lot of them, they are everywhere. yeah everywhere, and some of them actually there will be singing about this glorified knife, glorifying gun and I think there should be a regulation to that event. That the content, before anything is being placed into YouTube or unless

something is done in form of assessing or is asked to be scrutinized, the motive and content, what they do to the students, you know what they need to do is to set up laws into action to curb them.

Here Joseph shared his knowledge about music amongst the youths and the implications of this music to the youth generation. Joseph is of the belief that the kind of music genres that the youths are playing are filled with inciting words that motivate them to do evil. The music is having negative impact on the youths and subsequently leading them to cause harm and commit knife crimes and other evil vices. There are so many of these songs that are placed on the social media space which are not censored but are songs that the inexperienced teenage generation listen to and that incite them into committing knife crimes and other crimes. The penchant desire of the youths to be famous and to carry a large following on social media platforms might not be unrelated to cultural and identity issues. This is another underlying issue impacting on knife crime and would be discussed further in the next section.

5.8 Culture and Identity

Cultural and Identity issues have been suggested by 15 church leaders in 23 comments to add to the conversation as to the underlying causes of knife crime in the British society. The feeling of the need to belong, the identity factor motivates many of the youths to belong to a gang. These are some of the comments that the church leaders are sharing about factors that could be responsible for knife crime in their communities.

Akin: Another root cause of crime rate among these youths is what they feel they need to belong or the feeling that they need to belong to a peer group or to claim they're not push over in the community among their peers is always another root cause that needs to be addressed.

Salmon: Revenge, gangs, when you have a sense of identity, it will solve the problem of gangs. Many times, if we take time to take to sit down with them and you'll find that that the prevailing factor is that they said we want to belong, I want to be known, they want to have that sense of belonging, that leads to gangs and county lines. Identity, very, very important lesson and that is why what we need as leaders to teach is a sense of tolerance.

Akin and Salmon were sharing that the problem of identity is an underlying cause of knife crime. There is the need to belong because of an emptiness the young generation feels about themselves. This emptiness stems from the fact that they lack someone, a father figure at home that could give them a sense of purpose. This issue is more prevalent among the BAME

community because of higher number of lone parenting and absence of father figures at home. Mark, another church leader shared further about his experience of working as an equality manager in the BAME community.

Mark: You know there's more of a confidence if you see young people carrying a knife, there is a sense of confidence in my experience and there's a joy that you know I can speak I have the freedom to express my voice in any way that I want to negative or positive, so knife crime has gone beyond simply just having a murder or stabbing someone, it's actually become a part of cultural identity. I, in my experience I've worked 10 years with right equality as a strategic manager for the BAME community you know, so in my area that's I've done that for local government for many years, and one thing I've noticed when it comes to issues like this is that ethnicity and religion are not even connected to knife crime. Hindus carry knives Muslims carry knives. Even young Christians today have a knife in the school bag, or in the pocket.

Mark was trying to explain that based on his experience, the challenge of carrying knives is no longer connected to religious issue or ethnicity issue. It has become a norm; it has become something that is part of the identity of the youths of this generation. They have come to believe a lie that carrying knives would give them some sort of leverage over their peers, some sort of security and some sort of power to face anyone that they come across to intimidate them. Mark then stressed the need for a different approach to deal with the menace of knife crimes that are being committed in the British communities.

Mark's Point of Reflection

Mark reflected on the culture and identity issues regarding carrying knives and stated the following.

Mark: When it comes to engaging with them in this generation, this time, and especially as we are focusing on the BAME community you know, but then also the non BAME community that also have the same issues, if you look in society, if you look at the statistics deeper than the statistics, one thing that I've also realized, I hope that I'm not speaking a lot so you've got something. Secondly, it creates a fear, because they might throw something at me just accidentally, but it's become a part of identity to carry a weapon in your hand, fun, secure strength, not afraid of the consequences, it has become the norm.

Mark identified the fear factor as the reason that have led these youths to carrying knives which eventually has become a norm or cultural identity among this generation of youths. What these

church leaders were sharing clearly suggests that carrying knives is considered by the youths of today as part of their culture and identity. They feel secure, protected, and belonged when they carry the knives. There might not be an intention to harm in the beginning, however, situation such as provocation by a peer or the case of having to defend themselves might lead to fatal consequences.

Moreover, they have heard from peers that if you do not carry a knife, you are being naive, you are unsafe, or you do not belong. This coupled with a situation whereby there is an absentee father or mentor to give them counsel and assurance might have motivated them to carrying knives. This is in line with what Akin, Salmon and Mark were sharing about the challenge of cultural identity of today in our British communities, particularly among the BAME communities. Tunde, another church leader shared what they do in their church to give back that sense of identity to the youths.

Tunde: Yes, there is in our own church, is not because of the size of the Church, we realize that the kind of teenage activities we want to put up won't be big enough, but we have a big sister church, I'll put it that way. It's not even part of the redeemed church denomination, I have a personal relationship with the pastor they have this teenage program every Friday, they get together, they have gym. they do all sorts of activities on Fridays, and I feel it gives those children a sense of identity because the problem is again maybe that's another problem with this criminality and one ends up committing knife crime. Who you hang around with matters and children want to have a sense of belonging, so they want to say they belong to this group, but unfortunately the only group they can belong to is a criminal group or is a gang group that could end them up in a knife crime.

Tunde shared how his church acted to give their youths a sense of identity. Nevertheless, the level of impact or how far reaching this kind of events that was being organised on a weekly basis cannot be easily ascertained. Indeed, a more regular programme, for instance, on a daily basis will have a far greater level of impact than a weekly programme. This brings to the question of how financially empowered the charity organisations of this nature are to organise events that could support the youths in their journey to become responsible adults. Also, another question is how the police and justice systems are addressing this challenge of cultural and identity issues impacting on knife crimes. The following section expounds further on this.

5.9 Policing and Justice

The system of policing and justice in the nation has been argued could be another underlying factor for the increasing knife crime rates in the nation. Rachel, a church leader in her own opinion considers the operation of police has vindictive and a further trigger to knife crimes in the British society.

Rachel: What can be done, but I don't think personally, I don't think that enough has been done to rescue the situation. We've lost too many youngsters, way too many, and it really breaks my heart, causes unnecessary deaths, parents weeping unnecessarily, and it affects the cream of the society, like that Matthew, that boy, had his master's degree and was doing so well, the only child of his mother, all because he revealed the rapists, they are his friends. They went to prison and came back and killed him when they came out, and that is why the youngsters are not going to say anything because they don't get protection from the police when they tell the police. The perpetrator of the crime, they got protection, so they know they will come back and hit them and probably hit them harder than the first time, so it's also the police needing to change the way they do things.

Rachel shared in her story what was going on in her community with regards to policing and justice. She is of the opinion that the present policing and justice systems have failed the youth's generation, particularly the youths from a black heritage. Rachel cited two instances where policing has failed the youths of this generation. Firstly, she believed that the police were not offering the right kind of protection to the youths in their community by their action.

Unfortunately, the consequence of these kinds of systemic errors and failures is profoundly serious because witnesses would now be afraid to come up to give evidence against knife crime suspects, and this could lead to many suspects of knife crime walking free in the community. These perpetrators would now have a feeling that they are above the law and could do whatever they wish to do and get away with it. Obviously, this is already happening in some British communities as of today. There are cases of fear and apathy in the communities because of the activities of the knife crime gangs and it seems to many people that they are above the law and the police has not much answer to deal with the challenge this knife crime crisis is posing to the British communities.

Quite frankly, in line with Rachel's view, this undesirable situation made the youths and families in Rachel's community and perhaps many others to lose faith and no longer have trust

in the police and justice system to protect them. Secondly, Rachel identified discrimination of the police in their services to the communities. She explained this further stated as follows.

Rachel: The second thing is that the police discriminate against them a lot! You watch it! If you see a group of white boys pass you smile. If you're not careful, even as a Black person, you see a group of black boys and you're thinking that they are going to start trouble. If they stay around with their friends and they are talking, you believe, and you know them to where they are they will talk, they will be loud, even on the bus, they are loud they have loud vocal cords. And to them, everyone looks at them as criminals. People look at these youngsters as criminals, as people that would never do well. I see the reaction of people to them it's not good! So, the minds of the society have been tilted against them in a way! They are not bad! They just need help and it's not all of them that carry knives anyway, just a few, a fraction of them. When they leave university, they get good jobs, they start driving cars, the police will not let them be! Every day, they keep stopping them, they call it "stop and search"! And you see the white counterparts, drive good cars and they can go, no problems. If it's a Black boy, he must, he must be doing drugs. So, the society, the government needs to do a lot to change all of this. It's the inequality, the racism that got into this level, that is, causing some to be fighting, and unfortunately, they're killing themselves. Whereas it's the pain that they carry that are acting out, but they are doing it in a wrong way.

Rachel explained what took place whenever the police were carrying out an operation called 'stop and search'. This 'stop and search' was a routine exercise on the road where they are trying to identify any suspects who are carrying hard drugs. Rachel stressed in her own opinion that the focus during such kind of operation was on Black boys. This desire to target mostly Black boys in this exercise for seemingly no justifiable reasons to Rachel made the boys to be carrying pains in their hearts. Subsequently, this form of pain led them to do things that they should not have done. They began to do things in their own way, and that which could be interpreted as taking the law into their hands without considering the implications. She is advocating for the need for the police to do more to address the problem of racism and protection of the citizens of their communities. Also, that the police and the justice systems need to understand the cultural difference of the Black boys and their white counterparts, particularly why they speak the way they speak.

Rachel's Point of Reflection

Rachel, in reflecting and being a teacher with a wealth of experience of over 20 years in teaching practice explained what she meant by the way the Black youths speak as stated below.

Rachel: Generally, we know that as you know the Black people, I'm one of them, speak loud and vocal cords seem to produce louder sounds. When I should speak, they would say that I'm shouting. Shouting like that, what can we do? A white person who is looking at you, you know might say, I'm being aggressive, I'm shouting! What we need to understand is that God created us differently. When I attend their church, I say to them, I don't need the microphone to have a loud voice. When you speak loudly, they are given the name of being aggressive or maybe wants to start a fight, excuse me, he is only trying to express himself! What's wrong with that! So that's the system, that the school system has failed them for so long. And they are now coming out and saying, well, nobody's fighting for us, and so we are fighting for ourselves, unfortunately, they are killing themselves.

Rachel explained why the Black boys talk the way they do. The way the Black boys talk though is loud should not be equated to being aggressive. They talk loudly because their vocal cords produced loud voice. Whereas the white boys talk in a gentler way of speech. Moreover, a lack of this basic understanding would make the police and even the public behave in a negative manner towards these youths. This was the experience of Rachel. In her experience, there is a service of double standards that the police are offering, which was unexpected of a public organisation like that. What Rachel is sharing might be true of what was happening in her community where she was located. Conversely, Peter, another church leader presents a different opinion. He believes there has to be collaboration with the police to understand why they do certain things the way they do them. Peter a Black church leader, shared his own experience with the police in his community.

Peter: In order to address these things, we have done I tried to work with the police force. In 2018, I was working as an assessor with the police. When they wanted to recruit, I was among the panel. They have an internal interview with police staff members for promotion. They must go through an interview process with the panel of which I was one of the members. I learnt some things from the police perspective. The importance of 'stop and search,' and why it wasn't that it was just being targeted at black boys only. The fact is most of the perpetrators of knife crimes are Black boys. Enfield police found someone walking with a winter coat and was hiding long matchet there. Stop and search has been useful to save lives. As a church, we work closely

with the police. A crime was committed in the city centre, while they are chasing him, he knocked someone and killed a person in front of the church on the road. There was no evidence that police could rely on. However, because we work closely with the police, they came and took the recording from my CCTV and by that examination, the culprit was identified and arrested, and I will say that this is a big plus for us as a contribution to the community in arresting a criminal who killed a person. Working with the police in terms of collaboration with them, they intimated us with a criminal activity going round.

A form of collaboration with the police system in his borough gave Peter another opinion of the policing system which is different from that of Rachel. There might be some element of truth in what Rachel was saying as there has been proven allegations and reports of racism amongst the police force (IOPC, 2023; UN News, 2023). For instance, IOPC states:

The Macpherson Inquiry into the death of Stephen Lawrence stated that the police service was institutionally racist. The Inquiry found consistent evidence of the ‘over-policing’ and ‘under-protection’ of Black, Asian and minority ethnic communities. IOPC (2023)

Nevertheless, working and collaborating with the police in her borough might broaden the understanding of Rachel about how the police system operates and why they do what they do. Peter, by his volunteer work as an assessor in a police employment panel, and collaboration with them in some operations, has made him developed a much broader understanding of the policing system than his other church leader’s colleague from another borough.

Policing in British society is challenging work. The police force tries to provide a balance between arresting a suspect who has done something wrong, something that negatively impacts the well-being and peace of someone else and the community, with fairness in carrying out such a sensitive operation. Conversely, the police would want to carry out the job in a civil and non-offensive manner. A suspect who seems to be resisting arrest and needs to be arrested will demand the use of force or some level of measured pressure and aggression to get the job done. Also, there is the challenge of the risk to the lives of the service men. For instance, resisting arrest by a suspect might be in the form of a counterattack on the police, including the use of dangerous weapons. What is happening to the moral decadence among the youths of this present age is a cause for concern to the church leaders, community leaders, governments, families, and other stakeholders in the British communities. One of the key factors identified

based on the church leaders' accounts is the lack of religious instruction. The next section expounds further on this key underlying cause of knife crime in British communities.

5.10 Lack of Religious Instruction

Church leaders consider the removal of religious instruction from schools and colleges in the nation as a significant factor that could be attributed to the growing vices and indiscipline amongst the youth in the nation. They quoted the scriptural reference: "Train up your child in the way he should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it" (NKJV Bible, 2016: Proverbs 22:6). Early moral and religious instructions underpinning moral behaviours in the formative years is critical to character formation and the resultant values displayed in older stage of life.

Josiah's Point of Reflection

Josiah, a church leader in reflection, stated his own thoughts this way.

Josiah: When children are being pastored, what are the things they get from being pastored? Spiritual nourishment. The word of God ministers to them, and this word of God tells them that there are some things that are not allowed among the children of God. They are taught that there are things you don't say and things you don't do and people you don't associate with. I remembered my own children, and I always say this in church when these children said they want to go and do a sleepover in their friends' homes. I always asked them, the people you want to do a sleepover with what kind of religion do they practice? Is their upbringing like yours? What kind of rules do they have in their family? So, if the rule in their family is different from yours or if the rules are so loose that they can do whatever they like means that you are not allowed to do some things by virtue of you being children of God. Then you can't do that.

The scripture says that bad company corrupts good habits. Don't mix with people who use foul language or dress in any way that they shouldn't be dressing, and who are prone to committing crimes. So, children from church are nurtured; because of that they will distance themselves from any group that has the tendency to use knives to commit crime. So, because of that the word of God discerns them. As you know, bring up a child in the way that he should go and when he grows up, he will not depart from it.

Josiah explained the significance of religious instruction that is lacking in our school system today. This, in his view is responsible for the continuous rise in knife crime rates in recent years just before coronavirus pandemic kicked in in the year 2019. According to Josiah, the word of

God provides godly moral instruction for the children. It provides guidance about what are acceptable and unacceptable behaviours. The word of God also guides speech and helps to relate well with others because it teaches good virtues such as sincere love for your neighbours, virtues of goodness, mercy, forgiveness, meekness, and self-control.

Further, the youths that are stabbing, injuring, and killing others do so because they lack these virtues. They are unforgiving and vengeful. They believe they have been hurt or betrayed and they need to retaliate and pay others back on their own terms. They lack the virtue of self-control which allows an individual to be temperate and respectable in reacting to other people's comments or actions. They lack the virtue of mercy to forgive their friends of any wrongs done to them and move on with their lives. They always desire to take revenge in whatever way possible to show that they are not weak, they are not a walk-over. Therein lies the power of religious instruction because of that ability that it gives the children and the youths to make right choices in their reactions to the challenges and issues of life that they have to deal with on a regular basis.

Additionally, religious instructions for instance from the Bible instruct children about regard and honour for their parents, elders, and teachers. These kinds of instruction help the youths to have regard for their teachers, to listen to their advice and counsel that could be helpful to them in their academic journey and in their relationships with others. It helps in relating with colleagues of other colours or race or culture. It helps to deal with matters relating to cultural diversity, equality, and justice. This would create a conducive atmosphere of learning and integration in a school environment or in the community where the youths reside. It would create atmosphere of peace, love security and unity within the family, school, or community settings.

5.11 Theological Reflection and Response to the Underlying Causes of Knife Crime

The first two stages in the Pastoral Cycle (PC) have been examined in Sections 5.3 to 5.10. The reflections of church leaders were also examined to provide a basis for the last key stage of PC analysis - theological reflection and response. As discussed in Section 4.5.2, Willows and Swinton (2000:76) propose three key questions that guide theological reflections. Due to the interdisciplinary nature of this study, and the focus being church leadership instead of theological study, the three questions for theological reflections are modified as follows.

- What questions and analyses arise from Christian faith concerning what the Church leaders have experienced?

- How has Christian thought approached these issues raised?
- What possible practical outcomes may be brought to bear on the situation?

5.11.1 Christian Faith Versus Church Leaders' Experience

Green states:

Theological reflection seeks to understand and interpret the world through the eyes of its Christian faith using sacramental, credal and biblical insights that the Church has at its disposal – but it will be God in our experience of the world which will be the focus of theology's attention (Green, 1990:11-12).

Christian faith is based upon the belief that has its foundation in Biblical discussion about God and how that relates to human beings. De Roest (2019) asserts that for those involved in theological reflection, Scripture, prayer, and reading and analysing texts with other practitioners were important as part of the reflective process. Milton (2023) affirms that theological reflection involves identifying, evaluating, and responding to a present issue of human experience through faithful engagement with and wise response from a prayerful study of the Bible. He expounds on two key areas to theological reflection: 1. Classification – identifying, naming, and integrating, and 2. Synthesis – applying, analysing, and knowing. However, key themes have been identified and named. The BMC leaders based on their experiences of knife crime in their communities have shared their own opinion on some key underlying causes of knife crime. As discussed in preceding sections, these factors include family or parental problems, gangs and drugs, bullying, absence of recreation facilities, social media, culture and identity, policing and justice, and absence of religious instruction.

On theological reflection, a significantly copious number of questions arises regarding Christian faith and the experience that the church leaders shared from those identified themes named earlier. Three critical questions amongst these ones may include the following.

1. What are biblical insights and God's positions on the underlying causes of knife crime?
2. What should be the position and response of church leaders to a knife crime situation or crisis in their community?
3. How should they relate to or support the victims, their families, the perpetrators, the governmental agencies, faith leaders, and other stakeholders of knife crime in their communities?

Answering these questions provides a means of integration and synthesis into the church leader's experience. Questions 2 and 3 are basically similar to earlier theological reflection questions raised about Christian thought and practical outcomes. These are then addressed later together. Based on Section 4.5.2, theological reflection allows the researcher flexibility in discussing human experience with Bible tradition and consideration for the researcher's unique life experiences. Further, the support of two or three bible passages relevant to a situation affirms the theological stand on that situation (Deuteronomy 17:6, Matthew 18:16, NKJV). This is based upon consensus and belief by Bible scholars and Christians that the test of theological truth or biblical validity of a statement must be based upon at least two similar references from the Bible. For instance, the Bible states:

But if he will not hear, take with you one or two more, that 'by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established' (Matthew 18:16, NKJV)

Therefore, based on theological reflections, examining the questions, and seeking relevant context in the Bible, Table 5.3 presents a brief summary of this finding, which provides the biblical insights and interpretation of these regarding the themes under discussion.

Table 5.3 Analysis of Christian Faith and Underlying Causes of Knife Crime

Theme	Bible Reference (NKJV)	Synthesis (Analysing, Applying and Knowing)
Family Issue	Genesis 1: 26-28; 2:7; 18:19; Deuteronomy 6:6-7, Exodus 20:16	The Bible refers to God as the supreme being who created human beings and families. His plan is that the father and mother would raise the children together. They will train these children in a godly way, and they are expected to obey their parents. Where this instruction is not realised, a lone parent struggles to single-handedly raise them based on factors discussed in Section 5.3. This condition makes the children more vulnerable to external negative influences.
Gangs & Drugs	Exodus 23:2; Proverbs 1:10	The Bible warns against being in a group that seeks to commit evil and advises children not to consent to such an invitation. Ignorance of this biblical injunction and yielding to temptations lead to gangs and drugs. Section 5.4 expands further on gangs and drugs.

Bullying	Psalms 52:1-5; 64:1-8	The Psalmist talks about deceitful tongues and speaking words to destroy others and the implications. That God acts to deal with and judge such people. Bullying is contrary to moral behaviour and God's plan for humanity. Further discussion in Section 5.5.
Absence of Recreation	Ecclesiastes 10:18; 1 Timothy 5:13-14	Idleness of hands will cause problems. Paul admonished Timothy, his son in the faith to encourage young women to work and manage their homes instead of being idle. He stresses that this could lead to gossips and meddling with other people's business. That implies failure to engage idle children and youths can lead to moral degeneration. Further discussion in Section 5.6.
Social media	Proverbs 6:16-18; Exodus 20:13; 23:2	Social media can be used to carry both positive and negative information. The Bible speaks against the spread of false information or joining to incite division and negativity, which is common in this platform. As much as God might not be against it, this information tool needs to be managed carefully to avoid negativity particularly amongst the young generation. Section 5.7 discusses this further.
Culture & Identity	Psalms 64:1-7; Daniel 1:1-20	Here the Bible talks about some people planning to commit evil. Such a conspiracy is common in society. The pressure of the younger generation seeking to protect themselves by carrying knives for defence has become a culture and identity crisis which the Bible is categorically against. Daniel and his three colleagues refused to compromise their stand for the right things they believed. This stance helped them to navigate the challenge of their times and to excel in life. Further discussion is in Section 5.8.
Policing & Justice	Ecclesiastes 5:8, Proverbs 21:3; Isaiah 56:1	The Bible indicates that God is against the oppression of the poor and perversion of justice. God commands righteousness and justice in the society and to be exercised by the government and the justice system. Where these instructions are denied, people lose confidence in the justice system and find their own way of dealing with issues. Section 5.9 discusses this further.
Lack of Religious Instruction	Proverbs 22:6; 1 Timothy 4:11-12,	Here, the Bible indicates that paying attention to the children and training them in godly ways during formative years will make them grow up to do what is right in the latter years, as examined

	2 Timothy 3:16-17	in Section 5.10. Also, the Bible provides information that can provide instructions, guidance, and correction to help build an individual on the right way of living. Where this information is lacking, the children and youths might be ignorant of the right way of living.
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Having considered the Bible tradition and church leaders' experience, the following examines the response of church leaders. These are Christians with Christian thought and tradition. Therefore, their response is examined under the application of Christian thought and tradition.

5.11.2 Application of Christian Thought and Tradition

Based on the discussion in the preceding section, Christian thought aligns with Biblical thought and the perceived will of God. Professor John's report on Serious Youth Violence (SYV) proffers the following Christian thought. He states

In Jesus, we see God's desire for peace, healing and reconciliation made manifest (e.g. Mark 5:36-43; John 8:7-11; Matthew 26: 51-52 and parallel in Luke) and in Jesus we see God taking all human violence, torture, and power over others to the Cross. We proclaim salvation to others by Jesus' cross and resurrection and that means caring profoundly about doing something about the violence and suffering perpetrated on the most vulnerable within our own communities (John, 2013: 2).

The church leaders, having understood Biblical instructions, respond in a way to solve the problem of the knife crime crisis within their communities and spheres of influence. This is because God and the Christian faith seek peace, love, and brotherliness rather than troubles, fighting, hate, and war. In this present dispensation, God is referred to as a God of peace (Romans 15:33; 1 Peter 3:10-11, NKJV). Also, when Jesus Christ, the Lord and Saviour of the world, was about to depart this world, what he promised his disciples, that is the Christians, is peace (John 14:27). That is why Christian tradition favours peace among people and communities.

The church leaders as Christians should seek to offer care and support for the victims, their families, and the community when there is an occurrence of knife crime. Christian faith and tradition encourage care for those who are in grief, sorrow, or have suffered bereavement. This might be through diverse ways according to grace and abilities. It could be through regular

visits, prayers, organising vigils, counselling support, and at times provision of basic needs. Jesus Christ encouraged those in pain and carrying the burden of life to come to him for support and comfort (Matthew 11:28) while Paul the apostle describes God as the God of all comfort and encourages Christians to comfort others with the same comfort they received from God (II Corinthians 1:3 & 4). However, the disposition of church leaders in line with the Christian tradition and thought to the perpetrators might be different. Although God is a God of love (1 John 4:8, NKJV), He is also a God of justice. He commands His people to keep justice and do what is right.

Thus says the Lord: “Keep justice, and do righteousness, For My salvation is about to come, And My righteousness to be revealed (Isaiah 56:1, NKJV).

Although love would be shown to the perpetrators by prayer and sharing the need to do right, but the implications of wrong actions and justice should be made known and allowed to take its course in any case.

In addition, church leaders would seek to work willingly and cooperate with the police and government agencies, support the community in prayers, seeking for peace and community cohesion and unity. Cooperating with the police and government agencies is expected of church leaders by Christian ethics and tradition that request Christians to be subject to authority and to pray for them (Romans 13:1; I Timothy 2:1-2; Jeremiah 29:7, NKJV). By doing this, the Bible indicates the people will live in a community where there is peace, righteousness, and justice. They should seek to bring the community together by organising prayer vigils and raising a voice that everyone should stand for peace, truth and righteousness and justice.

5.11.3. Future Implications or Outcomes

Further, considering future implications and practical outcomes, the Bible indicates serious implications or consequences for individuals or communities that do not heed the warnings and divine instructions about allowing underlying causes of knife crime to fester. The Bible states

My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. Because you have rejected knowledge, I also will reject you from being priest for Me; Because you have forgotten the law of your God, I also will forget your children (Hosea 4:6, NKJV)

This implies people's lives would be negatively impacted should they lack the knowledge of God and obedience to His commands regarding the underlying causes of knife crime examined. This prophetic insight is reflected in unnecessary killings being perpetuated regularly through knife crime and other means in our streets and communities. Professor John stresses

Our faith demands not just that we care about SYV but that in Jesus Christ's name we work with others to protect the lives of our young people among us and make it possible for them to live in safety (John, 2013:2).

The Christian response to these underlying causes of knife crimes implies that church leaders have a moral and faith responsibility to take action to mitigate against knife crime occurrence in the communities they operate in. One way to determine this is by finding out from these church leaders what their roles and responsibilities are during periods of knife crime. The following Chapters 6 to 8 present the data and analysis of these roles and behaviours of church leaders during the knife crime crisis.

5.12 Chapter Five Summary

This chapter analysed the church leaders' accounts of the key issues underlying the knife crime crisis in British communities. It started by presenting key themes inferred from the results of the data from the interview conducted with BMC Church leaders. These key themes, such as parental problems, church leadership roles, bullying, challenges, and implications, were discussed briefly. There are eight key factors that trigger cases of knife crimes that were identified by the church leaders. These factors include family or parental problems, gangs, drugs, bullying, and absence of religious instruction. These factors were analysed by the Pastoral Cycle methodology. This allowed for discussion of church leaders' experience of knife crime, contextual analysis, exploration, and theological reflection.

What is unique about these accounts by church leaders is, they provide more insights and lived experiences about these factors that trigger knife crime crises in British society. Moreover, this chapter presented what are the reflections of church leaders as they share their experiences of knife crime. Furthermore, it provided a theological reflection of these issues, triggering knife crime crises in British communities, and these reflections were guided by procedures proposed by theology scholars. The discussion of BMC leaders' experience, analysis, and reflections provides a background to the next chapter's discussion on their response to the cases of knife crime by examining their roles and behaviours towards knife crime crises in the communities they represent.

Chapter Six: Pastoral Roles of BMC Leaders During Knife Crime Crisis

6.1 Chapter Overview

The last chapter identified and discussed in some detail eight key factors that are the underlying causes of knife crime crisis in British society as shared by church leaders in the three cities the study was conducted. This chapter examines the pastoral roles which are the first category of three overarching roles that BMC leaders played during knife crime crisis in their respective communities located in London, Birmingham and Manchester as indicated in Section 1.6. The other overarching roles which will be discussed in subsequent chapters are educational and social action roles. Section 6.2 provides preliminary comments of observation from the three research cities using the first two steps of PC, Sections 6.3 to 6.10 explore and analyse the church leaders' response in the pastoral roles, Section 6.11 provides a summary of this chapter.

6.2 Preliminary Comments

Forty-nine BMC leaders were employed for data analysis. This comprised twenty-one (21) leaders in London, and fourteen (14) each in Birmingham and Manchester. The interview data were subjected to two key methodological stages, realist narrative and thematic analyses. Inferences from these analyses indicate three overarching roles of BMC leaders. These are Pastoral, Educational and Social action roles. The first key role is explored in this chapter. The church leaders acted as 1. Pastor, 2. Father figure, 3. Counsellor, 4. Confidant, 5. Servant leader, 6. Authentic leader, 7. Autocratic leader, and 8. Provider (Figure 6.1).

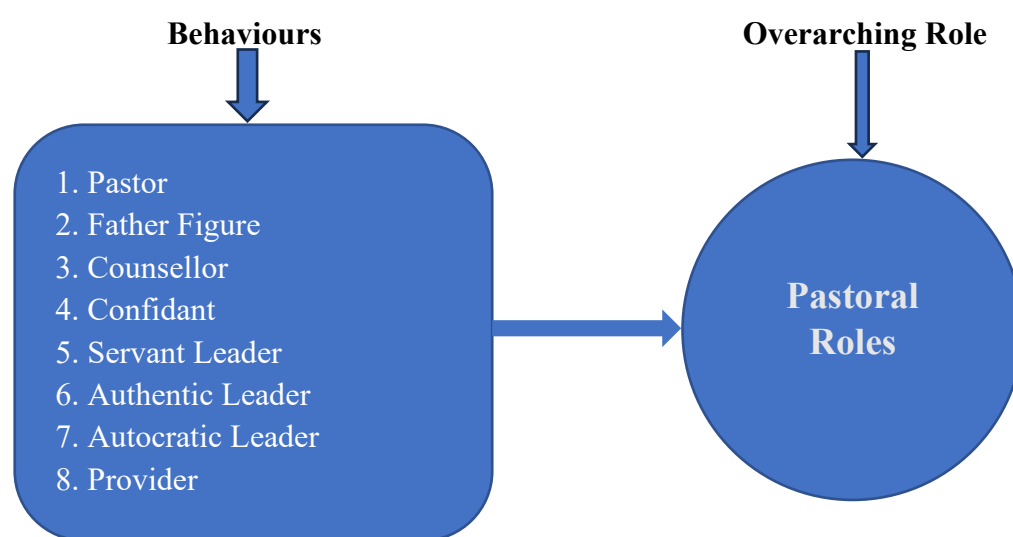


Figure 6.1: Pastoral roles of church leaders during knife crime crisis

These pastoral roles comprise the set of behaviours of church leaders during varied circumstances of knife crime crises that occurred in their communities. These results provide data for analysis and exploration. Pastoral cycle analysis based upon Green (1990)'s proposition, takes cognisance of such factors as historical, geographical, social, economic, cultural, and religious factors in its analysis.

The history of those involved in knife crime is consistent with what the church leaders are sharing across the three cities investigated. These are mostly youths coming from immigrant backgrounds and experiencing economic deprivation being lured into the world of drugs and gangs. There are few other peers that are from Caucasian background. Geographic locations are different, as the research involves three cities. The spread of research places is more extensive in London than Birmingham and Manchester because London is inevitably larger in population size than others. Also, London is more ethnically diverse than others which is consistent with prior research (ons.gov.uk, 2022). However, all the three cities indicate similar trends in terms of socio-economic factors with regards to those involved in knife criminal activities. London is growing to an increasing secular city than others and crime rates increasingly higher than other research and non-research cities in England (Butcher et al., 2019). Section 3.3 has earlier discussed the geographic, economic, and religious conditions prevalent in the research cities.

Based on the data results from the stories and experiences of knife crime being shared across the three research cities, when compared and contrasted, the three overarching roles being played by the church leaders were broadly similar. All the church leaders across these cities shared similar views as to the roles being played during the periods of knife crime crises in their respective locations. The only major difference that could be inferred is the extent of their roles and operations are not the same and might be based on how established the churches of these leaders are and the availability of resources, be they human, financial, and, material resources, to execute their projects. Chapter three presents further details of historic and cultural context of the youths in the three research cities. The following sections, 6.3 to 6.10 explores the pastoral roles in greater details to highlight the significance of these roles in British communities. It is imperative to expound on the roles and behaviours of church leaders in greater depth because this answers one of the key three questions of this research, that is, 'what are the roles and behaviours of church leaders during knife crime crises? Also, the findings

reveal how significant are these roles and behaviours of these leaders in the communities and cities that their churches are located.

6.3 Pastor

A Pastor is a minister in charge of a Christian church or group, especially in some nonconformist churches. This is similar to the role of a shepherd over the sheep. In other words, the role of nurturing members in the word of God and caring for their spiritual needs in prayer, teaching them the word of God, and helping them fulfil their God-given potential in life. A Pastor is one of the significant roles of a church leader in the knife crime crisis. Alan (2011) believes that the principal responsibility of a pastor or clergy is the care and cure of souls. This care and cure of souls include these four essential functions: healing, sustaining, guiding, and reconciling. To offer pastoral care at the early church means fostering healing, sustenance, guidance, and reconciliation, not merely for individuals but for communities. Nevertheless, a Pastor might not be able to carry out all these functions alone. He/she might have to include other ministers, whether volunteered or paid staff, to achieve all these functions in the church and community they represent.

Further, just as a shepherd of a flock cares for the sheep from birth till death, a pastor cares for the members of his/her assembly from the cradle to the grave. He is expected to have oversight of the well-being of the members of the church (1 Timothy 3:1). It is the duty of a pastor to be aware of the condition of the members and give attention to their needs (Proverbs 27:23), just like a shepherd seeks to know the condition of his sheep and gives attention to them. Consequently, a pastor must be familiar with the physical, emotional, and spiritual states of the members. He is expected to be quite versed in the knowledge of the Bible such that he would be able to feed his/her members with knowledge and understanding that could help them navigate the challenging issues of life. He/she must be open-minded to his/her congregants in church services and interact with the people. He/she welcomes and greets members to church services on Sundays and other days of the week. He/she enquires about their welfare, visits them, and prays for them. The pastor organizes the church members into groups and specialized ministries that identify with their needs, interests, and talents.

Also, apart from preaching, teaching, counselling, and prayers, a pastor is involved in other activities in the life of the members, families, and communities they represent, such as naming

ceremonies, baby dedications, baptisms, weddings, house dedications, burial functions, and other social functions in the community. As a pastor and a church leader in the community, he/she oversees the activities and operations of the church in the community. The presence of the church in a community aims to bring peace, harmony, hope, and unity. The church leader coordinates all these activities and engages members of the church community to serve in one role, such as singing, ushering, teaching, discipleship, protocol, and social action. Through these activities, members such as the youths are focussed on responsible activities that take them off the streets. As a result of these activities and the influence they impact on the youths of their local assembly, they are less prone to be involved in criminal activities such as knife and gun crimes.

The crisis of knife crime has far-reaching negative consequences. It is not only because it disrupts the community, but it also terminates lives and shortens hopes. Knife crimes cause death, fear, injuries, suffering, pain, sorrow, traumas, and disillusionment to the victims, their families, friends, and members of their community. Pastors care for and support church members and other members of the community during the knife crime crisis. The victims and families are visited and comforted by sharing God's word and prayer. They give counselling therapy in many instances during times of sorrow, pain, fear, and traumas that knife crime brought to the community. Church leaders acting as pastors, by their values and beliefs, are people who dwell on hope. They give hope for a better future and believe in the best of their members, the victims, and their families.

However, knife crime truncates the efforts of church leaders to give people this hope, especially among young teenage boys and girls. It is not a pleasant experience for church leaders to go through. The following are the accounts of two pastors, Isaac, and Esther, about what they do in their communities that relate to the knife crime crisis. These pastoral roles were demonstrated before, during, or after the knife crime crisis.

Isaac: We need to counsel, be there for them, and to support them. Yes, our point is to be able to take them on a journey on how to understand and how to be able to cope. We have had to do bereavement's counselling. Provide counselling for people, and chat with people that may be having post-traumatic stress disorder.

Esther: You know as a church our aim is to transform individuals to be godly. We educate them not only on the issues of knife crimes but on many areas of life. We try to educate them when they are young about what they should engage in and things they should not do including avoiding knife crimes, sex education, how to speak up when something is wrong.

The pastoral roles shared by Isaac and Esther exemplify the care of church leaders acting as pastors to their church members and people in their church communities. The pastors are conversant with the challenges of knife crimes in their communities and seek to minimise the impact of these challenges through their activities both within and outside the walls of their churches. They work on the prevention of knife crimes by regularly teaching moral and Bible instructions on what they are expected to be doing or not doing in life. They teach them how to react to issues and to relate with others in a peaceful way.

Prior research as discussed in Chapters 1 and 3, has shown that knife crime crisis has become a major threat to the peace and stability of the communities and boroughs across the nation. The rates of deaths caused by knife crime reached a 70-year crisis peak level by May 2019, just before the global Coronavirus pandemic fully kicked in. The narratives include stories of injuries, deaths, wasted lives, sorrow, bitterness, trauma, and varied health problems being experienced by the victims, victims' families, and the broader society in general.

The analysis of the stories and narratives shared by the church leaders about knife crimes indicates twenty-three significant ways of behaviour by which church leaders reacted to the varied challenges that knife crimes have posed in their churches and communities. It is essential to note that this knife crime crisis is identifiable with specific categories of age groups. This research identifies that there is a particular age group where knife crime is prevalent. Based on the stories and narratives of church leaders on knife crimes, the teenagers were primarily identified with the knife crime crisis and mostly of the male sex. Jane (this and any other names mentioned in this research that relate to church leaders are pseudonyms and not their real names), a church leader shared:

Jane: For me, it was a challenging experience. I found that I need to put some structure in place for them. Like when they are coming from school so that they will not be on the streets. Like some of them, their mums might have gone to work; there is no formal supervision for them. We set up something for them in the church because we have our permanent place of worship then. When they leave school, they come to church to play music or what they like and

take their time. Thankfully, it takes them away from the streets. But later, we realise that as they are clocking 18, 19, 20, you know, this knife carrying just dropped like that. As they grow, if the right support is available for them, they were able to get focussed and not be on the streets. As they get older, I think something happens in how they think, that they do not engage in this knife carrying or crime anymore.

Therefore, the teenage group is the general age category involved in the knife crime crisis. That demographic age group and mostly male, is where knife crime revolves, both the victims and the perpetrator. However, the gang leaders and drug barons at the grassroots of this crime might be of the older age category in many instances.

The crisis is a huge challenge to the local and national governments, political and religious leaders, and other stakeholders across the nation. The challenge posed by knife crime is a multifaceted problem requiring a multifaceted solution. Renny, another BMC leader described the challenge this way.

Renny: The challenges are multifaceted. They are multifaceted; there's an economic problem. There's a social challenge. There's a leadership challenge. There's a mentoring challenge. So, there's a societal challenge. There's also the one contributed by the government.

Grint (2010) describes this demanding situation as a 'wicked' problem, and consequently, there is no straight-jacket solution. It may require what could be considered a 'clumsy' solution requiring a collective or collaborative approach in getting to the root of the problem and proffering a solution. Grint asserts that a critical component of a necessarily clumsy solution is to combine elements of all three cultural types: the individualist, the egalitarian, and the hierarchist together in seeking a solution. Similarly, in dealing with the challenge that knife crime poses to the church leaders and the communities that they represent, there needed to be a multifaceted approach or ways to solution.

Therefore, to deal with the challenge posed by the knife crime crisis, this research indicates that church leaders have been found to have acted or behaved in many ways under pastoral functions. They have acted or behaved as a pastor, a father figure, a counsellor, a confidant, a servant leader, an authentic leader, an autocratic leader, and a provider as discussed in the preceding chapter. These roles they have acted to make a positive difference and to mitigate

against knife crime crisis in their respective churches and communities have had a significant positive impact on the crisis. Actually, these roles at times are combined when the church leaders are acting to make a difference in a crisis situation. For instance, when a church member is knifed, and the pastor goes to the hospital to pray for him, which is the caring part of the pastoral work, the pastor follows the victim up after recovery by counselling and by acting as a confidant to the member who happened to be the victim of a knife crime.

However, the sorrows, pains, traumas, and other forms of emotional experiences that knife crimes unleash on the victims and their families also extend to the pastors, friends, neighbours, communities, and nation. Pastors also feel with the victims, empathise with them even as they strive to comfort and counsel them. Rachel, one of the pastors, shared the moving experience of knife crime in her community.

Rachel: It was a scary experience, and this happened about two Christmas seasons ago there about to my very, very close friend's son. He was knifed, he was just here in Hackney, not too far from, you know, where I live and was knifed about 17 times, and the video went viral, you know, everywhere, was really nasty. I could not even have a close look at the face of the person in the video. To even know that he was that close home, I was just crying, was sad when I received the message, you know when the video came through on my WhatsApp, and I opened it, I was just literally crying, and tears were dropping, and I was praying and asking God to please not let the mother of this child cry. I just kept saying that the mother of this child must not cry; please, Lord whatever you need to do to keep him alive, please, Lord! I didn't even check the face until the mom now called me to say you know, because she had travelled and has to come back from Nigeria. She travelled to Nigeria, and she was saying whether we have seen what happened. I asked what happened and then she told me, that the boy had to go through so many operations, so many times because of the knife, just for him to stay alive. We thank God that he is alive today. It's a very scary experience, a very scary experience that the family affected had to be moved away from the area.

This story, as shared by Rachel, indicates how knife crimes can have a serious emotional impact not only on the victims, their families, and friends but also on pastors and other members of the community who heard and saw the horrific video. This is particularly true in this digital age of social media and the fast pace of news dissemination. The destabilising sad news of the horrific stabbing that Rachel saw and listened to in the video sent to her WhatsApp made her

be so emotionally upset as to start crying. Correspondingly, there might be many members of that community in her shoes with similar emotional experiences who, when they saw and listened to the video, might also have started to cry at the sight of the horrific stabbing of a teenage boy. At this point, those experiences due to the impact of knife crimes would require some counselling or the care and prayer of a pastor to navigate through their bad experiences successfully.

Fortunately, church leaders are making themselves available and acting as pastors to provide care, comfort, counselling, prayers, and encouragement to the church members and other members of the community who might need their service when a knife crime is committed or in the case of any injury or bereavement or need to visit hospitals, local clinics, prisons, and schools. Along the way as they serve they act to transform lives. The kind of leadership models exhibited in these instances of pastoral care that could be inferred seem to be servant leadership and transformational leadership as discussed in Sections 2.3.2.1 and 2.3.2.2. The BMC leaders had a strong desire to serve people (Ronquillo, 2011), they are humble-minded, have concern for human dignity, and have a deep sense of purpose (Greenleaf, 1997).

6.4 Father Figure

The role of a church leader as a father figure to church members, especially the youth, cannot be overemphasised. Undoubtedly, the results of this research indicate an incredibly significant role that church leaders play in the life of church members by filling the gap created in many homes that lack father figures. A church leader plays the role of a father or a mother, whatever the situation, to fill the gap of a particular need in the children's lives in a home with a single parent. This could also occur when a father and mother figure is in the home, but a need arises for a church leader to fulfil that role. In this context, a church leader acts as a father figure and not as the actual biological male parent. Munroe (2000) proposes ten functional roles of a father. These roles are 1. Progenitor, 2. Source, 3. Sustainer & Nourisher, 4. Protector, 5. Teacher, 6. Disciplinarian, 7. Leader, 8. Head, 9. Caring One and 10. Developer.

Actually, the first two roles might only be applicable in a different context. The remaining eight indicate the vast responsibilities a father plays in the life and upbringing of a child. These responsibilities are quite critical as they could determine whether a child turns out to be successful in life or be someone that is difficult to be lured into gangs or become a perpetrator

of knife crime. Renny, a church leader, shared his experience as a father figure to some children in his church community.

Renny: Let's look out for those who are single parents with children in that most curious age. That age range would do something like that. So, what is or who is keeping an eye to be a support on that kid? I know so many kids that are around that age, both male and female, of single parents that I have decided to be a father to. I'm talking about originally about maybe five I don't want to say, I said to be a father to them. It's not just at a distance I came into their homes. I asked to keep up with what was going on. Let's talk. Let's talk about things. I have them on my dial, my phone.

The experience that Renny shared is quite common among many church leaders who shared their stories. The number of lone parents, particularly single mothers, is increasing, and a situation arises where children and teenagers are left without a father figure and, in some cases, without a mother. The mother then finds herself in a situation she has to add to her already busy work schedules the responsibilities that her husband should be handling, including paying bills, school runs, attending to the educational needs of the children, and providing moral guidance and instruction for the children. Undoubtedly, as she tries to balance taking care of the children and working to pay bills, she cannot do as much as she should to oversee her children's activities. The children then get connected to gangs due to the pressure of peers and the alluring and deceptive world of gangs using economic bait to catch them.

Unfortunately, the world of gangs is strategic in how they get their victims, according to another church leader, Joel . They look for children where they notice the absence of a father figure, a home where a father has abandoned his responsibilities. They target such homes. They would go where these children play with their friends, such as chicken and chips shops or parks. There they will offer to buy chicken and chips for these children because they know they lack financial support. They might start by buying some things of interest, like wristwatches as gifts for the child. They would eventually proceed to ask them to go on an errand for them with some stipends as rewards. Further, they will start sending them to deliver drugs to business partners and giving them a share of the profit money. The business of delivering drugs could take these children in the gangs to many places across the country, called county lines. That is why you found that some kids are absent from home for some days, and the mother would be looking for them all over the community where she lives.

Another BMC leader shared a pathetic experience of young teenage boys he met in prison and how some of them were driven to join gangs so that they could support their mothers who were struggling financially to make ends meet. It is surprising to hear that even some of these mothers implicitly support their sons going into gangs and carrying drugs so they can earn some money to support them. A situation where a child brings some money home and gives it to his mum, and the mother cannot question or query where her child, who was not supposed to be working, got this money from, almost invariably indicates silent support for what her child is doing. This is part of the present-day dilemma in many economically disenfranchised homes.

Renny: So if I give you the money, you are thinking, oh, thanks, my son! So, what do you want, to just let the job go? And they would say, don't worry, mom, I look after you up. You go to prison. I've been to a couple of prisons to meet these guys. Ask, why are you in prison? Don't tell me, because of my mom, the majority say. So why? Because of your mom! Yes, I can't watch my mom walking and struggling and doing everything because dad is not there. Where is your dad? Not to be found. So, I just got to stand up for my mom and do something to support her.

The boy in the story shared is sympathetic to the economic problems that his mum is facing and, thereby, ready to do anything to make his mum happy. He is ready to join gangs and carry drugs to earn some money he could use to support his mum. Consequently, involvement in gangs and the hard drugs business could lead to knife crimes and convictions, just as Renny shared that many of these teenagers end up in prisons. On the other hand, if there was presence of a church leader acting as a father figure at home to this boy, he could have been guided and advised about the severe implications of joining gangs and being involved in drugs selling business. The role of the church leaders to arrest this situation, to be foster parents to these children, is then critical to give identity to these ones without a father figure in their lives. This is what Isaac, a church leader, has to say on how this role is manifested in church leadership.

Isaac: Christianity can play a lot because it gives identity to people. Church is a place where you can come to. Some people you meet have been in the well-trained home and have been with their fathers and mothers. They come into the church, and the ability to give us hope and confidence gives youth identity. Those who are in the church with a single parent, who has been raised by their mothers from my experience, by the time they come into the church for the

teaching of the scripture gives them an identity that they are saved by God because of what Christ has done, and secondly, you have elders in the church, who are male figure in the fellowship that also portray a father figure.

Obviously, church leaders provide an identity for these children from lone parents by offering them an alternative in two ways. Firstly, the church believes in a supernatural God, who is considered to be an ever-living father (Isaiah 6:9). Although you cannot see this father physically, he is there, taking care of people behind the scenes and providing for their needs. This kind of message being preached and taught in the church to these children assures them and could settle them emotionally to stand on their own to achieve something worthwhile in life, though their earthly father is not there to support them.

Secondly, the BMC leaders and some male adults in the church, on a volunteer basis, step into the lives of these children with their mothers' consent to offer help and support to these boys and girls. The support could come from regular financial support from male adults without any ulterior motives attached. It could also come from spending quality time with these kids or taking them out to some places of interest. This kind of gesture ensures these children look expectantly to the father figure, taking them out or giving them some money or gifts to meet their needs and desires in addition to the ones being provided by their mothers. Eventually, this kind of experience keeps the children focussed and makes it difficult for them to yield to peer pressure or be deceived by gangs.

This kind of behaviour of BMC leaders is in tandem with the paternalistic and charismatic leadership models with servant leadership being at the root of behaviour. The paternalistic style shows genuine care, concern, and kindness for the followers while maintaining some level of control (Hiller et al., 2019; Aycan, 2006). The charismatic model leads and provides a sense of meaning and motivation by the assurance of a great future if followers commit to the vision's goals (Lovelace et al., 2019; Mumford, 2006)

6.5 Counsellor

Church leaders have acted in many instances as counsellors to youths and single or full parents in the family, church, or community. They occupy the role of guiding people on personal issues of life that pose challenges to them. Obviously, this behaviour is manifested during or after the

knife crime crisis in a community and is reflected in the stories and narratives shared by the leaders. Gibson and Cartwright (2014) share their findings on narrative research that explores how a group of 22 adolescents construct the purpose and outcome of counselling. The results were found to fall into four forms of counselling outcomes which were tagged 'transformative,' 'supportive,' 'pragmatic,' and 'disappointed.' Each of these ascribed a different purpose to counselling and suggested different outcomes for participants. Nineteen of the 22 results indicated positive outcomes after counselling, with only three indicating otherwise. For instance, a participant who shared his experience of counselling is summarised as follows.

Nick's story described how his life was turned around as a result of counselling. Instead of remaining trapped in his own anger, he had been able to let his bitterness go and become a different sort of person altogether. He spoke about how he had gone from always being in trouble at school because of his anger outbursts to excelling in a range of areas (Gibson and Cartwright, 2014: 517).

The findings of Gibson and Cartwright highlight the significant role that counselling by church leaders plays in the lives of young adults, adults, the church, and the community they represent. A counsellor is trained to advise people on personal problems. Church leaders in the context of knife crimes have been found to advise members and the youth on personal problems and how to deal with them. For instance, Ruth, a church leader in Birmingham, shared her experiences of a knife crime crisis and how she had to organise a counselling session for her daughter.

Ruth: Everything that happened to that boy had no business with him, he just happened to be around, and they stopped and stabbed him. To us, it does not matter what happens to the offenders who were in it. The important thing is that this family lost a promising child, who was just eighteen. I had to arrange a counselling session for my daughter because she was crying, somebody she was in school with and then she heard that the person died due to this sort of thing, and the boy was quite known, he is not like the quiet type, because they said that he was into this music, so he was always visible kind of. A lot of them knew him, so at his funeral that they showed on TV, in the TV clip they showed that was sent to me, you would think that it was one big official or wherever they were because I think a group gathered and then funded his funeral and everything.

The story just narrated by Ruth indicates the far-reaching consequences of the knife crime crisis in British society. The extent of negative emotions caused also reaches those who were to watch what happened to the victim via various platforms of social media that the information might have been sent. The sad news of a promising young lad being stabbed to death that the church leader's daughter heard and probably saw in the video clip of how her schoolmate and friend were stabbed and killed in such terrible circumstances of knife crime created a negative emotion which led her to start crying. Consequently, to make Ruth's daughter overcome the emotional upset, she has to go into a counselling session. This shows the critical need for counselling during crises of knife crimes as the victims' families and friends come to terms with what has occurred.

The victim might have survived the attack, and he/she is only injured. In some cases, there is the fatal condition of the victim. The victim's family has to bear the burden of sorrow in a lifetime journey of remembering their son died a sudden death at the hands of evil gangs. The investments in that child have gone down the drain. The dream for that child has all of a sudden disappeared. The relations, friends, neighbours, faith and community leaders, and other acquaintances have to come to terms with the sudden loss of someone they knew. Honestly, many of such categories of people would require counselling. They need to be given an assurance that all will be well. Such an experience is not a repetitive phenomenon. Also, the law enforcement agencies are working on the security of their lives and that of their communities. They need to be counselled on the attitude or posture to take at such challenging times. They need to control their emotions so that their health is not adversely affected.

Actually, counselling could also work in the pre-crisis stage of knife crimes, and it could prevent a condition that might potentially lead to single parenthood. This is because single parenthood, if care is not taken, may be a precursor to raising a child who is involved in knife crime, just as single parenthood has been generally identified as one of the underlying causes of knife crimes in British society. Paul, a church leader, shared an experience of how he was involved in counselling a couple who were planning to go into divorce in marriage, which could have led to single parenting.

Paul: There is a particular case where the situation of the family was really become serious to the extent that one of the partners resolved to go to court for a divorce. By the time they got to the front of the judge, the judge would ask them a question. The man would reply that our

pastor, our father in the Lord, said this or that, intervened in this or that. The wife also said the pastor intervened in this. The judge then said that if your pastor could go to this extent in intervening before, how come you didn't consult him before contemplating this divorce case? In that case, I'm referring you back to that pastor who has been on your case for more than ten years. They brought the case back to us, and by the grace of God, the case was resolved.

Fortunately, in this case of counselling a couple facing a marital problem, the story has a happy conclusion. The judge sent the couple back to the church leader, who acted as a counsellor to advise and pray with them until they stabilise, and there was no need for the father figure in the family to leave home. Obviously, that implies a family is saved from divorce, some children are saved from a long-term separation from their father, and the children could still have the father figure at home to support the family and fulfil his responsibilities towards his wife and children.

On the other hand, gang members could be counselled out of the group if they were connected with a church leader who serves the role of a counsellor. Not all church leaders can fulfil the role of counselling the youth, knife crime victims, and perpetrators. It could be another way of stemming the tide of knife crimes in society when those involved are being counselled out of it. Paul has this to share about a teenager he counselled.

Paul: The young guy was hearing strange voices. The parents then came to me. I put him on weekly counselling with me. So, for a long time, he never missed a session. Concerning the strange voices, I came to understand that he was reading some occultic materials. I made him to understand that it might be because of these occultic materials that he was hearing negative voices. Whatever you are feeding your soul with, that is what will manifest in your life. It is a case of deliverance from demonic forces and needing prayers. To the glory of God, he stopped hearing the voices, and his life changed. He started doing well, and If I'm not mistaken, he will finish Uni this year.

Generally speaking, BMC leaders have shared the testimonies of many youths who happened to join their counselling session are being delivered from drugs and bad gangs. Some of these youths might be mentally challenged due to the use of drugs and some other factors. However, if they submit themselves to counselling, invariably, they get a solution to their problems. The experiences shared by Paul indicate two distinct models of leadership, the servant and

transformational styles. By Paul's acts of leadership there was transformation witnessed by a couple having marital problems and a male young adult having some emotional challenges.

6.6 Confidant

Church leaders serve as confidants to a lot of church members, youths, and adults during knife crime crises. By this, they believe the church leaders would pray for them and lighten their burdens by the opportunity to share the affairs of their lives that are bothering them with someone or an authority they could trust to keep their affairs confidential. A confidant is someone you trust and share your feelings and secrets with. One of the most significant roles of a church leader is to be a confidant. This is because, as Bookwala (2017) indicates, older adults who report the availability of a confidant have been found to have superior wellbeing in consonance with the theories of social support and socioemotional selectivity. Also, a confidant's availability is linked to better overall mental health and quality of life and lower levels of depression and anxiety. Consequently, the availability of confidants to teenage youths and young adults might improve their mental health, quality of life, and their disposition to matters relating to knife crimes.

Actually, what the church leaders shared about their roles as confidants affirms what Bookwala suggested. A church leader, Renny shared his encounter with a single mother who was stressed due to the weight of responsibilities she was carrying.

Renny: One of the single mothers called me yesterday and said, I am almost going mad. I asked what had happened. She said to me, I can't. It's difficult to take it anymore. So, this schooling is killing me. I must do the job. I'm supposed to do it as a project person. I must do homeschooling for a 10-year-old and 13 years old; I must wake them up. Sit on the bed, whatever I must cook for them. I have to pay the bill. And she started to cry. She's not connected or whatever. So, it's too much for me to even must take care of myself or something like that. So, I just need help; since their dad has gone for the last eight years in this UK nobody knows where to be found!

This is exacerbated by the absence of her husband, the father of her children, for many years now. Apart from her professional job as a project officer or manager, highly demanding work, she also has two children to take care of. Presumably, her responsibilities and obligations in

life might have doubled, making life hard for her. This kind of mental state made her break down into crying as she confided in and narrated her experience to a church leader. Fortunately, confiding in a church leader makes people emotional being improve. It would also clear their minds to allow fresh thinking and gain new insights into the solution. Confiding in others can be time-consuming, both for the confidant and the other party. However, the result is always positive and encouraging.

The work of confidants might be misunderstood, mainly when working with children and teenagers. The parents of these children might think that it is not necessary when these children are looking for someone else apart from their parents to confide in. Ade, a church leader, shared an experience in his interview session.

Ade: You won't believe it, sir. We have a child of 14-15 years old having girlfriends in the church because there are times, I do one-on-one sessions with them so that they can open up to me. What I know about some of them, their parents don't know. You can imagine one of them saying please, sir, you know you're a good father that he has someone who is his mum's age who wants to sleep with him. So, that's level of confidence that they have in me. The person might be a teacher or worker in the church. I replied to him, don't do it! The moment you do it, your life is spoiled. So, I do that counselling for them for the ones in our church every two weeks.

The function of a church leader as a confidant could be critical to the well-being of a child and his/her growth in life to becoming a responsible young adult in life. A church leader plays the role of a confidant as the situation demands. This role should not be confused with that of a counsellor. A confidant might just be a custodian of the information shared, and he/she might not press further to offer advice or guidance as obtainable in counselling. Generally speaking, the two roles could intermingle in many cases to achieve the purpose of supporting someone or a youth who is in need and meeting that particular need. On the other hand, in a situation where a teenager or any other individual has a critical issue bothering him/her, an absence of a confidant might worsen the situation, and the result might be disastrous in what could have been prevented from happening.

The role of a BMC leader, Ade taking time to listen to teenagers and counselling them demonstrates two models of leadership discussed in Sections 2.3.2.1 and 2.3.2.6. These are authentic and servant styles of leadership. Servant leaders sacrifice their time to serve the need of the followers (Greenleaf, 1997). Complementing this behaviour, authentic leaders are known to be self-aware, humble, and look out for the welfare of others (Whitehead, 2009). George et al. (2007) add that they engender trust and build genuine connections with others.

6.7 Servant Leader

Broadly speaking, leaders in the secular and church sectors manifest a vast array of leadership models. Naturally, the most talked about in the Bible that church leaders subscribed to is servant leadership. Many church leaders believe that the leadership style of their Lord and Master, Jesus Christ is 'servant leadership' (Pugh, 2013; Greenleaf, 1977). There was an instance, written in the Holy Bible, where Jesus washed the disciples' feet to show the importance of serving others (John 13: 4-14, NKJV). In another instance, Jesus revealed that the secret of greatness in his kingdom lies in serving others.

But Jesus called them to Himself and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those who are great exercise authority over them. Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant. And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave, just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many (Matthew 20:25-28, NKJV).

Therefore, many church leaders have come to imbibe a heart of service and follow a servant leadership style of operation that the Lord Jesus preached. This research indicates that a considerable number of church leaders support this concept of leadership much more than any other. On the contrary, some church leaders argue that Jesus, their master, and the spiritual leader they follow, employs not only servant leadership but other leadership styles such as autocratic, paternalistic, and authentic forms of leadership during his earthly ministry. As a result, some leaders would then argue for the 'situational leadership concept', which states that the leadership style you employ in any given situation depends on what you believe would best apply to that context (Green, 2001). In other words, a church leader could use several leadership

styles to carry out his/her responsibilities in the church or the communities in which he/she operates.

Actually, a substantial number of BMC leaders play the role of servant leaders because they believe they cannot impact the youths and other members of the congregation or community unless they lead by example. They volunteered to engage in different activities with church members, including lowly rated jobs in the church and community, to get the much-needed social action projects carried out. This is what a church leader shared about his experience serving in his community as a servant leader.

Ade: In a not-for-profit organisation, servant leadership is the best. People want to see you are doing it. You know, not having them to serve you, you know. Because, as you serve them, they will be happy to serve. When I get to church, and I see somewhere is dirty, I bring the hoover; as I'm carrying the hoover, two to three people will come and take over, some of them wondering what is happening. So, as you serve them, they serve you.

Indeed, the argument Ade was suggesting here is that serving others motivates others to serve you and do the work of God.

Also, a servant leader seeks to embody the spirit, attitude, and disposition of the most outstanding leader of all, Jesus Christ. The servant leader is marked by the impact of the Holy Spirit in his or her life with a spirit characterized by love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Galatians 5:22-23, NKJV). Agee (2001) suggests that if effective leadership flows from within and leaders are led out of who they are and not by technique, then this is the beginning place for defining the effective servant leader. The life of such a leader is marked by a genuine walk with the living Christ that is forming and shaping the person from within, making him more like Christ day by day.

Moreover, another aspect of the servanthood of Jesus Christ that church leaders imbibe is showing love and care to people through good works. The historical antecedent of Jesus, as recorded in the Bible, indicates that he was going about demonstrating love and doing good (Acts 10:38, NKJV). James, a church leader, shared an experience of a teenage boy involved in the gangs. He followed him up and continued to counsel and pray for him. When his parents were discouraged about him, he continued to believe in him and speak positive things about

his life. Whenever the boy encountered problems, he would call his pastor for spiritual counsel and prayer. The church leader kept loving him and kept speaking positivity into his life. The testimony is that the boy made it eventually, came out of the gangs, finished his university education, and became a responsible young adult in society. Action of James here portrays not only of servant leadership model but also of transformational leadership. Transformational leaders as discussed in Section 2.3.2.2 are able to inspire the followers to achieve organisational goals.

6.8 Authentic Leader

Authentic leaders are self-actualized individuals who are aware of their strengths, their limitations, and emotions. They also show their real selves to their followers. They do not act one way in private and another in public; they don't hide their mistakes or weaknesses out of fear of looking weak. They also realize that being self-actualized is an endless journey, never complete (Kruse, 2013). If something is authentic, it means it is real, true, or what people say it is. Church leaders try to be real and true in disposition to the church members they lead by acknowledging that they, too, could make mistakes and that they are human beings as well, with weaknesses and frailties. This is reflected in their daily lifestyle as they serve members of their church and the public in their communities. For instance, Chris has this to share about his experience working with the children and youths in his community.

Chris: Before we talk of any mentoring, we are meant to be a covering. What I mean by covering, can you imagine using an umbrella that has holes? It cannot be effective. You know so because of the holes, it can't be effective. as church leaders, we must be the genuinely solid cover for those under us that we are trying to mentor. What I mean by that is this. Let us be authentic. You must do it freely. You must do it willingly. Many of us don't want to do something without material benefit. We have to be authentic. That's when this thing works. We used to run five centres and free maths tuition. Free. If I had quantified what we were doing when human resources were available for five years consistently, I would have become a millionaire. I'm not boasting. Based on the number of students who were coming to our free mathematics classes, both in Havering and to the glory of God, for five years. Yeah, there's more to life than money.

Based on his Christian beliefs and convictions, Chris believes he must imbibe the authentic leadership style. He does this by being conscious that he is a leader building a new generation of leaders from the grassroots. To do this, a church leader has to live an exemplary life worthy of emulation by the members of his/her congregation and the community he/she represents. The leader should be open-minded in his/her dealings with the congregants or members of the public with whom he/she comes into contact. This is what Chris has set out to do by establishing a free tuition school that helps school children with one of the tough subjects in primary and secondary schools: mathematics. He was doing this maths teaching on a volunteer basis, to help single parents and other children from economically disadvantaged backgrounds.

Moreover, in his opinion, Chris stated that the knife crime crisis is a multifaceted challenge; it is a societal problem, and it is a social problem that the church leaders and others have to rise up and do something more proactive about. He emphasised that, unfortunately, the problem would continue to exist in society because it is a function of the family environment. As long as there are families, there will be knife crimes. There will always be knife crime and other forms of crime in society when there is a toxic family environment because of austerity, unemployment, and lack of fear of God due to no religious instruction. The type of environment we create as a people is critical to the case of knife crime crisis which has been on the increase before the coronavirus global pandemic kicked in by the year 2019.

Therefore, Chris could contribute by being an authentic leader to these children and youths, using his skills to benefit his community sacrificially. He came to terms with the challenge and found the little way he could help was by volunteering to engage the young ones early in the area of provision of educational support and training on godly moral through his lifestyle of authenticity and teaching them in a subject that might prove problematic to these young ones. Unfortunately, not many leaders like Chris could volunteer in this way. Frankly speaking, the work of volunteering is quite challenging. How would you, as an individual, pay your bills, take care of your family, or enjoy the basic necessities of life if you were taking on a volunteering job like that of Chris? Nevertheless, as Chris mentioned, there is more to life than money. Adding value to the lives of others might be quite a fulfilling experience of life and a legacy that society and generations would come to appreciate. The belief and practice of Chris here agree with authentic style of leadership (Section 2.3.2.6). They are known to be self-aware, humble, always seeking improvement, look out for the welfare of others and committed to organisational success within the construct of social values (Whitehead, 2009).

6.9 Autocratic Leader

Autocratic leaders are different in many ways from servant leaders. Autocratic leaders, as opposed to servant leaders, do not consult with their followers or church members before making decisions and executing them. Autocratic leadership is considered a dominant and controlling leader in discussing opinions and ideas, leading to the actual decision taken in the group (Cremer, 2006). Autocratic leadership is defined as a top-down approach to all decision-making, procedures, and policies within an organization. An autocratic leader focuses less on collecting input from team members and tends to make executive decisions that others are expected to follow. In this situation, a pushy and controlling leadership style is expected to discourage followers' loyalty and dedication to the leader, according to Cremer. However, this might not be the case in a religious setting where the belief is that their leader is appointed by a higher authority that they must worship. They see the leader as representing God. Whatever decision he takes, they believe might have been instructed by this God and has to be followed. Therefore, Cremer's views on autocratic leadership might be limited to the secular sector and not applicable to religious settings.

Moreover, there are times church leaders would have to make some decisions alone based upon a perceived leading of God, who they believed is the One that placed them in position. They would not collaborate or make a consultation with their followers before conducting some assignments. Based upon this research, what BMC leaders are sharing suggests that the autocratic style of leadership is normally combined with other styles of leadership and is less pronounced than the servant model of leadership. Ade, one of the church leaders, shared his experience of autocratic leadership.

Ade: But again, 70% of the time, you see that servanthood style of leadership. Should I use autocratic, maybe 20 -30% of the time? Let's say, you know, this is what the Lord is asking us to do; you might be saying no, for instance, yeah, the last time that I met with the ministers, once a month, the leaders of the church to pray this last meeting, so asked everyone to start saying what is in their mind. Someone suggested a second service. Did someone else say in this covid second service? The Lord said to me, I agree with that person that requested a second service. So, I said there would be a second service by June by the grace of God, even if just five people attended on June 6, 2021. Yes, so, I know my wife, at one stage, you might take a stand, everybody goes with you, or some have different opinions. I know my wife would be with me. But in most cases, it is servant leadership that is good.

Consequently, analysing the comments of Ade affirms the proposition of what the BMC leaders were saying that for the church sector, an autocratic form of leadership cannot be a standalone leadership model of the organization. Quite frankly, Zerah, another church leader, strongly believes that someone cannot lead people you do not serve. To try and lead people that you do not serve could be portrayed as bullying or dictatorship. The heart of church leadership is stewardship; it is your stewardship that would authenticate your leadership.

Nonetheless, according to Luke, another church leader, you cannot box leadership into one model. You have to consider the model appropriate for the occasion. Tunde, another church leader supports this assertion. He believes there should be autocratic leadership to get a right balance in a church organisation. He stressed the following.

Tunde: I would subscribe to autocratic leadership. I believe, very much there should be a balance between paternal and maternal models. We should have both coming together, whereby we are ready to nurture, and we are ready to discipline where it is required. When you have a leader, who is ready to do what needs to be done not succumbing to public opinion at every corner, I think we'll get more done, but unfortunately, that's the disadvantage, one of the little disadvantages of democracy is that you have to bow to the will of the people, even though sometimes it is not the will of the people, but it is just the will of very loud minorities.

Here Tunde compares autocratic and servant leadership models to those paternal and maternal models. A father instils discipline in the family, as is common to autocratic leaders. However, a mother does the caring and nurturing, identifiable with servant leadership. Undoubtedly, both fatherly and motherly roles are needed to produce a well-rounded child. As a result, the argument of Tunde is that both forms of leadership are necessary for carrying out the roles of church leaders in any situation if we are to realise effective results in leadership.

Additionally, the Lord that the church leaders serve is autocratic in his leadership style at times. There was a time that there was a crowd of people following Jesus. The disciples asked Jesus to send them away because it was in a desert place, and it seemed there was nothing to feed them. Jesus did not consult the disciples further. Just like an autocratic leader would act, he just instructed the disciples not to send them away but to get them something to eat. The disciples were wondering how this crowd of people would be taken care of. However, Jesus used his

supernatural power to provide them food to eat (Matthew 14:13-21, NKJV). This is a classic example of autocratic leadership that worked with Jesus. Similarly, the church leaders, in following the precepts of their Lord, might believe that they can employ this model of leadership as and when the occasion demands. For instance, to bring up young inexperienced members to grow up into leadership positions, there are some instructions that the church leaders have to dictate to them to follow. This is part of coaching and mentoring them to become true leaders of tomorrow. Obviously, in conducting some training or coaching for young leaders, there would not be room to begin to negotiate certain moral and biblical standards with them if they are to represent the interests of their faith. The preceding discussion of autocratic leadership support the concept of such leaders as discussed in Section 2.3.2.7.

6.10 Provider

Church leaders sometimes find themselves in situations where they must be supportive of the economically disadvantaged members of the church or the community at large. There are circumstances where a church leader financially and materially supports a church member personally or from the welfare budget fund for a certain period. They also set up food banks to cater to the homeless or those in their communities who found it difficult to feed themselves and their families. This aspect of service was pronounced during the covid-19 period when situations arose due to job losses or business downturns caused by the impact of the pandemic. Ahaz, a church leader, shared the activities of his church.

Ahaz: We started a campaign, young people elite. We also started with young men who are not in employment, training and bringing them out from gangs and trying and put them in another group where they could interact with their peers and get them to develop open aspirations. We started a project called 'choices' where they could educate themselves and get paid for it. They could decide to go into education, school, or business. The goal is to get them into employment and make them give back to society. I think God gave me a five-point plan about making things possible in our community. This is spelt "PEACE". And the first is about Parenting. The second one is about Education. The third focus is Achievement. The fourth is Community. Lastly, the fifth, Employment.

Ahaz is one of the church leaders whose vision is to provide for the needs of the youths in knife crime crisis. He believes that the work of rescuing these youths should not be left to their

parents and the government alone. He started a project called the PEACE Alliance. The project essentially focuses on five areas. The first deals with supporting the parents on how they could effectively engage their children. It trains parents on how to show love and care for their children. It trains them on effective parenting. The second focus is on education. And here the project ensures that these children go to school. The kind of education the group has in mind is holistic. They educate on mental wellbeing and morality so that these youths could be able to follow the right kind of values in life. The third focusses on achievement. This implies that the group celebrates every achievement made by the youths and finds a way of rewarding them to encourage them. The fourth pursuit focusses on community. Ahaz believes that every community should invest in the youth, in their development and future. As a result, he is involved in community and national mobilisation to support the youths' wellbeing and development. Lastly, the fifth one pursues employment. It works on how the youths can be gainfully employed or become an entrepreneur.

Therefore, there are projects like 'choices' mentioned earlier to ensure they are educated, get skilled, and employed. This vision of employment or other points raised earlier might seem big and challenging, but it is achievable. Moreover, another significant point about this vision is that it does not take care of only youths who are not victims alone; it takes care of those who are perpetrators of knife crimes and have become convicts. These convicts, when they finished serving their term, would be given hope again of settling down into the community, they become employable and given a chance to start life again. The 'choices' project seeks to engage them in education and skill-building training that could help them get focussed on responsible activities in society.

Further, there are other projects through which church leaders function as a provider for the members of their church or the public in their community. There is a notable food project, tagged 'foodbanks' that many churches that have a place of storage in their churches engage in. The church leader and his/her members will donate foodstuffs, non-perishable food items, to these food banks on a regular basis. Any member of the public lacking food to eat could then come in and make some collection free of charge. This foodbank initiative became necessary during the Coronavirus pandemic, particularly from the second quarter of 2019 till the first quarter of 2022 in British society. Sensing the need of the people around this early part of 2019, The Peace Alliance launched the community food hub in partnership with Freedom's Ark Church to directly respond to ongoing socio-economic needs in Tottenham and surrounding

communities. The project is being supported by other partners, and they provide essential perishable food items up to 2-3 times a week to the most vulnerable with a vision to address hunger and food poverty in the communities.

In addition, a church leader as a provider also supports other needs of church members.

They set up welfare funds for the church members for various needs. There are those who are bereaved and suddenly find themselves carrying the responsibilities of both parties in the marriage. They would need regular financial support till they are able to adjust to their new status of widowhood or that of a widower. There are those members in the church community who have challenges with their immigration status in the country. This is more pronounced in BMCs, which have many members immigrating from Africa and Caribbeans to the United Kingdom. They might have challenges getting good paid jobs or challenges dealing with processing their stay or job visa documents, are taking time to process.

These categories of people would need financial support as well. A church leader then functions as a provider to ensure these categories of people are supported financially and materially until they are settled. The activity of Ahaz is a good exemplar of a BMC leader exhibiting a combination of many styles of leadership to impact his community and the nation as a whole. This sort of combination includes servant, contemplative, and paternalistic styles of leadership as discussed in Sections 2.3.2.1, 2.3.2.5, and 2.3.2.4.

6.11 Reflection of Pastoral Roles

BMC leaders have encountered varied kinds of experiences of knife crime crises in their communities, some of which were explored in this chapter. These experiences have led to reflections on their part and responses or actions. These responses are forms of transformative changes in the lives of the BMC leaders. Ballard and Pritchard (2006) propose key modes of change (Section 4.5.2). Reflections on the experiences of knife crime crises in their communities have resulted in different forms of interpersonal change in the lives of BMC leaders. These leaders are increasingly involved in the affairs of victims of knife crime, young adults, lone parents, and convicts of knife crime, and are networking with other church leaders and stakeholders of knife crime to address the challenges of the knife crime crisis. In Section 6.3, under pastoral roles, Rachel's response to what she saw and heard in a viral video of the recent stabbing of a young adult sent to her led to an affective change. This emotional and

attitudinal change made her start crying uncontrollably for a young male adult who was knifed several times and was at the point of death.

The experience that Rachel had and that of other BMC leaders during knife crime brought about affective and attitudinal change, leading to deep-seated feelings and empathy for the victims involved in knife crimes, their relations, church members, and the community, coupled with personal experience of pain, sorrow, and trauma. The degree of this affective and attitudinal change depends on several factors, including the severity of the knife crime committed, the possibility of restoration of physical well-being, and the number of those involved (George, 2000). This key attitudinal change has led to the eight pastoral roles that highlight the behaviours of BMC leaders in different phases of the knife crime crisis discussed in this chapter. These pastoral roles are conceptual groupings that, in practice, are not standalone roles but work in groupings depending on the context and circumstances.

For instance, the discussion of the role of a BMC leader as a “Pastor” suggests servant and transformational models. The role of a “Father figure” suggests servant, paternalistic, and charismatic models. The servant leadership role seems dominant in most of the roles of the BMC leaders. In Section 6.9, Ade, a BMC leader, stated that he exhibits both servant and autocratic leadership styles, but he employs the servant leadership style about 70 percent of the time. Nevertheless, some other leaders argue that transformational or authentic leadership or autocratic leadership, or even a combination of these leadership models is preferable depending upon the circumstances. As a result, some leaders argue in favour of the situational and contingency leadership model. As discussed in Section 2.3.2.2, the situational leadership model watches the situation at hand before deciding which model of leadership is best suitable to employ.

6.12 Chapter Six Summary

In conclusion, the interview data based on what church leaders shared about their views on knife crime crisis and the roles they played was subjected to the first two of the three stages of methodological analysis for this project, realist narrative analysis and thematic analysis. The findings indicate eight ways of behaviours or roles that church leaders have acted under pastoral roles. These are 1. Pastor, 2. Father figure, 3. Counsellor, 4. Confidant, 5. Servant Leader, 6. Authentic Leader, 7. Autocratic Leader, and 8. Provider. These results were used for

the third stage of analysis which is pastoral cycle analysis comprising analysis and exploration of the findings. The analysis and exploration of church leaders' roles extend further to Chapters Seven and Eight.

The findings reveals that the crisis that knife crime brings has far-reaching negative consequences. It is not only because it disrupts the community, but it also terminates lives and shortens hopes. Knife crime causes death, fear, injuries, suffering, pain, sorrow, trauma, and disillusionment to the victims, their families, friends, and members of their community. A church leader functioning as a pastor care for the members of his/her assembly from the cradle to the grave in many ways, as expounded in this Chapter. He/she carries out these unique pastoral roles during times of crisis with diverse leadership styles, including father figure, servant, authentic, and autocratic leadership models. These are conceptual roles that are standalone roles played by BMC leaders. These roles mostly overlap during knife crime crises but are restricted mostly to members of the church community. They have less impact on the broader community outside the church. The next Chapter focuses on the educational category of roles that church leaders played during the knife crime crisis.

Chapter Seven: Educational Roles of BMC Leaders During Knife Crime Crisis

7.1 Chapter Overview

The preceding chapter analyses the first category of three overarching roles of church leaders during the periods of knife crime crisis using pastoral cycle methodology. The pastoral roles that were analysed and explored include eight key pastoral roles of BMC leaders during knife crime crisis. This chapter continues to examine the BMC leaders' roles by analysing and exploring further the second prominent category of roles, the educational roles. These educational roles of the church leaders comprise six significant roles which are 1. Teacher/Educator, 2. Role model, 3. Mentor, 4. Coach/Trainer, 5. Guarantor, and 6. Administrator. Figure 7.1 illustrates further these six key educational roles and are discussed in greater details with lived experiences in succeeding sections.

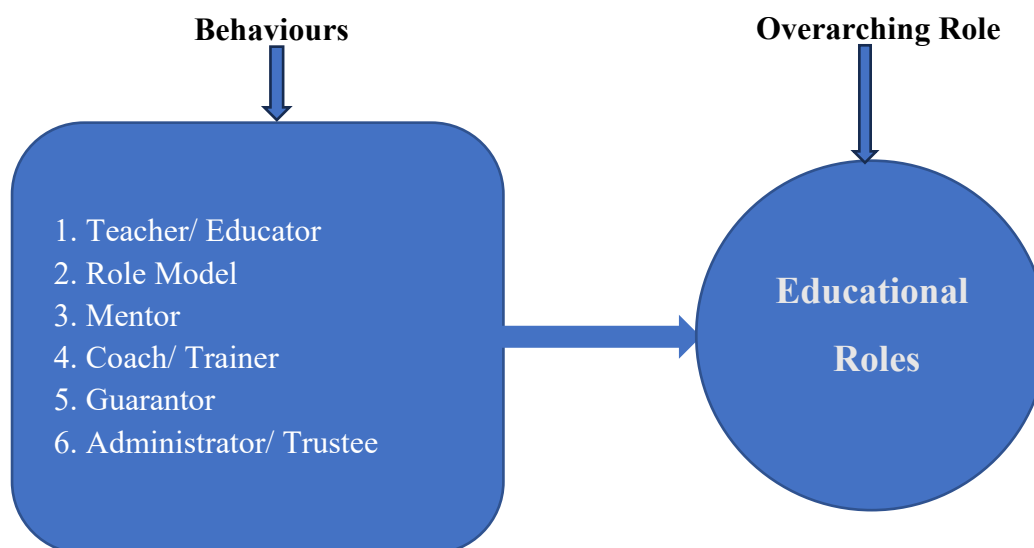


Figure 7.1: Educational Roles of Church Leaders During Knife Crime Crisis

7.2 Teacher/Educator

Church leaders act as teachers or educators by instructing or training their members and those members of their community who attend their organised events. The teaching or training are organised in the form of regular informal weekly classes, such as Sunday schools, or by setting up schools to instruct children or adolescents. There are also training and insightful seminars on parenting, money management, health talks, and others to support families in the church and the community. The stories being shared about knife crimes and the challenges posed to church leaders during the knife crime crisis indicate that a sizeable number of them engage in

teaching or educating teenage children and their parents on academic and moral instruction regularly. The learning could be in formal or informal settings. Informal teaching takes place weekly on Sundays in many churches through activities such as children's Sunday school classes or teenagers' interactive clubs or forums. All these activities are invariably accessible to the public within the community in which the church leaders are operating. One of the church leaders, Zerah, shared how he and his church served as teachers or educators to the children and the youths.

Zerah: Not schools; it's got to be parents, ably supported by the schools, government, and churches as I found out. That's why we not only consider child care nurseries and primary, we move on to supplementary education, to have a mentor over them, and then move on from there to the universities whereby in Christian concern, we run what is called the Wilberforce Academy, whereby we try to help train as it were leaders for tomorrow with proper support and we have been on that for 12 years of training and getting them to universities such as Cambridge and Oxford. We are just helping and working with parents to help shape the right mindset. Again, this thing costs time and money. But like I said, if we love our children, and love their future, then we are willing to sacrifice whatever it takes to train them.

Zerah discussed how his church ministry engages in children's formal education from children's care level to secondary schools and Sixth form colleges that prepares them for the role of leadership and for universities. This is a great vision of providing knowledge and skill to the young generation so that they can grow up to be responsible citizens and leaders of tomorrow wherever they find themselves. Similarly, other church leaders like Zerah are involved in various activities in their churches and communities as teachers and educators. Salmon, a church leader, shared how they had a vision based on the Bible that when you train a child in the way they should go when they are old, they will not depart from it. To fulfil this vision, his church organised and ran a daycare centre that takes care of children with the age category of formative ages of 2 years to 8 years old. The children are not being taught about language and relevant subjects alone; the children are being taught values and social interaction. It is during this form of teaching that moral issues and the dangers of knife crime are addressed.

Also, another church leader, Esther, shared how she organised events for the youths in her church to educate them about the dangers of knife crimes. She invited expert speakers who deal with youth criminal offences such as knife and gun crimes associated with the youths. They

were taught about the need to be careful about where they go and whom they mingle with. They shared about the dangers in being at the wrong place at a particular time and the terrible experiential situation of a youth dying because of mistaken identity. They shared the importance of standing against knife crime and not putting yourself in a position whereby you can be caught with a knife or arrested. Also, shared about the need for the youths to support each other, to look out for each other, and for their parents to pick them so that they do not get mixed up with the wrong people or go to the wrong places.

Further, police and other law enforcement agencies are invited to come and share their experiences with the youths, to share what are the things that constitute criminal offences, the mistakes that past offenders and convicts made, and what they need to be aware of to avoid getting into trouble with the law enforcement agencies. The youths are educated on the implications of getting arrested and convicted and how criminal records could have life-changing impacts on convicted people. Through these insights, these youths are taken care of so that they do not fall into the hands of evil gangs that are out there to recruit members into their fold. Seriously, Esther shared that many of these youths are not aware of the grave implications of having a criminal record because of knife crime committed; how criminal records could hinder youth from getting education and job opportunities, how these could lead to job insecurities, hopelessness, suicidal tendencies, mental problems, and further convictions and even death.

In addition, Angela, another church leader, shared her experience of functioning as an educator. There was a time she started a school for teenage youths who dropped out or were expelled from their schools.

Angela: Yes! Now the children that are excluded from mainstream Schools were sent to me to prevent permanent exclusion. The government-funded us and brought students to us. So, God gave me a template of a programme to address and prevent exclusion. Many of these exclusions are gang related. These guys carried knives and would bring them to school. One would say, Miss, I wanted to use this knife but felt I should give it to you. Then, I would say how do you know that I am looking for a knife. So, the drawer in my office was full of knives and I began to use them to peel my oranges and apples.

Angela was a teacher by profession who also had a master's degree in special needs. She felt a need to start a special school for her son when he was excluded from school. She started inviting other youths who were also excluded from mainstream schools. The school programme was so successful that her council got to know about the school and partnered with her to train these youths. So, she started full-time school for those excluded from mainstream schools. The results were significantly positive to their career development and helped deliver many youths from the world of gangs and knife crimes. Angela attributed her courage and success in this special school project to two key points. First, her belief and faith in God and second, knowledge acquired in her undergraduate and postgraduate degrees in social work and special needs.

Besides, Angela started putting her experiences with the youths being trained into writing and organising chat shows and seminars, inviting young people to come and talk about their experience, particularly those that have passed through the experience of gangsterism but has been delivered from it. One of the seminars that she organises deals with how youths can navigate problems during challenging times. She has a vision for the youths to engage them, bring them to the level of discovering their unique gifts and talents, how they would develop them, and eventually use them for God's glory and/or to make a living out of it. Moreover, Angela organised another forum to bring church leaders in her community together to discuss and pray about how to deal with knife crimes in their community.

Additionally, church leaders can act as educators in some scenarios by organising educative youth camps. A church leader, Jane shared how her church organises a yearly 4-day intensive youth camp. The idea is to take these youths out of distraction and prepare them for the future. The church leader would bring successful young adults to teach these youths social skills and educate them on many important aspects of life such as economic management and academic success. Moreover, there are parenting conferences for parents to understand the best way of parenting their children.

In sum, church leaders have proven to be impactful educators of children and youths in their communities. They educate children and youths along the line of their educational subject, particularly those subjects that these young ones usually find difficult. There is also teaching on other aspects of life, such as leadership and social skills. Nevertheless, the extent of the impact of their contribution could not be measured. In some instances, these church leaders

mentioned the lack of significant support from the government or local council to which they belonged. By their behaviours as teachers and educators of the youths, BMC leaders have demonstrated leadership models discussed in Sections 2.3.2.1, 2.3.2.2, 2.3.2.5, and 2.3.2.6 which are servant, transformational, contemplative and authentic models of leadership.

7.3 Role Models

The function of church leaders as role models to the youths is exemplified by the following experience of Renny, a church leader with the youths of his church community.

Renny: Our culture is so ingrained that we are so blocked off that we don't understand the postmodern millennia Gen Z children that we're going to use our baby boomer mentality. I know a modernistic ideology to engage people who are present in a different paradigm and different dynamics. So, we do not just talk to them. Do you know how many children don't talk to their parents? They don't have a conversation. We fail to understand they operate in a different world that requires dialogue. That requires conversation that often does not require a "yes, no, no, yes, talk". That's what I find with many of these ladies. My wonderful ladies out in there do not see listening as important. She said, he doesn't listen. I said, Boy, you can't do that. Why did they listen to you? I said, because I download with them, I reason with it and let them push out their opinion. So, we bounce it together. I respect where they're coming from, not another authoritarian, or dictatorial to them, but I know where I'm supposed to guide them by instruction. But not to say bye-bye and allow them to make their mistakes. Not condemning them but then pulling them up as a man, that you said come on let's talk again. And then they respect you and that's where you get the medals of role models, that they will follow you.

Church leaders had shown to occupy the role of role models in the lives of many youths, especially in instances when there was no father figure or close relatives to guide or inspire them to the right attitude to life. A role model is a person whom someone admires and whose behaviour they try to copy. Research indicates that both parental and nonparental role models can serve as a protective function for children and adolescents at risk for future internalizing and externalizing problems (Walters, 2016). On the other hand, role models have the capacity to influence children and adolescents through negative examples. Many youths lacking role models have fallen victim to the wrong role models that have lured them into gangs and carriers of drugs for drug barons. However, church leaders have stepped in to occupy this strategic

position of a role model in the life of the youths. This action has positively impacted the youths in their church communities and made them grow up into responsible youths who were able to stay away from the evils of knife crimes in society.

For instance, the experience of Renny clearly illustrates how church leaders in their church communities, whenever there is a need in the lives of family members step into situations to help bring about the much-needed guidance and instruction that the youths and their parents require. Renny compares the generation of the parents, which he described as the baby boomer to that of their children, the postmodern millennial Gen Z. The mentality of each of these two generations is different. The way they think and process things in life is different. As a result, a parent who is not trained in parenting, does not realise the nuances of the generation gap, and understands that the way the postmodern millennial Gen Z youths think and react to life issues would have challenges raising the children of this generation.

That is why in Renny's story, single mothers are finding it difficult to communicate and relate effectively with their teenage boys. They became discouraged or disillusioned by the attitude of their boys. The church leader who understood how these boys and their generation think was able to relate with them and provide support as a role model. Renny can reason and dialogue with these youths and provide critical guidance that they require to prevent them from making life-changing costly mistakes. Much rather, they will be able to take the right step at every critical stage of their life journey and come out as successful and responsible young adults.

According to Renny, the way these Gen Z youths reason indicates they are ahead of their time. They are the most ingenious people. They are entrepreneurs. They have the mentality to start making things happen at an early age. They want to start making money right at the youthful age of 12 to 15 years old. They want to be famous at an early age and change the world. They want to be history-makers. Therefore, with this kind of mentality, if someone comes to them offering them an opportunity to make money through gangs and drugs, invariably, they will succumb to the advice and start the dangerous journey of a life lived with gangs, knives, and business of carrying drugs across county lines. Further, bad role models, such as drug barons living a life of affluence, riding big cars, and wearing the latest expensive wrist watches would misguide these young ones to taking on the wrong business that put their destiny and life at stake because of a blind pursuit of quick money.

In addition, there are so many wrong role models in the public domain, be it social media or mainstream media, that the youths follow currently. There are celebrities and influencers whom the youths follow in massive numbers as their role models. In contrast, the lifestyle and integrity of these role models are questionable. Frankly, the challenge before these Gen Z youths is to determine which of these role models are good examples of role models worthy of attention and followership. Conversely, excellent, and authentic role models would steer these youths in the right direction in life, with good advice, good platforms, and lawful and genuine ways of doing business and making money. Church leaders have significant roles to play in offering an alternative to wrong role models and pointing Gen Z youths in the right direction.

There might be a situation whereby church leaders are not available or in a position to play this role as role models. In this regard, they might signpost them to the relevant role model. For instance, a role model in the field of boxing might be a successful boxer like Anthony Joshua, the former British world heavyweight champion. If parents and leaders can respect the grace that God has given to these youths in their line of interests and allow them to operate in that grace, they will excel and be successful therein. The account of BMC leaders about the way they behaved as role models suggests they exhibited authentic, charismatic and transformational styles of leadership.

7.4 Mentor

Church leaders serve in this role of advising and training the youths and their parents to become leaders or attain a position in a particular field of life, for instance, a lecturer, an engineer, or a medical doctor. Salmon, a church leader, shared his experience mentoring the young generation in his church community. He described how a teenager who was involved in gangsterism came to become a successful boxer.

Salmon: The next one is linked to the mentors who must be able to give a sense of vision, very important. Youths, when they don't have something to look forward to, they do what they want to do. Are there ways in which we can paint a preferable future, a better future to these youths who are killing people. A preferable, better future. Paint, demonstrate it. I listened to Anthony Joshua, who was caught up in this nonsense until an uncle who was a boxing coach in a gym gave him a picture, a vision of a preferable future. That's how he became a boxer. It works! We must be able to give the youths vision, and sense of purpose, very important. Where we can

paint a preferable future, the next task is that we must be able to motivate. Motivation is very good; they have energy. If you succeed in motivating ten youths, you will be shocked by the synergy they will create, and when they are motivated, they go the extra mile.

This testimony shared by Salmon vividly illustrates the role of a mentor. Church leaders function as mentors to various categories of age groups in the church and community they are called to serve. The upcoming youths need guidance, and they need direction to succeed. These youths are full of life and energy with a vision to succeed. Renny, a church leader, referred to them as post millennia Gen Z, who are quite ingenious and ahead of their time. In the quest to succeed, in a situation where there is no right mentor or responsible father to guide them, they fall into the hands of drug barons and gangs who turn them into tools in their hands to carry out their nefarious activities, such as the drug peddling business. Therefore, having good mentors in the life of these youths is critical to their success.

Undoubtedly, mentors help shape the lives of these youths and help them discover their skills, talents, and purpose in life. Not only that, but mentors also help them to discover and develop these unique gifts through training and counselling. In addition, mentors also help them deploy these giftings so that these youths can use the giftings and skills to benefit others and themselves. For instance, Anthony Joshua was able to bring pleasure and pride to the people and nation of the United Kingdom because of his extraordinary accomplishment and success in boxing at a global level. Also, he was able to benefit himself and become financially comfortable and independent through this sport. This feat was made possible because of the role of a good mentor in his life. A substantial number of BMC leaders indicate that they take up the challenge of mentoring these youths or young adults as they strategise on how to deal with knife crime crisis in their respective communities and how best they could mentor these youths to prevent them from gangsterism. They think about how to holistically do this, not only to train them but to equip them to be active in responsible ways. This effort might take time and cost money. However, many expressed great fulfilment in getting many of these youths out of the streets and out of danger caused by knife crimes.

Moreover, church leaders serving as mentors have been found to bring many youths out of the clutches of gangs by organised church events. Renny shared an encounter with some of these youths involved in knife crimes.

Renny: Okay, I was in one of my mentees' churches, one of my mentees that particularly deals with the issue of knife crimes, and then he just asked me to come. So, you will not understand what knife crimes is, unless you come to the church and see the gruesome experience of what this is all about. And then he started his service. He then made an altar call and a strange call. Further, he said that there are people here who have knives, you have all sorts of things like that. If you have it, could you please common drop it right here in the front? And I was aghast at the ages of children that are coming out 14 years old, 15 years old, all manner of knives being dropped!

This experience illustrates another critical and commendable work of church leaders serving as mentors in their churches and communities. Many young ones who would have ended up in prison due to the activities of gangs and knife crimes are rescued by organised services and events, as shared by Renny. In these services, church leaders would share the word of God in the Bible with the attendees and follow this up with some youths who have been delivered from the world of gangs sharing their testimonies and the peace and freedom they are now enjoying. The account of BMC leaders as mentors demonstrates four significant leadership qualities. These are servant (Section 2.3.2.1), authentic (Section 2.3.2.6), charismatic (Section 2.3.2.3) and transformational (Section 2.3.2.2) styles of leadership.

7.5 Coach/Trainer

A significant proportion of the BMC leaders play the role of a coach or trainer in the lives of the youths and adults in the church and community. They are directly involved in training and coaching activities and sometimes invite other professionals to be involved. The training, which covers a wide range of fields at times, is expanded from an informal setting into a regular format by establishing schools or training centres for the youths and adults of the church and community. Coaching goes beyond mentoring or role modelling. Here the coach is quite close to the student and invariably physically involved in the life and activities of the student to achieve a particular purpose. Jane shared her experience as a coach of young people in her church.

Jane: I enjoyed working with the younger people. Every year, we take them for a youth camp. It is a 4-day intensive programme. It is to take them out of distraction and prepare them for the future. We might even use a university environment for the camp. Here we bring in young

people who are in the universities or who have passed through their stage in life and have testimonies to share. Those who can teach them social skills and educate them on important aspects of life like financial management. Another thing we do is to allocate them to mentors. They don't tend to like it because they are now accountable. I learnt to tell them not to do certain things but to let them know the effects of doing them. Like one of them whose criminal record has been registered on his DBS, and that sort of restricted what he could do. We use someone like that to come and share their experience to educate them of the implications of some actions they engage in.

Jane described the coaching she provides for the youths to get them focussed on the right things in life. The centre for coaching, a youth camp, afforded the opportunity for close teaching, training, and mentoring programmes. Coaching is an intensive programme, just like Jane and her team organised here. The 4-day programme was conducted in a particular location, and the activities were organised for the entire day.

There are three sections of activities which are educational, physical and spiritual activities. The educational activities are quite critical to the youths' academic success. Here they are taught strategies that help students to succeed in their academics. This training might include a range of coaching on studying and passing examinations, planning, and managing time throughout a term or semester, and when facing examinations. The coaching might also examine some core subjects and how to read and pass them. Core subjects like English and Mathematics are given prime attention and are discussed. There might be signposting to relevant coaching centres that students who want to succeed could attend. Brilliant students amongst these students are identified and asked to share their experiences and how they have read and pass their subjects excellently. The coaching was also extended to other essential aspects of life, such as monetary management and social skills or interpersonal skills. They are taught the core British values to honour and respect for others through a coaching forum like this. Through these means, other youths are encouraged as they go back to try and put in effort once again to achieve success. The physical activities that the youths engaged in during this period of camping include a range of adventure, sporting activities, arts, camping, and games.

Lastly, the spiritual activities relate to the Bible and their faith in God. These activities include bible quiz competitions, regular bible reading, discussion, and a period of questions and answers to get further understanding or clarity of statements in the Bible. Regular daily

devotion involves sharing a topic relating to daily living and the guidance offered in the Bible. The daily devotion also involves a session of prayers whereby the group prays about issues affecting individuals, their families, and the broader communities the youths came from and the nation. The coaching team coordinates the spiritual activities while the participating youths are taught about godly values, they could imbibe that could help them successfully navigate life's challenges.

Further, these challenges might include cases dealing with knife crimes, peer pressure, losing a loved one, a separation between parents, future careers, sicknesses, and failures. There are passages in the Bible relating to each of these specific cases that are shared with them. These virtues help build Christian character and the ability to relate with others. Nevertheless, the challenges of limited resources have not permitted BMC leaders to increase the regularity of this significantly impactful programme. The behaviours of BMC leaders in training and coaching these youths demonstrates servant, authentic and transformational leadership models.

7.6 Guarantor

BMC leaders share stories of standing as guarantors for members of the church, especially the youths who have committed one knife crime offence or the other or an act of violence in the school or community. By this representation, the youth is given a lifeline or another chance to correct his/her attitude instead of wasting his/her life in police detention or prison. Undoubtedly, a church leader may wish to serve as a guarantor for a member of his/her church. However, if that member is not entirely known or has not come under the pastor's teaching, training, or mentorship, the pastor might be hesitant to be a guarantor. A guarantor can vouch for the character of the person being guaranteed. Esther, one of the church leaders, shared her experience of guaranteeing a member of her church.

Esther: We start by having conversations with young people on how to stay away from a life of crime. One of the things that the young ones did not know is that their action today will have implications for their lives in the future. One of the examples that I remember now is a young man whom I had to go to the police station to sort him out. He and others were coming back from school like any other 14 -15-year-olds, and some boys of the same school started to fight in trying to prove a point to one another until the police came in. It was around 12 midnight to 1.00am that I had to go to the police station to stand for him as a responsible adult so that they

could release him. The weapon they claimed was in his hand is his belt. Thankfully, I was able to get him out and nothing was placed on his record. The boy is now 28/29 years old and doing well. I said that as a story because things like that could have gone on his record and could be categorised as a criminal record. This might affect his getting to university or in getting jobs later in life once a criminal record is registered against his name. That is why we educate them because they don't know these things.

This is a typical example of what church leaders do for their members. They function in the role of a guarantor to support those youths that are about to or have entered either civil or criminal offence. This is in line with their faith beliefs and values. They believe that they should be compassionate and support the weak that are in trouble. Presumably, because of this reason many BMC leaders' function in this role as a guarantor. In the story shared by Esther during the interview session, the boy she mentioned would have been detained in the police cell that night but for the intervention of Esther. Many young lives would have been wasted in detention or prison because of knife crime offences. There are damages done to that individual that could not easily be measured.

Perhaps, considering a case of a youth that has caused knife injury to another person, the emotional and psychological damage on him as a perpetrator or being arrested and detained in a police cell cannot be measured. Suppose the young man was arraigned before a court of law and was eventually jailed and sent to prison. In that case, the emotional and psychological damage of becoming a prisoner cannot be measured. That is one of the reasons why there is a critical need for guarantors. Guarantors serve a key role in preventing many youths from emotional and psychological damage and wasted lives. They stand to mediate between law enforcement and the offender or suspect to prevent further emotional challenges for the young offender.

Similarly, a convicted offender, when released from prison, needs to start a new life. The convict, having served his/her jailed term, needs to get a job, or do a business to earn a living and be integrated back into society. However, this is often difficult because of the criminal record that has been registered against his/her name. The person goes around in a vicious circle of disappointments for not getting a job to do, difficulty getting back to normal life, difficulty in housing, and difficulty in carrier progression. This case could lead him/her to discouragement. Discouragement leads to depression and suicidal tendencies, which could lead

to death. This is where church leaders come in again to serve by guaranteeing the discharged convicts. This is what Ade, a church leader, shared about what he was doing as a guarantor.

Ade: So, it's a church on his own, so, as we're counselling them in the prison, they are coming out, you now start a life for them and a church. You don't have a job, you don't have anything, who will employ somebody just coming from the prison? So, when they now come back, you now have service for them separately. You engage them in the church to be working in the church as cleaners, so that you can clean that dirt from them and then you'll be able to give them reference to be able to work later, because after about six months or one year you've known them from prison, maybe one year you've known them, and they've been with you in the church, then you can say I can give this person reference in the past one year, this was his life, but I've known him, he's been, he's been under me, working so they can start your life again.

To have such a strategic programme of integration is commendable and enables peace and stability in the community as the number of those involved in gangs diminishes. Conversely, a situation where such a solid programme of integration of ex-convicts is not in place generates fear, instability, and a further domino effect of an increase in gangs and knife crime activities in British communities. Nevertheless, the challenge is how much Ade alone could accomplish if there is not a similar structure of guaranteeing ex-convicts in other communities.

Based on the roles they acted as guarantors, BMC leaders have demonstrated three key leadership models: Paternalistic, Servant and Contemplative styles. These models are not clearly separated in their daily operations but are conceptual and throw more insights into the roles of BMC leaders during knife crime crisis occurring in their respective communities.

7.7 Administrator

Church leaders find themselves serving the role of a trustee board member to oversee the administration of an organisation which is mostly charitable or not-for-profit bodies. They also serve as administrators of their churches in addition to their pastoral or shepherding roles. In most cases, this is because volunteers for this position are limited. The purpose of serving as members of the trustees' boards of their local churches or other churches/charities is to join hands with other leaders to establish the right policies and governance that could impart

positively in dealing with day to day running of those organisations and indirectly critical problems in their communities. These include cases relating to knife crimes, drug abuse, and racism. They serve in this regard to benefit the church and the broader communities they represent. Ahaz is one of such leaders who assumes leadership responsibility of a board that deals with knife crimes and other forms of crime in London.

Ahaz: We had a collaboration of faith church leaders. I sit on the Violent Crime Prevention Board, for VCPB. You might want to check them. Yes, yeah. In and around the city, London. It's about leaders, us coming together and work towards achieving peace in our system. Not just one church but all coming together to achieve peace.

This comment by Ahaz has shown that church leaders may function at times in the role of administrator or trustee board member in the context of knife crime crisis. Ahaz occupies a position where board members of an organisation dealing with cases relating to violent crime matters can deliberate and decide how to prevent knife crimes in London and its environment. Church leaders like Ahaz have experienced negative emotions from youths in his community and others close to him who were victims of knife crimes. He has gone to many burial functions for youths who died from knife crimes. He has decided that he must do something about the challenge that this crisis poses to the church and British society. Consequently, one way of response is to be part of an organisation that seeks to prevent this evil vice in society.

Additionally, the VCPB organisation that Ahaz participates in as a trustee's board member started in 2018 when the rise in knife crimes across the cities of the United Kingdom seemed to be at its peak in recent years. The organisation has lofty goals and works towards the cause, effect, and prevention of violent crimes, such as knife crimes in the United Kingdom (VCPB.org, 2022). To address these goals, VCPB focuses on eight core areas of life. These include cases relating to the youths, parents and families, community growth, education, faith, and community policing. Similarly, this research indicates that a sizeable number of other church leaders serve as trustee board members or administrators of other organisations on matters dealing with the problem of knife crimes and other evil vices in British society.

Similarly, the church leader's role as an administrator of a church or charity or business enterprise implies that the church leader takes control of the operation of the church, business, or organization. They combine the role of shepherding with that of the day-to-day running of

the church organisation in many instances, especially if the church is not within a larger denomination or not large enough to fund the administrative responsibilities in the organisation. This is the case in many BMCs. Also, they occupy the role of administrator in other organisations apart from the church, such as an educational institution or group, including nursery, primary or secondary school, or training camps. It is arguable that a church leader's function as an administrator or trustee board member could also come under pastoral functions. The purpose of this role of an administrator is for an effective focal position for coordination, information, communication, and administration in the church office. This implies having a church officer as the public face of the church or organisation and representing values the church/organisation holds to the church or the public, including matters dealing with general inquiries.

However, in the case of a church setting where these responsibilities are required, a considerable number of the roles are given out to the volunteer members of the church to relieve the weight of the responsibilities placed on the shoulders of the church leaders.

Ahaz: We started a project called 'choices' where they could educate themselves and get paid for it. Ultimately, they could decide to go into education, school, or business. The goal is to get them into employment and make them give back to society.

One significant move by Ahaz to address the knife crime crisis among this age category of youths is by setting up a structure for members of the gangs who are not interested anymore in mainstream education in the secondary or higher education but only to train on skills acquisition and trade. It might be those who have been convicted or have been to prison but are ready to settle down to do responsible jobs where they can earn a living. This will draw their attention away from gangs and make them restart their lives. This group of youths is encouraged and supported financially during and after training until they are settled in responsible jobs. Therefore, the project is capital-intensive and requires much financial support to be sustained. Church leaders were sharing that governments need to do more in supporting charities with this kind of community impacting project.

Further, in response to this challenge posed by knife crime, another church leader Zerah set up a leadership academy. He shared that their organisation not only considers the children from childcare to supplementary education in the secondary, but they also set up an academy school

to help train as leaders for tomorrow with proper support. This has been happening for over 12 years, and the training has produced boys that go to high-performing universities such as Cambridge and Oxford. This leadership School works with parents to help shape the right mindset for these youths. Nevertheless, programme such as this initiative costs time and money. Albeit Zerah believes that if we love our children, and love their future, we must be willing to sacrifice whatever it takes to train them. The role BMC leaders play as administrators demonstrates leadership models such as servant, transformational and contemplative styles.

7.8 Reflection of the Educational Roles

Reflections on the experiences of knife crime crises in their communities have resulted in different forms of interpersonal change in the lives of BMC leaders. These leaders are increasingly involved in the affairs of victims of knife crime, young adults, lone parents, and convicts of knife crime. In Section 7.2, Angela sets up a School to take care of youths who are dropouts from mainstream Schools. Also, the BMC leaders' account suggests a huge impact they had on the education of children and youths in their communities. They educate children and youths along the lines of their educational subject, particularly those subjects that these young ones usually find difficult. There is also teaching on other aspects of life, such as leadership and social skills. This educational impact, they suggest, has brought a noticeable reduction in the crime rates in their communities. However, the extent of the impact of their contribution could not be measured. Further, in many instances, these leaders mentioned the lack of significant support from the government or local council to which they belonged. This might affect the sustainability of such educational programmes on a long-term basis.

In addition, a dominant number of BMC leaders serve on a volunteer basis as they still have their daily jobs or businesses they attend to. Consequently, it might be impractical to take on many pastoral roles. Nevertheless, a substantial number of the church leaders claimed that because of their passion for helping the youths, they are making sacrifices in terms of time and effort toward educating the youths to enlighten them in making informed and purposeful choices in life. Also, taking on multiple roles will depend on the capacity of the church or the Christian ministry where the church leader serves. Some churches can set up a school project or a training centre.

Further, most BMCs, because of a lack of financial and human resources, may not have the capacity to do so. Where the capacity is large enough, there is a church leadership educational team where some church leaders serve as teachers while others serve as role models, mentors, coaches/trainers, guarantors, or administrators/trustees. Moreover, apart from these projects being educational projects, some of them might be considered as social action projects because the projects benefit the communities where they are established. In carrying out these roles, the BMC leaders have been found to demonstrate a combination of different leadership models discussed in Sections 2.3.2, 7.2 to 7.6. The dominant ones include servant, authentic, and transformational leadership models.

7.9 Chapter Seven Summary

The educational roles discussed and analysed are strategic roles of BMC leaders in their churches and communities to provide critical teaching, knowledge, training, and understanding to the children, youths, and adults in their churches and communities that could influence their perspectives towards knife crimes and inform their decisions. The results of the data collected from BMC leaders indicate that a dominant number of incidents of knife crimes are traceable to the BAME youths. One of the reasons adduced to this might be that these youths were reacting to issues of life based on ignorance. As a result, BMC leaders of BAME communities are passionate about educational functions to enlighten their members on the implications of committing knife crimes. These educational functions could be done uniquely focussing on a specific educational function or in combination with other educational functions. The leadership models demonstrated by the roles played by the BMC leaders were also identified.

The following chapter expounds further on the social action roles of church leaders in their respective communities.

Chapter Eight: Social Action Roles of BMC Leaders During Knife Crime Crisis

8.1 Chapter Eight Overview

Chapter Seven explores the educational roles that church leaders played as they serve their communities during the period of knife crime crisis. This chapter explores and analyses further the last set of overarching roles that the church leaders play, that is the social action roles during knife crime crisis in their communities. These nine critical roles as illustrated in Figure 8.1 comprise of 1. Project manager, 2. Youth advocate, 3. Community leader, 4. Collaborator, 5. Street pastor, 6. Chaplain, 7. School governor, 8. Peacemaker, and 9. Community prayer champion. The following Sections 8.2 to 8.10 with lived examples explore and analyse further each of these critical educational roles that church leaders from BMCs play pre-crisis, during, and post-crisis knife crime cases in the communities where they are represented.

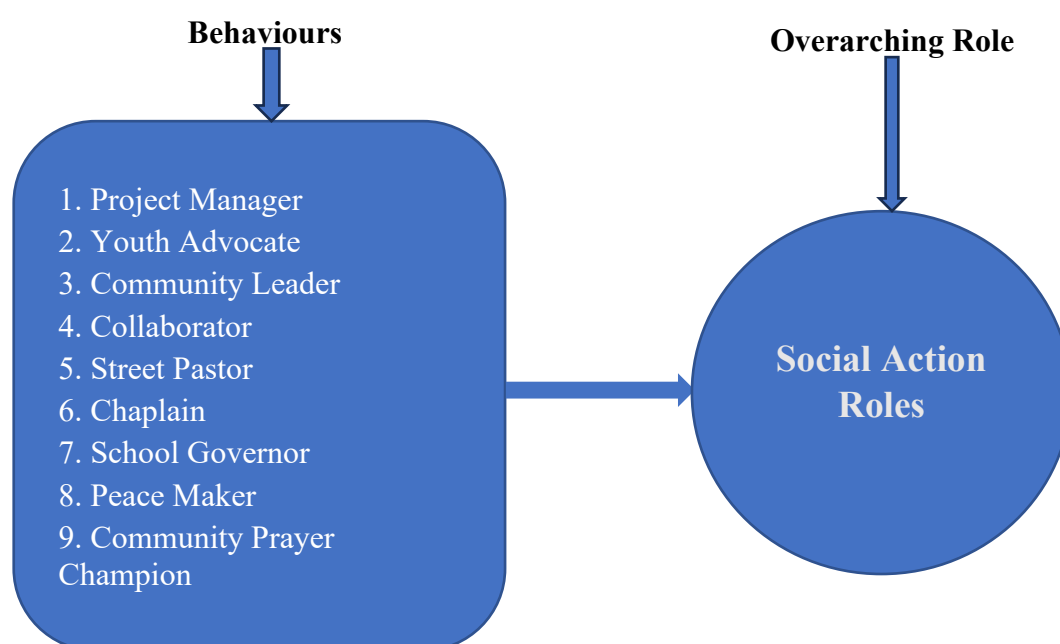


Figure 8.1: Social Action Roles of Church Leaders During Knife Crime Crisis

8.2 Project Manager

The accounts of BMC leaders indicate that programmes and activities organised in their communities were having positive impact on the youths and members of their respective communities. The church leaders set up a range of projects in their churches and communities to educate the youths or to occupy them with activities such that their attention would be taken off from street gangs. These projects directly or indirectly have significant impacts on matters

relating to the knife crisis in the British society. Some of these projects focus on the downstream efforts of dealing with knife crimes crises while others focus on the upstream efforts.

The upstream efforts attack the problems of knife crimes at the grassroots or dependent stage of life. There are projects the church leaders organise or set up for children who are in the nursery and primary schools, who are in the dependent stage of life. Right before growing up from dependent stage to being independent, there are projects set up to teach them about the right values to imbibe in life. Figure 8.2 illustrates the various stages of projects that are being

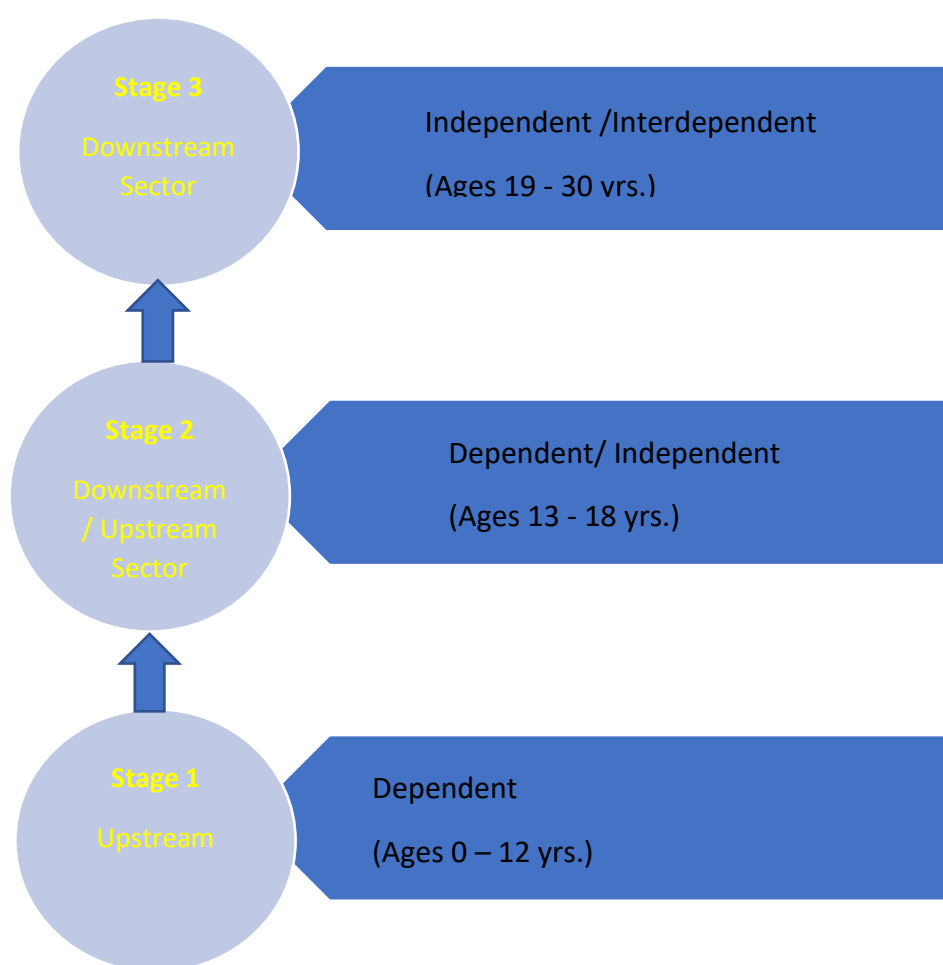


Figure 8.2: Stages of projects conducted by church leaders

embarked upon by BMC leaders.

The age categories are average estimates of the age groups that these stages could be grouped based upon the accounts shared by the church leaders that were interviewed. These are strategic

programmes set up to support the children to grow up not only academically but relationally to become responsible citizens in British society or anywhere that they might find themselves in later stages of life.

8.2.1 Stage 1 Projects - Dependent Sector

This early-stage addresses children in the age category of 0 – 12 years. This is the dependent stage of life of the children. It is the upstream sector or the grassroot of knife crime crisis.

One of these impactful projects in stage one was set up by Salmon, a church leader in London.

Salmon: The Bible says train up a child in the way you should go, when he is old, he will not depart, fundamental training, because we run a day-care Centre. We have a family community centre, we're a contact centre. What is called the formative age of a child, from the age of two to probably 7 or 8 years, where the child is being taught not only language, not only mobility, but the child is also being taught values, social interaction. It is important that at this young age up to the age of twelve, proper training needs to be done not just in school but also in churches, highlighting the dangers of knife crimes.

Salmon explicates about the need to train these youths right from the dependent stage of life before they start to become independent and interdependent. This dependent stage of life would have prepared them with the right kind of mindset for the next stage of life. The project would prepare them not only for their academics but also for the moral aspects of life. The school project is one of the community projects that is having huge positive impacts on the children in the community and producing children who would later in life be able to make right decisions for themselves when they are being asked to join knife crime gangs or wrong kind of peer groups in their schools or communities.

8.2.2 Stage 2 Projects – Dependent/Independent Sector

Stage two is the mid stage with the age category of between 13 years to 18 years and focusses on the dependent/independent stage of life. It is the middle ground between the downstream and upstream sectors of knife crimes crisis. At this stage, these children are growing up to become independent. Besides, they start to become interdependent by making friends and relating with them through their school programmes and activities. The interdependent also involve relationship with peer friends and peer groups within the community setting. Therefore,

it is easy at this stage of life for youths to get into groups and gangs. Their attitudes and character are being formed. They begin to take decisions on their own. Consequently, they start getting involved in gangs and drug business. Jane, a church leader shared her experience of this second stage.

Jane: In terms of experience, it's not what I'm reading but what I encountered. There was a day I witnessed the stabbing with a knife. It was such a scary experience but depending on how you approach the younger people. They were just stabbing themselves. That was more than 4 years ago in front of our local library. We saw a boy being knifed inside a bus that was carrying passengers at the bus stop. The police and the emergency services came to the scene. We didn't know what triggered it. For me, it was a challenging experience. I found that I need to put some structure in place for them. Like when they are coming from schools so that they won't be on the streets. Like some of them, their mums might have gone to work, there is no formal supervision for them. We set up something for them in the church because we have our permanent place of worship then. When they leave school, they come to church to play music or what they like and take their time. Thankfully, it takes them away from the streets. But later we realise that as they are clocking 18, 19, 20, you know, this knife carrying just dropped like that. As they grow, if the right support is available for them, they can get focussed and not be on the streets. As they are getting older, I think something happens in how they think, that they do not engage in this knife carrying or crime anymore.

Surely, based on Jane's story, she must have experienced knife crime in her church community that is distressing and traumatic. She has been a witness of this knife crime crisis. Undoubtedly, the pain and trauma the incident would have brought to the family of the victim would have been more severe. The burden of what happened motivated this church leader to set up a project in her church building to arrest the challenge of knife crime in her community. Obviously, in this second stage, it is more challenging to arrest the challenge posed by knife crime because the children and youths are getting into the interdependent stage of life and there is a greater tendency to be associated with different kinds of friends who could lure them into the world of drugs and gangs. Invariably, some of them might have gone into prison and return thereby contacting more challenges of life and wrong association in the prison.

8.2.3 Stage 3 Projects - Independent/Interdependent Sector

Stage 3 projects focus on youths in the age category is estimated to be of 19 years to 30 years who are in the category of independent and interdependent stages of life. This is the upstream sector of the knife crime crisis. The youths here are highly relational active youths who are deeply involved in the world of gangs. Many might have gone to prison and return home. Many of them are discouraged and depressed about their situation and living. Many have suicidal tendencies, and many have mental health issues. Church leaders, the governments and the police are mostly concerned with this category of youths. Ahaz, a church leader shared what he is doing with this category of youths.

Ahaz: We started a campaign, young people elite club. We also started with young men who were not in employment, training and bringing them out from gangs. We try and put them in another group where they could interact with their peers and get them to develop open aspirations. We started a project called 'choices' where they could educate themselves and get paid for it. At the end, they could decide to go into education, into schools or business. The goal is to get them into employment and make them to give back to the society.

One significant move by Ahaz to address the knife crime crisis among this age category of youths is by setting up a structure for members of the gangs who are not interested anymore in mainstream education in the secondary or higher colleges but only in those that train on skills and trade. It might be those who have been convicted, have been to prison but are ready to settle down to do some responsible jobs where they can earn for a living. This will draw their attention away from gangs and make them to restart their lives. This group of youths is encouraged and supported financially during and after training until they are settled in responsible jobs. Therefore, the project is capital intensive and requires a lot of financial support to be sustained. BMC leaders were sharing that there is need for governments to do more in supporting charities with this kind of community impacting projects.

Further, in response to this challenge posed by knife crime, another church leader Zerah set up a leadership academy. He shared that their organisation not only consider the children from childcare to supplementary education in the secondary, but they also set up an academy school to help train as it were leaders for tomorrow with proper support. This has been happening for over 12 years. The training has been producing boys that go on high performing universities

such as Cambridge and Oxford. This leadership School works with parents to help shape the right mindset for these youths. Nevertheless, programme such as this initiative cost time and money. Albeit Zerah's belief is that if we love our children, love their future, we must be willing to sacrifice whatever it takes to train them. The activities of BMC leaders such as Salmon, Jane, Ahaz and Zerah in setting up different projects in their respective communities suggest multiple leadership models being demonstrated here. These include servant, transformational, authentic, and charismatic leadership models discussed in Chapter Two.

8.3 Youth Advocate

The research data indicates that BMC leaders are involved in advocating for the provision of facilities for adolescents and their proper upbringing so that they could turn out as responsible adults. This they do by engaging the governments to support the cause of the youths, providing activities for them, and setting up facilities to engage them. An advocate officially supports or suggests an idea, development, or way of doing something. Renny, a church leader, is one such advocate for the youths.

Renny: So, the church in many ways, we can make a lot of noise. Let's pray about it. Let's do whatever there's a place for advocacy. Advocacy is both action and prayer. Moreover, focusing on what it is protest. You are protesting education. So, you are protesting in prayer to God by petition and apart from petitioning God, but we also petitioned the reality of life that we live. So, it's what is due for us as a church. We've got to be not just praying about it but doing something. Let's do something.

Renny shared the vision of advocacy that church leaders engage in their communities. The advocacy seeks to make a case not only in prayer to God but also advocacy to the political leaders, those in governments, and other stakeholders relating to knife crimes in society. Advocating would bring the attention of stakeholders to the problem and mobilise efforts toward a solution.

8.3.1 A Second Chance?

Sade: We have to talk about the effects of knife crime on the perpetrator and the victim and on the witness, so the perpetrator is actually the person that has gone out to actually commit that offence. Okay, the victim is a person that has been attacked or injured, and the witness is the

people that have actually seen what has been done or what has happened. So, these three different people have experienced this thing and I've seen it in different ways. Most of the time, the perpetrator themselves might be a victim because it may be a victim of religious misconception or altered beliefs. He could be a victim of being raised in an environment that increases or exacerbate this condition, it could be an environment that is violent itself, maybe domestic violence is witnessed, domestic violence within the whole family. Maybe, himself has been abused or you know attacked, so for a perpetrator there's a whole lot of things that we need to understand when we are dealing with you know, the perpetrator of an offence. So, we don't just lock them up and say that they deserve to be punished. We need to understand what is going on with these individuals and why they have actually become what they are, so from our organization, in Reflecteen, we believe that every young person can be given a second chance and then, a third chance we all need to be given a chance, over and over again, because if you can understand that the perpetrator himself has been a victim on so many levels, maybe he's been victim of deprivation.

The extract from the views of a church leader, Sade seems long but necessary to understand the whole narration of what she was sharing about her experience of knife crime in her community. She was able to identify three key categories of individuals involved at the scene of a knife crime case. These are the perpetrator, the victim, and the witness. She made a key observation here, that the perpetrator himself/herself might have been a victim before, and that is why she was stressing a controversial point about the need to give perpetrators of knife crimes a second chance in society. Perhaps, presently, a perpetrator who stabbed someone with a knife and killed the person is sent to jail for life, and his/her record debars him/her from taking any job in society for life. Sade advocates that there should be a change to this viewpoint of the law and that the perpetrator be forgiven and allowed to do things freely as if he has never committed an offence before. Some other school of thought argues that if this is allowed, it would be a license for this category to commit worse crimes since they know they will not be punished.

Nevertheless, the view Sade has expressed and is advocating for the youths of this nation is worth investigating closely. In this research, a good proportionate number of BMC leaders agree that ex-convicts' rehabilitation system is fraught with errors and inadequate to take care of those being released from the prisons having served their full term. Those discharged found that they were being thrown into a world that had become different from what they had known

and no longer kind to them nor give them opportunities to thrive again, even with the best of genuine intentions. Therefore, closely examining what these perpetrators have gone through in life, as Sade proposed and advocated for, could there be significant insights into why the perpetrators did what they did? Have these perpetrators been victims of knife crime, domestic abuse, economic degradation, racial discrimination, or other forms of abuse? Could things or the action of the perpetrators have been different under different life experiences? Are there structures that governments, church leaders, and other stakeholders put in place that could prevent a reoccurrence of knife crime by the perpetrators? These are genuine questions that could be considered in dealing with present laws applicable to the perpetrators of knife crime in British society.

Further, Sade is advocating for the church to put a better structure and practices in place, to find a way of really engaging with young people and understanding things from their world. The church needs to understand why they are doing what they are doing. Why the children from many BAME groups have low self-esteem, and why are they going into drugs and knife crimes? Sade contributes to this area of concern in British society by forming an organisation that offers free after-school provisions to young people and provides after-school clubs where they can move on from School hours, meet and play together in creative or artistic ways under a supervised environment. They can explore their personal development, and by so doing, they can also know their goals and what to do to accomplish those goals. In addition, another objective of her organisation seeks to support their health and mental wellness through activities that would enable these youths to be open-minded to share matters relating to their health and wellbeing.

Based on what the BMC leaders, Renny and Sade shared above. One could notice genuine care and concern for human dignity, particularly of the youths. These leaders have demonstrated servant and paternalistic models of leadership during their advocacy for the youths.

8.4 Community Leader

Church leaders sometimes act as community leaders as they network with other faith leaders, the council, youth agencies, the police, and other stakeholders in the community to ensure peace and security in that community. They also initiate community-led projects that are of benefit to the public in the community. A church building is located at the heart of each community, village, town, or city, and the church serves as a rallying centre for activities in the

community. Activities such as weddings, naming ceremonies, burial functions, and elders' meetings invariably take place at the church building. Therefore, a church leader is a highly respected personality in the community and is naturally chosen to lead or coordinate some activities in his community, depending on his/her availability.

Moreover, one way of providing leadership in the community is by coordinating community engagements that address problems such as knife crimes that are being encountered in the community. Sade, a church leader, shared how she and her ministry are involved in community engagements.

Sade: We had a community event relating to knife crime and violence, because it's a core issue with our organization, you know. We want to prevent and to reduce the evils occurring in our community, so we have a series of community events that we put out there for members of the community to come on and engage.

Sade's ministry focuses on the youth. One of the core areas of this ministry deals with community engagements. The people in the community are engaged in matters affecting the wellbeing of the community and the wellbeing of the parents and their children. The challenge that the knife crime poses is not to the church leader alone or to the victim's family alone but to all the citizens in that community. Seriously, no community member would be sure whose child would be attacked next. Therefore, organising an event that calls local citizens to come and have a conversation on an issue at the crisis point in a community would be welcome by all and sundry. It is not until an individual becomes a political head, such as a ward councillor or a member of parliament representing an area or a member of the council board, that the person could be a community leader.

Undoubtedly, the positive influence or inspiration that a citizen brings to his/her local area could set him/her apart as a community leader or as someone that commands the followership of others in the community. Many BMC leaders operate as community leaders through the following means.

- Community centres
- Nursery, Primary and Secondary Schools, After School Clubs
- Leadership training/Skills acquisition centres

- Knife crime stakeholder's/ church leaders' forum

Concerned church leaders of different denominations meet regularly to pray and plan to deal with the problem created by knife and gun crimes in their communities. In these instances, church leaders have been identified to provide steady leadership to coordinate activities to restore peace to their communities. The activities of the BMC leaders have shown character traits relating to servant, transformational, contemplative and collaborative models of leadership in impacting their communities.

8.5 Collaborator

The interview data indicate that a substantial number of church leaders collaborate or network with other colleagues, faith leaders, community leaders, police, other government agencies, and stakeholders on matters relating to knife crime crises in their communities. Collaboration involves working together with others for a particular purpose. BMC leaders work with others to share and exchange ideas, set up a framework of action, or pray together to deal with the challenges posed by knife crime and other forms of crime in their communities and the broader British society. The collaboration of church leaders with themselves or others is an ongoing phenomenon at many levels. The collaboration could be either at the national level, council or county level, community level, or church level.

Moreover, the purpose of these various levels and ways of collaboration is to unite leaders in different spheres of life for action against the rising tide of knife and gun crimes in communities, towns, and cities across the nation. The following further discusses the diverse levels of collaboration across the nation by church leaders.

8.5.1 National Collaboration

There are various groups where church leaders collaborate at the national level to address the challenges that knife crime poses to British society. The collaboration might not focus only on knife crime; obviously, there are other societal challenges that these leaders need to deal with. For instance, Zerah, a church leader, discusses a national collaboration he has been involved in, as shared in the following account.

Zerah: Yes, there's collaboration, but it can be a lot better. Because if you look at within the ethnic minority, it is one of the reasons why we also have something that I co-founded and co-chaired the organisation called, the national church leaders forum, for Black Christian leaders. It's a forum that speaks about the issues affecting the communities that are black churches and the people we serve. It covers a lot of issues from government and the media, and to the law on critical issues. It was in 2016 that I co-authored a manifesto for mobilisation that covers eight different areas, for education, prisons, criminal justice, mental health, media, and arts. If you google "National church leaders forum", you will see our website, details of our manifestoes, what we do and how we want to organize things amongst church leaders in the BAME community. We want to pull our resources together to help speak with a coherent voice on issues like this (knife crime) that affect our society.

The national organisation founded by Zerah, and his colleague has great ideas to mobilise BMC leaders to act and speak with a united voice on challenging matters like knife crime in British society. This level of collaboration cuts across the nation and may require further collaboration at the county level to effectively achieve its purpose.

8.5.2 Council, Community and Church Collaboration

Church leaders serve as ward councillors or are part of faith group meeting going on in the council offices on a regular basis. This is part of a collaboration effort with council officers in addressing challenging issues the council is facing concerning knife crimes and other forms of crimes in the council or county. Representatives or leaders of different faith groups and police meet with the council major/mayor and other council leaders to decide on critical issues relating to the council. Peter, a BMC leader collaborated on community level.

Peter: I tried to work with the police force. In 2018, I was working as an assessor with the police. When they wanted to recruit, I was among the panel. They have an internal interview with police for promotion. They must go through an interview process with the panel. As one of the members, I learnt some things from the police perspective. The importance of stop and search, and why it is not just being targeted at Black boys only. The fact is most of the perpetrators of knife crimes are Black boys.

The meeting that Peter held here with the police gave him an understanding of how the police work in the community and how they employ staff to join them. This collaboration disabused mind of Peter as to the issue of racial discrimination. Also, Jacob, another BMC leader shared his experience of inter church collaboration.

Jacob: There is a couple of initiatives going on in Manchester at the moment. The Lord impressed in my heart, you know, to work with all the pastors we have in Manchester in what we call Manchester Gospel festival, where we work with other churches once a year. Manchester Gospel festival in town, but we had a visual event and yea it yielded positive results.

By collaborating at different levels and contexts to organise events bringing peace and transformation to British communities, towns, cities and Boroughs, these BMC leaders, Zerah, Peter and Jacob, amongst many others have demonstrated multiple leadership models that include, servant, transformational, contemplative and collaborative styles of leadership. Another collaborative effort deals with street pastors, as the next section shares.

8.6 Street Pastor

The "Street Pastors" initiative was started in the year 2003 by a Church Pastor who was concerned about the rate of knife crime in his community in Brixton. Eighteen volunteers (fifteen women and three men) took to the streets of Brixton on the first day (streetpastors.org, 2020). Since that time, over 12,000 street and prayer pastors have been enlisted and trained. These pastors have played an active part in maintaining safer streets and strengthening community life across the nation. The "street pastors" initiative could serve in the daytime or night, whether in the high streets or parks, schools, and colleges. Whichever context they are in, the "street pastors" initiative aims to offer reassurance, safety, and support through caring, listening, and helping various categories of people, children, youths, adults, or the elderly. They work together with other partners to make communities safer. Also, some experienced street pastors are trained for the role of response pastors. These are volunteers who provide physical and emotional support in times of crisis such as knife crime crisis.

The BMC leaders, due to concern for the children and youths in the church and community, took the role of patrolling the streets in the community in vulnerable hours to support the school

children either when going to school or returning from school. This is much needed in situations whereby their parents or guardians are not available to pick them up, and they have to walk their way to or back from school. The stories being shared by the church leaders indicate a significant reduction in knife crime rates where the street pastors are in operation. Ade is one of the church leaders in his town who acts in the role of a street pastor.

Ade: Particularly in the community here in Erdington where our churches are, knife crime has been on the increase. In fact, in 2020 crime rate in Erdington is number one or two in the whole of Birmingham. I mean crime directly related to knife crime. And, when I got that news last year, November or December that we are like the top three in the whole of Birmingham, in terms of crime rate, that drove me to a new initiative which we tried to champion in all the communities. We just started a "Street Pastor" initiative, we just launched it. So, because wherever you have street pastors, crime rate would reduce. That is normal everywhere, so I just led that which we started or launched it recently.

Ade was able to recruit other colleagues to patrol from the school area to the pupils' homes during the closing school hours. The church leaders acting as street pastors guide the school children to their respective homes or destination. Through this effort, the school children are being shielded from street gangs or from being lured into drugs. The presence of street pastors also deters gangs from their activities because they find it difficult to operate. The gangs know that the street pastors collaborate with the local police. Anything that looks strange to the street pastors would be reported to the police. Therefore, as the gangs notice the presence of street pastors, they move away to another location.

Additionally, the success of the "Street Pastors" initiative has been noticeable in some schools. They even requested the presence of these pastors as the school authorities observed the decrease in knife crime rates in their community. Peter, one of the church leaders, shared his experience stated as follows.

Peter: And so, in response, some churches started the street pastors in Enfield to monitor students going to schools or returning. This is found in a popular school that is very good and noted for good grades, that's of A Levels A Levels; they do very well in A Levels and is one of the best colleges in that part of Enfield. Street pastors go out at the end of the day to escort the students from the school who are not used to going on the bus. When the problems of knife

crimes became high in 2018 to 2019, some Schools decided to recruit street pastors to walk the students from school to their homes.

Peter noted that some schools started recruiting street pastors to escort the children from schools to their homes, which indicates the trust that school authorities have in the church leaders. Consequently, the work of street pastors is spreading across the nation to bring the knife crime rate down as much as possible through the activities of street pastors. Nevertheless, the challenge is finding a substantial number of church leaders willing and available to serve their community in this regard. This effort can significantly impact efforts to curb the knife crime crisis in the communities of British society. The efforts of these BMC leaders such as Peter have shown the characteristics of both servant and collaborative leadership models.

8.7 Chaplain

The interview results suggest that a sizeable number of church leaders serve their communities and nation as chaplains after being trained to provide spiritual care by ministering peace, faith, hope, and love to those in non-religious settings. The non-religious settings may be schools, colleges, universities, hospitals, hospices, sports grounds, community centres, prisons, industrial workplaces, local authorities or councils, universities, airports, parliament, royal households, and even armed forces. The chaplaincy covers spiritual help, fellowship, and study, confidential advice/ counselling, prayers, and offers information about places of worship of all faiths. This role has proved over the years to have a positive impact on the spiritual wellbeing and mental health of the people being ministered to. Eventually, this has led to a reduction in the rate of knife crimes in the community. A good proportionate number of church leaders serve as chaplains in hospitals, schools, or prisons. For instance, Ade, a BMC leader shared his experience of prison chaplaincy.

Ade: So, it's a church on its own, so, as we're counselling them in the prison, they are coming out, you now start a life for them and a church. You don't have a job, you don't have anything, who will employ somebody just coming from prison? So, when they now come back, you now have service for them separately. You engage them in the church to be working in the church as cleaners, so that you can clean that dirt from them and then you'll be able to give them reference to be able to work later, because after about six months or one year you've known them from prison, maybe one year you've known them, and they've been with you in the church

then you can say I can give this person reference in the past one year, this was his life but I've known him, he's been, he's been under me, working so they can start life again.

Ade is one of such church leaders who could volunteer to function in the role of the prison chaplain. They have a specific burden to reach out to those in prisons with the message of hope, peace, and love. They can provide fresh hope to the prison inmates and paint a vision of a better future notwithstanding the wrong things that they have done before. There is an assurance of a follow-up after they have served their terms in prison. Ade shared that he did this when ministering to those in the prisons. Many prison inmates require understanding and the need to be counselled concerning the kind of life they choose to live. Regular meetings or fellowships are held with the inmates, which involve sharing the word of God about faith, hope, and love. It also involved a session of prayer with them and counselling. This helps in their transformative living and settlement after they have been discharged from the prisons. Here Ade, a BMC leader represents many other BMC leaders who are influencing their communities through servant and collaborative leadership traits.

8.8 School Governors

Many church leaders serve as members of the board of governors of schools in their respective communities. They can benefit the schools by volunteering to employ their wide range of religious and professional experience to influence the policy decisions of local schools in the right direction. School Governors work within a team of the school governing board to ensure high achievement standards for all children and young people in the school (Birmingham City Council, 2022). Peter, a church leader, shared in his story about the need for community engagements and for more church leaders to volunteer to become school governors.

Peter: We are more concerned about members of our church, but we need to be more sensitive to what is happening in our community. My encouragement to church leaders is to get engaged and get into the community. Join the neighbourhood watch. Join collaboration with police open forums if you can. Connect with the police neighbourhood watch and the council and, if possible, encourage involvement in school activities such as school governors. Get involved in what is happening with the community, police, council, and schools. Become effective participants of the local community.

BMC leaders are increasingly seeing the need for more community engagements to influence things going on in their communities. The rise in knife crime rates and the resultant crisis of injuries and killings it has brought to the British communities has raised grave concern and the need for action. As a result, volunteering to be a school governor is one of the ways to influence matters in the community and be part of the team that is steering the children and youths in British communities in the right direction. Although the work of school governors might require sacrificing a sizeable number of days per year to commit to the responsibility, it is highly rewarding as the church leaders see the results and impact made on the school, the children, and the community being represented. These characteristics indicate servant and transformational, and collaborative leadership traits of the BMC leaders.

8.9 Peace Maker

The church leaders mediate between couples or parents and children to ensure peace in their homes and community. This role is quite critical, especially in families facing economic and immigration challenges as they are constantly struggling to make ends meet. The pressure and stress due to the challenges of life the members have got to face when their loved ones experienced being transferred knowingly or unknowingly to other members of the family. Here the church leaders normally step in to provide the needed stability and assurance to help the individuals, families, and communities successfully pass through those difficult periods. The role of church leaders functioning as peacemakers is not limited to the four walls of the church alone. The influence extends to their church communities and even beyond to national and global influence. Rachel, a church leader, shared an experience of mediating in a family.

Rachel: And you know, as leaders, we need to educate the parents. I believe that we need to educate our parents. I had a case of a child that ran away from home years ago, she ran away from home, and I was used to that as being involved in the youth ministry. And so, the mother called me and said, so and so person has left home. I thank God she was found! She's okay, well, she didn't have a good start to life at all when she was young. Studying her now, like in her teenage years, and we're looking for her for days, went to the police station and the mother went and they said, go we'll be looking for her. When she told me, and I said, did they asked for the photo of your child, she said no. I said they're not looking for her. How would they identify her if they saw her on the street if they didn't even have a photo of her. So, I had to follow her back to the station and, finally, were able to find her and we brought her back. And

I remember that day that she came back, I was settling problems between her and her mother till 4am in the morning.

The situation described by Rachel is one of many ways church leaders function as peacemakers. There has been a quarrel between a teenager and her mother. The quarrel must have generated a lot of debates and arguments that led to anger and the daughter departing from home to an unknown destination. Indeed, there was a communication breakdown between this teenager and her mother. The problem might have led to the daughter not disclosing where she was going or where she would be staying. Not seeing her daughter for days, the mother must have been afraid and agitated about what might have happened to her. The mother sharing her problem with a church leader helped her to take the right steps towards a solution and the eventual recovery of her daughter. The church leader had to go with her to the police station to complain formally and correctly.

In addition, the church leader acting in the role of a peacemaker has to stay with mother and daughter to listen to their complaints and areas of disagreements that led to communication breakdown and triggered such a level of anger and frustration in her daughter having to leave home without notice to an undisclosed destination. The mediation process must have taken a couple of hours for them to end conflict resolution by 4.00am since the evening of the preceding day. This indicates how time-consuming the peace-making process could be. Also, this indicates the sacrificial nature of the work of church leaders, particularly in the knife crime crisis period, as they seek to restore peace and order to their communities by mediating conflicts between families or groups. The role of church leaders as peacemakers can extend beyond their church walls to their communities, cities, and nations. Ahaz, a church leader functioning in the role of a peacemaker, started a project (Thepeacealliance.org.uk, 2020) with the acronym "PEACE" to stem the tide of knife crime in his community to mitigate killing, sorrow, and instability in his community. Each of the five letters in the word 'PEACE' has a unique word and meaning.

Further, for instance, in the first letter in PEACE, P represents Parenting, the second E – Education, the third, A – Achievement, the fourth, C – Community, and the fifth, E – Employment. This project addresses the needs of the less privileged youths and those returnees from prisons and how they could be settled back into the system, which has been difficult for them before. Further insights into the PEACE project have been discussed earlier in the section

under 'Project Manager'. Based on the accounts he shared, Ahaz, as a church leader, has collaborated for peace in his local community and national fronts. He has been involved in deliberations involving peace amongst various interdenominational churches, police, and national governmental agencies across the nation. Through the activities of Rachel, Ahaz, and other BMC leaders, they are able to impact their communities positively by the demonstration of servant, paternalistic and collaborative forms of leadership.

8.10 Community Prayer Champion

A significantly high number of BMC leaders serve their community in this role of praying for the peace and well-being of the members of their churches and communities. They do so by prayer efforts or campaigns in their communities or by going around the areas of their communities and praying along. This research suggests, based on the accounts of BMC leaders, that their prayer efforts have brought about peace and positive transformation in the area of knife crime reduction and other areas in the community. The church leaders, by their faith in God, hold to the Biblical principle that when you pray to God, he will hear the prayers, and he will answer and do remarkable things. He will bring about a change of situation. The Bible states:

Call to Me, and I will answer you, and show you great and mighty things, which you do not know. 'Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened (Jeremiah 33:3; Matthew 7:7-8, NKJV).

This is the belief and the faith of church leaders as they function in the role of prayer champions in their churches and communities. Chris and Akin, two of the church leaders, shared their faith in prayers.

Chris: We are given the power as light in our respective communities to dictate direct situations. You know what I mean by that, to use our own language to declare and decree for it to be established. Yeah. So, what can we do? Number one, we must ask God for mercy. That means through prayer. If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves. And the truth of his word is not in us. So, that is the starting point, the mercy of God through prayer.

Akin: It's like COVID-19. There are many strands to COVID-19 and there are many strands to knife crime. For my little research to move forward from COVID-19, I'm still maintaining a spiritual solution. You cannot solve a spiritual problem with a physical approach. It's not possible. I'm going to relate it to knife crime. It's like somebody who is mentally sick, and you are recommending Panadol. Panadol cannot cure insanity or Ibuprofen can't cure cancer.

Chris discussed what solution that they could employ if church leaders were to deal with the knife crime crisis. He was offering a spiritual solution. He believes it is a spiritual problem in the first instance and has to be handled spiritually by praying to God. Similarly, Akin affirms this belief by Chris. Chris believes the church and community had to, first of all, pray to God to get a solution to the problem of knife crime in society. Church leaders believe that prayer is a mighty weapon someone can use to deal with challenges in different areas of life. There has been a history of those who have prayed to God and received favourable answers both in the Bible and in our contemporary times.

Moreover, church leaders can pray for the community by mobilising members to walk around the community in prayer. Josiah, a church leader, shared his experience of this.

Josiah: There was a case year back in the year 2001. We were doing night vigil, and during that night vigil, we told some people to stay in the church around 1 am, so they stayed in the church, and the rest went into the community and were praying in the night you know doing a prayer walk over the community, and somehow the police got to know, and they began to follow us. They followed us back to the church, and when we got there, they said what are you people doing? So, I came out and explained to them that we were praying over the community, and we are declaring peace over the community. So, when I explained myself, they looked at me for a long time; they didn't know what to think of me, so they went away.

Josiah mobilised some members of his church to go around their community, to walk and pray at night. They were walking around, making conversation with God to bless their community, to grant peace in their community. This kind of effort has been proven to be effective in achieving its purpose. The implication of moving around the community is that those that are in gangs and sell drugs at night would not be able to operate in that community. Also, the implication is that the children can go safely to their schools during the day and return safely.

The testimony of Josiah is that the prayer efforts made at that time produced positive results in their community.

Therefore, because of past results of prayer, church leaders regularly organise joint prayer campaigns in diverse levels and spheres of life. They organise prayer in both in the city and national levels. They organise prayer campaigns at community and church levels. One instance of a prayer campaign on a national level is tagged ‘Festival of Life.’ This event organised by RCCG UK and held yearly in October in the London Excel exhibition centre in Docklands has attracted attendees ranging from 10,000 people to 40,000 people. As a result of all these prayer efforts, it is safe to suggest that church leaders act as community prayer champions to add efforts to dealing with challenges posed by the knife crime crisis in their respective communities in British society. Through the leadership traits of servant, transformational and collaborative leadership, BMC leaders, Chris, Akin, Josiah, and others are making huge positive impact on British communities and cities, in London, Birmingham, and Manchester amongst others.

8.11 Reflection on Social Action Roles

BMC leaders are impacted by the experiences of knife crime crises in their communities, which led to behavioural changes in their lives. Some of them take on new skills such as counselling, project management, conducting funerals for young adults, and prison and hospital chaplaincy. Some of these leaders are driven to learn or train in new skills based on their experience of knife crime in their communities. The new competencies and skills acquired during periods of knife crime crises led to behavioural changes that helped BMC leaders make a significant impact on stakeholders of knife crime and their communities as a whole. In Section 8.7.1, Ade, a BMC leader, explained how he was involved in prison chaplaincy and the rehabilitation of ex-convicts of knife crime. He went through attitudinal and behavioural changes that led him to train as a chaplain. This has equipped him to offer his service to the knife crime convicts in prison.

Reflecting on the activities of the BMC leaders through their social action projects, their influence and positive impact in their communities and the nation have been hugely significant. The church leaders have demonstrated multiple and varied leadership styles to carry out their social action projects. These kinds of roles have necessitated them mobilising church members,

caring for members of their communities involved in the knife crime crisis, networking with other church leaders, faith groups, and governmental agencies. Table 8.1 provides a suggested leadership model demonstrated by the BMC leaders in each of the roles discussed.

Table 8.1 BMC Leadership Models Demonstrated in Social Action Projects

S/N	Role	Model
1	Project Manager	Servant, Transformational, Authentic, Charismatic
2	Youth Advocate	Servant, Paternalistic
3	Community Leader	Servant, Transformational, Contemplative, *C'rative
4	Collaborator	Servant, Collaborative
5	Street Pastor	Servant, Transformational, Collaborative
6	Chaplain	Servant, Transformational, Collaborative
7	School Governor	Servant, Transformational, Collaborative
8	Peace maker	Servant, Paternalistic, Collaborative
9	*C'nity Prayer Champion	Servant, Transformational, Collaborative

*C'nity – Community *C'rative – Collaborative

The conceptual leadership roles listed in Table 8.1 indicate servant leadership as being the dominant model. Transformational and Collaborative models share about the same occurrence, indicating the importance of collaboration in social action projects and the potential for transformation of individuals and communities where these projects are being executed.

8.12 Chapter Eight Summary

There are nine key roles that church leaders played during the knife crime crisis under the category of social action roles. Analysis of the social action roles of church leaders indicates that a vast number of social action projects have been identified to address the midstream sectors (10/12 to 16/18 age category) rather than other sectors (Section 8.2). For instance, projects such as Street Pastors, Chaplaincy, School Governors, and Peacemakers address the midstream sector. This is basically because of two crucial factors. Firstly, this is because the teenage category, the post-millennial Gen Z, experiencing a prominent level of developmental changes, including hormonal and physiological developments of life, falls within this band. Secondly, based on the recent phenomenal rise in knife crime, this is the prevalent age category

for these knife crimes. Renny gives some insights into the life and beliefs of this category of youths (Section 7.3).

Further, the BMC leaders engage in some other social roles that could be identified to cover all three sectors, downstream, midstream, and upstream. For instance, collaborative, community leadership, and prayer champion functions could be identified as having an impact on all three sectors. On the other hand, a highly sizeable number of the projects being financed and championed by the government, whether local or national, seem to focus on the midstream and downstream sectors. They are projects directed at the intervention aspect of knife crime and not at prevention. The projects are directed at sectors that might not have a massive impact in mitigating against knife crime, and as a result, there is bound to be a continuity of these crimes and a high probability that it will continue to rise. This is the observation of Renny and a considerable number of other church leaders interviewed. The next chapter examines the key findings and contributions of this research to church leadership studies.

Chapter Nine: Key Areas of Contribution to Church Leadership Studies

9.1 Chapter Nine Overview

In Chapter 8, the social action roles of church leaders during the periods of knife crime crisis in their respective communities were explored. This penultimate chapter discusses the key contributions of this research to church leadership studies. The research has investigated the BMC leaders' views of the underlying causes of knife crime in three hotspot cities of knife crime. These are London, Birmingham, and Manchester. Also, this study examines the roles and behaviours of BMC leaders during periods of knife crime crisis. This chapter summarises the findings from the empirical research and analyses the inferences drawn.

Furthermore, this chapter discusses this research's critical contributions to knowledge in church leadership studies. The findings from this study propose four critical areas of contribution to church leadership studies. These are:

1. The Underlying Causes of Knife Crime
2. BMC Leaders' Overarching Roles
3. Servant Leadership Dominance
4. Collaborative Leadership Impact

9.2 The Underlying Causes of Knife Crime

The findings of this project provide new and more detailed knowledge than what past research indicates about church leadership roles and behaviours when involved in a community crisis, particularly in the context of knife crime. The first of these findings deals with the views of BMC leaders about the underlying causes of knife crime in their respective communities. The results of data analysis, having been passed through thematic and pastoral cycle analyses, indicate eight key factors that trigger knife crimes in British communities. These are as follows.

1. Family or parental problem
2. Gangs and drugs
3. Bullying
4. Absence of recreation facilities
5. Social media
6. Culture and identity
7. Policing and justice
8. Absence of religious instruction

An exploration of these underlying factors is presented in Chapter Five, and as highlighted in Section 5.12, the accounts by the leaders provide more insights and lived experiences about the triggers of the knife crime crisis in British society. The order in which the factors are listed does not necessarily imply their order of importance or significance. However, based on the data analysis, comprising realist narrative, qualitative thematic analysis using NVivo software, and Pastoral Cycle, the first trigger or most significant underlying factor of knife crime in British society is family or parental issues, manifested in the absence of a father figure in the home or lone parenting. This is followed by gangs and drugs.

In Section 5.3, Renny, a BMC leader, shared a scenario where he met a single mother who was contemplating suicide because of the level of stress of taking care of her children, training them alone, and combining this with her day-to-day job. Apart from the emotional issues the children of a lone-parent background have to deal with, they lack the guidance, security, and mentoring that a father figure could give or that both parents could offer them. The vacuum created in the life of such children and the absence of a father figure lure them to the male figures in gangs that deal with drugs and identify with knife crime problems. The challenge of emotional problems identified with children and youths from lone parental backgrounds is consistent with what many scholars (Zagel et al., 2013; Crawford and Henry, 2003; Covey and Tam, 1990) propounded as discussed in Section 5.3.

Also, in another experience of Renny with a young male adult who takes drugs, when asked why he took drugs. The answer is that he was introduced to it on his estate. There is no father figure, no role model, and no mentor to offer him guidance, instruction, or protection. This represents the view of mostly the BMC leaders interviewed. Matthew, another BMC leader mentioned in Section 5.3, explained that conflicts arise amongst the youths who are gang members involved in the business of selling hard drugs. These conflicts lead to stabbings and killings, which might at times involve innocent youths due to mistaken identity. Therefore, Matthew strongly believes that to deal with the problem knife crimes pose to society, the problem of selling hard drugs and gangs has to be concretely addressed. Other key factors such as bullying, absence of recreational facilities, social media, policing, justice, and absence of religious instruction have been analysed in Chapter 5.

Therefore, the first key finding of this study identifies eight key triggers of knife crime in British communities inferred from the three hotspot cities of knife crime in London,

Birmingham, and Manchester. This finding affirms what many other scholars in the literature in Section 3.4 have proposed as triggers of knife crime crises (Aldred et al., 2008; John, 2013; Brennan, 2018). Aldred et al. (2008) state:

The Church is aware of the role that family breakdown has in fuelling violent gang behaviour and has identified lack of fathering and poor parenting among other contributing factors. The most commonly identified factor fuelling social disorder was easy access to drugs and alcohol and problems of addiction. Lack of moral conscience or guidance, and lack of discipline in the home also featured prominently among questionnaire responses (Aldred et al., 2008:14).

One key observation in addition to the finding on the triggers of knife crime that seems not found with earlier studies is the factor of ‘lack of religious instruction’. Scholars like Aldred et al., John (2013), and Harding (2020) discuss other factors but fail to mention this new contribution by BMC leaders.

Nevertheless, Harding (2020), who considered the problem through the lens of social field theory, indicates a need to rephrase the narratives of the triggers of knife crime to the asymmetry of the social field that offers mechanisms for agency and control while providing both a pressure release and opportunity to demonstrate authenticity amongst the peers of gang members. The social field implies the network and interaction of street gangs operating under a structured domain with relational boundaries and a code of behaviour (Harding, 2020; Bourdieu, 1990). The concept of the street gang operating within a defined social field is a valid interpretive frame to unpack the symbolism and utility of knife-carrying and its usage. Within this domain of the social field are the struggles of the actors for dominance and positions, which unfortunately have to be earned by the authenticity of carrying knives and employing them to unleash havoc on others or their antagonists as they engage in the drug business along the county lines.

Harding asserts that the operations in the social field are critical to understanding the triggers of knife crime in British communities. However, Harding failed to acknowledge that the members of these gangs, being discussed as part of the social field, are from some particular homes and backgrounds. This brings attention to family or parental factors, which were mentioned earlier as the first underlying cause of knife crime. Before the implications of the

social field existed, the gangs being formed must have drawn their members from some family homes where the children lacked father figures, and they became more vulnerable to the enticement of the gangs to join their group. Therefore, in my opinion, the proposition by BMC leaders still stands concerning the eight key triggers or underlying causes of knife crimes in British communities.

9.3 BMC Leaders Overarching Roles

The second finding deals with the roles and behaviours of church leaders during periods of knife crime crisis in their respective British communities. There is presently scant examination of church leadership roles in the context of the knife crime crisis or any other crisis in British communities in the social science literature, as highlighted in Chapter 1. Hence, this research makes a pivotal contribution to this area. The research lends a voice to the thoughts of BMC leaders on their roles and behaviours during knife crime crises in their communities, particularly in three hotspot cities examined in this research. As discussed in Section 2.3.3, crises are highly salient events and are distinct from other normal occurrences in terms of their significant potential to disrupt individuals, communities, organisations, and other stakeholders (Bundy et al., 2019). Citizens living in a community and stakeholders where knife crimes are rampant are entities that can both influence and be influenced by crises caused by knife crime. Coombs (2015) and Bundy et al. (2019) agree on three phases of a crisis. These are pre-crisis prevention, crisis management, and post-crisis outcomes.

Based on accounts of BMC leaders on how they responded to knife crime crises, the findings of this research have inferred twenty-three conceptual key roles that function in the three phases of a crisis: pre-crisis, mid-crisis, and post-crisis periods. These roles and behaviours were backed by real lived experiences shared by these church leaders, as expounded in Chapters Six to Eight. The roles can be categorised conceptually into three overarching roles as follows.

- Pastoral roles: comprising pastoral, father figure, counsellor, confidant, servant leader, authentic leader, autocratic leader, and provider roles.
- Educational roles: comprising teacher/educator, role model, mentor, coach/trainer, guarantor, and administrator/trustee roles,
- Social Action roles: comprising project manager, youth advocate, community leader, collaborator, street pastor, chaplain, school governor, peacemaker, and community prayer champion roles.

Although other scholars (Anderson, 2015; Freeman-Powell, 2021; Adedibu, 2015; Francis, 2021) have been able to identify these overarching roles that BMC leaders functioned during knife crime crises or other challenges in their communities, this seems to be the first research that went further to identify broader roles that they played. As Chapter Six explains, BMC leaders, due to the multi-faceted challenges of knife crime crises, have experienced attitudinal and behavioural changes. These changes have led to a function in the eight key conceptual pastoral roles. As a Pastor, they have shown care and support for knife crime victims, families, and others. Conducted funerals in cases of bereavement. As a counsellor, they have offered advice to the church members and have helped many navigate moments of distress. As a father figure, BMC leaders have stepped in to support lone parents by acting as father figures, offering guidance and security to the youths.

In carrying out these functions, the inference from this study indicates that BMC leaders have exhibited most church leadership models discussed in Section 2.3.2. The most dominant is servant leadership, followed by authentic, transformational, and paternalistic leadership models. In Section 6.9, Ade, a BMC leader, stated that he exhibits both servant and autocratic leadership styles, but he employs the servant leadership style most of the time. This finding suggests BMC leaders exhibiting a combination of two or three of these leadership models or switching from one to another depending upon the circumstances. As a result, some leaders argue in favour of situational and contingency leadership models. As discussed in Section 2.3.2.2, the situational leadership model watches the situation at hand before deciding which model of leadership is best suited to employ.

Specific aspects of the educational role of BMC leaders include teacher, mentor, role model, coach, or a combination of functions as discussed in Chapter Seven. For instance, as discussed in Section 7.2, Angela sets up a School to take care of youths who are dropouts from mainstream Schools. This deals with Schools' exclusion and the attendant problems it poses to society. Also, the BMC leaders' account suggests the huge impact they had on the education of children and youths in their communities. They educate children and youths along the lines of their educational subject, particularly those subjects they find difficult. They were taught other aspects of life, including leadership and social skills. This educational impact, they suggest, has brought a noticeable reduction in the crime rates in their communities. However, the extent of this impact has not been measured. Further, in many instances, these leaders mentioned that a lack of significant support from the government or local council might affect

the sustainability of such educational programmes on a long-term basis. It could be inferred that the BMC leaders have exhibited servant, authentic, and transformational leadership models as they respond to knife crime crises in their communities.

The third category of roles is the social action. As stated in Section 8.11, reflecting on the activities of the BMC leaders through their social action projects, their influence and positive impact on their communities and the nation have been hugely significant. A dominant number of church leaders who embark on educational projects relating to social action focus on children (ages 0 – 10/12 years) or early years and teenagers (ages 10/12 – 16/18 years) or midstream (Sections 8.2.1 & 8.2.2). Most social action projects have been identified to address the middle-aged category. For instance, projects such as street pastors, chaplaincy, school governors, and peacemakers primarily address the midstream age majorly. There are two crucial reasons: first, teenagers and millennials, Gen Z, are experiencing a prominent level of developmental changes, including hormonal and physiological life developments, which fall within this band. Second, from the knife crime and views shared by the church leaders, this is the prevalent age group of people involved in knife crimes. Section 8.2.3, Ahaz, a church leader, built an educational project that helped young adults into employment. The young convicts who have served their prison terms and need to settle down into gainful employment are helped by this project to get trained and acquire knowledge and skills for self-employment jobs such as painting and plumbing. This educational role helps deal with the post-crisis problems of the youth.

The finding suggests that social action roles are more prominent in knife crime crises than other church leadership roles. This could indicate that many interventions and emergency activities normally go on during any crisis, including knife crime, to address the grave situation of the crisis period. Also, the early years (0 -10/12 years) are the most effective area for dealing with the knife crime crisis. Inference from the data suggests that the dominant view of the BMC leaders is, that when the challenge in the early years sector is addressed, the source of the crime would be stopped and eventually bring to a minimal level the problem of knife crime in British communities. The resources being poured into intervention programmes by the government would have been better employed in prevention. For political reasons, the government might not be able to pursue a long-term prevention strategy, as public pressure would force immediate, reactive, and short-term intervention measures. In Section 8.11, Table 8.1 illustrates

a suggested leadership model demonstrated by the BMC leaders as they carry out social action projects.

All the leadership models that are discussed in Section 2.3.2 as being prevalent in Church settings, apart from autocratic leadership, are inferred as being demonstrated. An autocratic leadership model where instant decisions needed to be taken, and, in such a situation, as the knife crime crisis was not prevalent with BMC leadership, because the first responders are generally government agencies, such as ambulances, medical personnel, and the police force. The church leaders might later be involved to serve as counsellors, prayer champions, chaplains, and so on. As shown in Table 8.1, in carrying out social action projects during knife crime crises, the dominant leadership model indicated is servant leadership. Transformational and Collaborative models share the same prominence. This indicates the importance of collaboration in social action projects and the potential for the transformation of individuals and communities where these projects are being executed. The next section expounds further on the dominance of servant leadership.

9.4 Servant Leadership Dominance

This study suggests that the servant leadership model is a more widely practiced and effective style than other forms of leadership models in church settings, particularly during knife crime crises. When asked which leadership model they prefer or operate during knife crime crises in their communities, the data analysis results indicate that most church leaders favour the servant leadership model over other forms. Section 6.7 discusses Servant leaders and affirms that the servant leadership model is the most preferred form that church leadership subscribes to. For instance, BMC leaders such as Ade, James, and Renny stated that they employed the servant leadership model in their operations, mostly more than other forms. From Section 6.7, Ade's view is that Servant leadership is the best style for charity organisations like churches. He stressed further that followers want to see the leader participating in the setup activities in the church. When they see the example of a leader, leading in service, participating in serving others, they, in response, would be happy to do likewise.

The way these church leaders demonstrated servant leadership is shown in social action projects discussed in Chapter 8, particularly Sections 8.2 to 8.10. They served the community by providing food and needed survival materials to the community and acted as street pastors.

Where they went to the streets of the neighbourhood, just as carers will do to those entrusted to their care, to escort young children and teenagers to their Schools; as discussed in Section 8.6, they also serve as chaplains (Section 8.7) and prayer champions (Section 8.10) for the community without expecting any reward. The result affirms what scholars such as Greenleaf (2012) and Bolden (2004) suggest: Servant leadership is the most practiced form of leadership model in churches and other not-for-profit organisations. According to Greenleaf, servant-leaders are first driven to serve others, while Bolden (2004) asserts that the focus on serving a greater purpose has made the servant-leadership model popular within the church and non-profit sector. However, the author adds that this model has had a limited impact on commercial sectors. This is because the commercial sector is profit-driven rather than people-driven.

Eva et al. (2019), while doing a comprehensive review of 285 articles on servant leadership spanning 20 years (1998–2018), conclude and proffer a broad definition of Servant leadership by stating that

Servant leadership is an (1) other-oriented approach to leadership, (2) manifested through one-on-one prioritizing of follower individual needs and interests, (3) and outward reorienting of their concern for self towards concern for others within the organization and the larger community (Eva et al., 2019:114).

The above definition contains three noteworthy features that are identifiable in Servant leadership. These are the motives, modes, and mindsets of leaders. The first is the motive of Servant leadership (i.e., 'other-oriented approach to leadership'), which is a crucial aspect of servant leadership because it differentiates it from other perspectives on leadership. The motive is the underlying personal motivation for taking up a leadership responsibility. This orientation towards others reflects the leader's resolve, conviction, or belief that leading others means a movement away from self-orientation, instead of other leadership styles that focus on advancing the leader's ambition. Most BMC leaders follow this leadership trait as it resonates with the leadership style that the Lord Jesus exhibited while with his disciples. Jesus states

Just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many (Matthew 20:28, NKJV).

The son of man in the above passage refers to Jesus. His choice and mission is to come and serve humanity and sacrifice for the people. Hence, the servant leadership model is the most professed and dominant leadership style in the church.

Therefore, it is not accidental that BMC leadership behaviour aligns with what Eva et al. expound on about the resolve of servant-leaders in serving others emanating out of their self-concept as an altruist, moral person who, by default, requires a great awareness of self, character, and psychological discipline. Furthermore, the acquisition of the vital position of servant leadership amongst popular leadership models in church organisations could be linked to the consensus amongst church leaders that the leader they seek to emulate in their faith, the Lord Jesus Christ, practiced primarily servant leadership throughout his ministry. He demonstrated this leadership by washing the feet of his twelve key disciples and followers and commanding these people to do likewise to other disciples (John 13:4-14).

Further, as discussed in Section 2.3.2, Pugh (2013), while arguing in favour of Servant leadership, concludes that the New Testament leadership model is Servant leadership because Jesus Christ, the central figure of the New Testament, imbibed the culture of servant leadership and asked his followers to follow the same course. Therefore, the third key area of contribution to knowledge in this study suggests that although other leadership models are getting increasingly employed in church settings, servant leadership is still the most dominant and effective form of leadership that the BMC leaders demonstrated during the knife crime crises in their respective communities. However, as discussed in the preceding section, servant leadership mostly does not operate as a standalone but operates in conjunction with one or two other leadership models. Furthermore, the results from data analysis indicate that a considerable number of BMC leaders stress that apart from operating as servant leaders, church leaders need to network or collaborate to achieve a greater and more effective impact on the challenge of knife crime in British communities. This leads to the fourth key area of contribution of this study: the impact of collaborative leadership.

9.5 Collaborative Leadership Impact

Section 2.2.9 discusses the church's key leadership models, which include servant, paternalistic, transformational, and authentic leadership styles (Greenleaf, 1977; Pugh, 2013; Anheier, 2005; Ronquillo, 2009; Grandy, 2013). However, in recent years, a significant number

of scholars (Grint, 2010; Brookes and Grint, 2010; Head, 2022; Aldred et al., 2008; Brandsen, T. and Pestoff, V.; 2008) has been advocating for collaborative leadership in dealing with complex and difficult problems such as knife crime crisis in British communities. As stated in Section 2.2.9, collaborative leadership involves a community of people or leaders initiating and making decisions on issues that matter to them. They have a shared purpose that extends across organizational boundaries (Grint, 2005; Ansari et al., 2001). Also, Section 2.4.6 mentioned John's findings (2013) about churches and church leadership involvement in existing multi-agency partnerships, including collaborations with schools, governments, and other stakeholders dealing with knife crime in British communities.

The findings of this research on the knife crime crisis confirm the suggestions of a sizeable number of crisis leadership scholars that collaborative leadership will produce better results than other leadership models (Brookes and Grint, 2010; Grint, 2010; Head, 2022; Vangen and Huxham, 2003). Most BMC leaders interviewed agreed on the need for further collaboration and networking with the government and other agencies dealing with knife crime in British society. When asked about the knife crime crisis and the most effective or efficient way of reacting to this in their communities, apart from servant leadership, collaboration, networking, and a multi-agency approach were mostly mentioned. The BMC leaders experience a social and political change as they reflect on their experiences of knife crime crises in their communities. As Ballard and Pritchard suggest, these leaders begin to see themselves as part of communities with social and political responsibilities. This is evidenced by various kinds of activities and groups that they initiated or became involved in. Some of their actions, roles, and behaviours are indicated in the preceding chapter.

In Section 8.5.1, Zerah's reflections on the cases of knife crime and other social ills affecting BAME communities led him to start a national church leaders forum for Black Christian leaders. In Section 8.5.3, Peter, another BMC leader, collaborates with the police in his community. In Section 8.4, Sade, a female BMC leader, organizes community events to address issues relating to knife crime. Through the social and political change encountered by BMC leaders, they were able to build a network of relationships and collaborations with other BMC church leaders, church leaders of different denominations and expressions, community leaders, politicians, government agencies, the police force, and other stakeholders with interests on the knife crime crises in British communities. This suggests that church leaders are open to

discussions on collaboration, and many of them are already involved in one collaborative effort or another toward dealing with the knife crime crisis. This is evidenced in three ways.

First, they spoke of events and institutions they set up, and governmental agencies involved in collaboration efforts dealing with the cases of knife crime. This was discussed in detail in Section 8.4. These include the following.

- Community events such as seminars relating to knife crime issues and interdenominational gospel music concerts that reach out to the youth. They provide an alternative focus. These events are jointly organized programs by church leaders networking in a particular community or across communities on a bigger scale. For instance, Sade, a church leader, spoke about seminars her church ministry organized event on knife crime issues. James, another church leader, spoke about a yearly event called the 'Festival of Praise' jointly organized by church leaders in a city considered to be one of the hotspots' cities of knife crime in England.
- Community centres provide a rallying centre for meetings and social events that could focus the youth on the right direction. Many churches are situated at the heart of communities and have halls that serve as community centres. These centres provide platforms for leaders in a particular community to meet and collaborate for the peace and well-being of the community. Salmon, a church leader in East London, shared how his church runs a community centre for meetings, social events, daycare centres, and after-school clubs.

Second, church leaders spoke of the existing networking amongst church leaders, community leaders, and governmental agencies such as the police and political leaders. Section 8.5 discusses leaders' networking and collaboration levels, whether at community, interdenominational, county, or national levels, that are directed towards responding to the crises of knife crime in British communities. James shared another experience of church leaders coming together in his city at different forums to deliberate on saving young people who are engaged in knife crime and how these could be transformed from negative to positive lifestyles. Azor, a church leader, shared about a group called "Street Pastors," who are church leaders working together to ensure safer streets for youths attending schools in the community where they are represented. This kind of initiative has spread to many communities in England. On a national level, Zerah, another church leader, mentioned a national church leaders forum where BMC leaders pull resources together to respond to social vices in British society.

Lastly, most of the BMC leaders spoke of the necessity for more networking and collaboration amongst church leaders, governments, and other stakeholders of knife crime to get an effective and lasting solution to the challenge of knife crime. There is a consensus amongst church leaders; for instance, Salmon, Ahaz, Zerah, Ade, and Peter in Sections 8.2.1, 8.2.3, 8.5, 8.6, and 8.8 respectively, all shared the need for more action in networking and collaboration amongst church leaders, police, political leaders, governmental agencies, and other stakeholders of knife crime in responding to the challenge of knife crime in British communities. Further, the extent of present collaboration amongst church leaders, government agencies, and other stakeholders is unknown. However, many church leaders still felt there was not enough collaboration. There is a need for more action on the part of all the stakeholders in networking and collaboration if any significant impact is to be achieved.

The findings of this study indicate that the challenge of the knife crime crisis is a wicked problem (that is a complex problem – Section 2.3.2.8) that cuts across many levels, county lines, and institutions, thereby requiring a multi-faceted approach to a solution. A collaborative leadership model employed in addition to Servant leadership seems to add force or efficiency to produce the result and maximum impact. Therefore, apart from the dominant Servant leadership style of operation in a church setting, this research suggests consideration for higher levels of commitment to collaborative work with other stakeholders. However, a considerable number of scholars agree that if collaboration is to bring more significant impact and efficiency, it must be premised on certain critical factors. These include collaborative advantage, the big picture, public value, and trust (Brookes and Grint, 2010; Head, 2022; Coleman, 2007).

9.6 Chapter Nine Summary

In Summary, this chapter discussed the four key findings to church leadership studies resulting from this research project on the response of BMC leadership to knife crime crises in British communities. The first key finding identifies and discusses the eight critical underlying causes of knife crime as inferred from data analysis of the account shared by BMC leaders in the three hotspot cities of knife crime, namely London, Birmingham, and Manchester. These include parental problems, gangs and drugs, bullying, absence of recreation, and absence of religious instruction. The second key finding identifies three overarching BMC leaders' roles during the knife crime crisis. These are Pastoral, Educational, and Social Action roles. The third key

finding inferred that servant leadership is the dominant leadership model of the BMC leaders during knife crime crises.

However, it mostly operates with other leadership models such as transformational, charismatic, authentic, and paternalistic models. Also, based on BMC leaders' accounts and experience of knife crime crises, collaboration is being practised, and further collaboration is strongly recommended to mitigate against knife crime crises. This leads to the last key finding of this research. Finally, the last key finding is that BMC leaders asserted that the collaborative leadership model adds a huge positive impact or efficiency to the servant leadership model in dealing with knife crime crises. This extends the argument of many scholars on recent developments about leadership studies that collaborative leadership is the most effective form of model in dealing with socio-policy problems, such as the knife crime crisis in British society.

The next chapter, the concluding chapter of this research, summarises the whole research work, including the limitations of the research findings. Also, it provides a few recommendations for further studies in this field of church leadership studies.

Chapter Ten: Conclusion

10.1 Chapter Ten Overview

This chapter presents the summary of this study, "Responding to knife crime: a case study of church leadership in a community crisis." The study focuses on church leadership in Black Majority Churches (BMCs) in the United Kingdom. The following outlines the various stages of the research, the literature review, the research methodology employed, the data analysis, the findings, and the critical contributions of knowledge to church leadership studies. Further, the study draws attention to the limitations of the research findings and provides some reflections and recommendations that could guide future research in the field of church leadership studies.

10.2 Overview of Research Process

The motivation for this study to consider a topic relating to knife crime and leadership was borne out of concern to do something about what has been observed and experienced about the knife crime crisis in a Borough of Greater London where the researcher pastored a church for over twenty years. Hence, the research questions dealt with finding out the views of BMC leaders about the underlying causes of the knife crime crisis and how they are responding to this crisis in the communities where they are located. Initial background knowledge about knife crime and church leadership, particularly amongst BMC leaders, was gathered through a literature review in those relevant fields. A qualitative research methodology was preferred because the views of church leaders, who are human beings who can reflect on themselves, were to be gathered and analysed.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 50 church leaders from three British cities that were among the hotspots of knife crime in the United Kingdom. These are London, Birmingham, and Manchester. However, only 49 of these participants, who were BMC leaders, were utilized for data analysis to allow for a more focused study. The interviews were carried out via Zoom video conferencing due to the restrictions on face-to-face contact during the global coronavirus pandemic when these interviews took place. Due to the interdisciplinary nature of the study, encompassing social science, humanities, and theological inquiries, a pragmatic methodological approach to qualitative data analysis was considered. This method involved a realist narrative approach, thematic analysis, and pastoral cycle methodology of practical theology. The Pastoral Cycle (PC) analysis encompassed

three key areas: 1. Church leaders' experience, 2. Analysis and exploration, and 3.

Theological reflection and response. The findings based on data analysis were presented in Chapters Five to Eight. Chapter Nine discussed the findings of the whole research process and key contributions to knowledge in church leadership studies. These are outlined in the following section.

10.3 Four Key Areas of Contributions to Church Leadership Studies

The results of this research, conducted on how BMC leadership responded to the knife crime crisis in their communities, identify four key findings and contributions to knowledge in church leadership studies. The key findings provide answers to the main research questions for this study. The research questions for clarity are listed as follows.

- What are the views of BMC leaders on the underlying causes of the knife crime crisis in their communities?
- What roles do BMC leaders play, specifically their behaviours in the knife crime crisis in their communities?
- How does the evidence about these behaviours and roles contribute to contemporary theories of church leadership?

The first key finding answers the first research inquiry. The data analysis of the accounts of BMC leaders reveals eight key underlying causes of knife crime in the three hotspot cities, London, Birmingham, and Manchester, where the study was conducted. These are Parental or Family problems, Gangs and Drugs, Bullying, Absence of Recreation facilities, Social media, Culture and Identity, Policing and Justice, and Absence of religious instruction. The stories and narratives of BMC leaders give new insights into the challenges that knife crime poses to British society, the experiences of those living in their communities, and why those key factors are triggers to knife crime crises. As discussed in significant detail in Section 9.2, it clarifies the views and articulates the voice of BMC leaders compared with other leaders about the underlying causes of knife crime in British communities. Apart from revealing this empirical contribution to knowledge regarding key underlying causes of the knife crisis based on the accounts of BMC leaders, this study extends knowledge by identifying an additional underlying factor of “absence of religious instruction,” that earlier studies have not proposed.

The second key finding provides an answer to the second research question about the roles and behaviours of BMC leaders during knife crime crises. This result identified three overarching church categories of church leadership roles. These are:

- I. Pastoral roles: These comprise the roles of Pastor, Father Figure, Counsellor, Confidant, Servant Leader, Authentic Leader, Autocratic Leader, and Provider.
- II. Educational roles: These comprise the roles of Teacher/Educator, Role Model, Mentor Coach/Trainer, Guarantor, and Administrator/Trustee.
- III. Social Action roles: These comprise the roles of Project Manager, Youth Advocate, Community Leader, Collaborator, Street Pastor, Chaplain, School Governor, Peacemaker, and Community Prayer Champion.

The details of each of the overarching church leaders' roles have been explored and discussed in Chapters 6 to 8. Three categories of leadership roles were inferred from the data analysis of BMC leaders' accounts of knife crime. These are pastoral roles, which entail eight functions; educational roles, comprising six functions; and social action roles, comprising nine functions. Thus, twenty-three functions of church leadership roles were identified before, during, and after the knife crime crisis. Social action roles are being more prominent in knife crime crises than other church leadership roles.

It is important to note, as discussed in Section 9.3, that although other scholars have identified the overarching roles of BMC leaders during knife crime crises, this finding seems to be the first detailed elaboration on the roles of church leadership in crisis. The Twenty-three leadership roles provide fresh insights into the multi-faceted roles that BMC leaders function during knife crime crises, and the huge impact that they are making in their communities. These additional insights would motivate the governments, their agencies, and other stakeholders to collaborate with BMC leaders to work together in dealing with knife crime crises in British society.

Lastly, the third and fourth key findings answer the third research question about how the evidence of the roles of BMC leaders contributes to the contemporary theories on church leadership studies. The third finding suggests that servant leadership is dominant and more effective in church settings during knife crime crises than other leadership models, as discussed in Section 9.3. This proposition aligns with what many leadership scholars suggest about the dominant and effective leadership style in nonprofit organizations, particularly in

church settings is the servant leadership style. In addition, servant leadership mostly does not operate as a standalone style of leadership. Mostly, in practice, it works in conjunction with others such as transformational, charismatic, paternalistic, and collaborative leadership models.

Although the servant leadership model seems dominant in church settings, many church leaders still spoke of collaboration and networking with other churches and stakeholders on knife crime to produce maximum results. This insight leads to the fourth and final key finding of this study, that collaborative leadership may add efficiency to servant leadership in dealing with knife crime crises. Many church leaders affirmed that knife crime is a complex and multifaceted problem, requiring a multifaceted solution such as a multi-agency approach. Hence, there is a need to consider collaborative leadership in addition to the servant leadership model in dealing with socio-policy problems such as knife crime. As discussed in Section 9.3.2, this proposition aligns with recent propositions of a broad spectrum of scholars on leadership and public policy, stating that collaborative leadership is best suited to dealing with complex societal problems such as the knife crime crisis.

Overall, the study has enhanced knowledge of leadership in crisis, particularly church leadership, and the significant multifaceted roles that church leaders play in their communities. It reveals an urgent need for leaders and stakeholders of knife crime to network and collaborate to achieve more noteworthy results in their efforts to deal with the pervasive knife crime crisis in British communities.

10.4 Limitations of the Study

This study was carried out on only three significant hotspots of knife crime in the United Kingdom, which could have introduced an element of selection bias in the research. Also, as the interviews were conducted via Zoom video conferencing, church leaders might have missed opportunities to capture nuances of the exercise more accurately than in face-to-face situations. Therefore, caution should be exercised in the generalization of these views and experiences of church leaders to the whole of the United Kingdom. Also, the research is limited to BMC leaders. Their worldviews might have been influenced by their faith and their denominational doctrine. The views of other non-BMCs, Christian denominations, faith groups, victims of knife crime and their families, governmental bodies/agencies such as the police and politicians, and other stakeholders of knife crime are not taken into consideration

in data analysis. Hence, the results and any propositions would produce a partial perspective on knife crime solutions and might not be the whole picture of issues on the ground.

10.5 Recommendations

It will strengthen present findings and generalisation of results if future research includes leaders of other faith groups apart from those in BMCs to better understand what broader spectrum of faith leaders who are saying or experiencing about knife crime in their communities. The possibility of generalisation of results could be enhanced by expanding the number of cities selected to be studied. Also, future research might take into consideration other stakeholders who are involved in the knife crime crisis, such as the victims, their families, the perpetrators, governments, and the police.

Although consideration for a broader sample size will lead to more elaborate research work requiring much more time, finance, and incorporation of mixed research methods, it might produce better results and generalisation of findings. Nevertheless, the findings from this research and suggestions contained have added new insights into church leadership dialogues and studies. Also, it may be useful when considered in conjunction with prior relevant research work in proposals of a policy framework for integrating church-led initiatives into national crime prevention strategies. Policies relating to knife crime should take account of BMC leaders' views, involve BMC leaders more, and facilitate inter-sectoral collaboration, including BMC leaders.

10.6 Final Reflections

The existing literature has provided appreciable insight and understanding about leadership in general and Black Majority Church leadership in particular. There has been a realisation of the considerable influence that church leaders could have on their followers, people, organizations, communities, and nations. Leaders who are trained and skilled have a lot to offer in crises to mitigate against the crises or lessen the negative impact they might cause on people, organizations, and communities where they have influence. Sincerely, the researcher has learnt through interactions with other researchers about the need to be receptive to other ideas and change. However, the changes to present knowledge and understanding need to be carefully exercised to lead to a better or positive result.

The fieldwork conducted worked well at the beginning. However, later, during the transcription of the interviews, the realization dawned on the need for better planning to check the equipment being used and pay attention to the mode of communication to aid the

transcription and analysis of collected data. For instance, there was a case of unstable internet connections at some periods of the day, which resulted in unclear responses in a few cases during fieldwork and data collection. This issue led to spending more time than envisaged in the transcription process, which succeeded in the interviewing stage.

Overall, the research project was challenging and yet fulfilling. The findings revealed church leaders' significant and multifaceted roles in their communities, particularly in the knife crime crisis. The study reveals the magnificent work of BMC leaders in their communities, the significance of their closeness to members of their communities, and how relevant their roles are to the crises taking place in British communities. The study aids in appreciation of the importance of research in shaping the future of communities, mobilizing action in dealing with crises, and influencing governmental policies for the future by the provision of knowledge that could enhance positive transformation in society. Further, the study reveals how research could provide relevant knowledge and the directions that church, economic, educational, and political leaders in charge of decision-making may follow.

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Appendices

Appendix I: Knife or sharp instrument offences recorded by the police for selected offences

by police force: area English regions and Wales, year ending Mar. 2011 – Sept. 2019

Year Location	Apr.'10 To Mar.'11	Apr.'11 To Mar.'12	Apr.'12 To Mar.'13	Apr.'13 To Mar.'14	Apr.'14 To Mar.'15	Apr.'15 To Mar.'16	Apr.'16 To Mar.'17	Apr.'17 To Mar.'18	Apr.'18 To Mar.'19
England & Wales	32669	30987	26397	25588	26312	29261	35381	-	-
Eng. & Wales Excl. Man.	30620	29250	24798	23945	24551	27464	33726	40216	43531
England	31705	30278	25679	24297	25480	28429	34359	-	-
Eng. Excl. Manchester	29656	28541	24080	23297	23719	26632	32704	38927	41958
Greater Manchester	2048	1737	1599	1643	1761	1797	1655	-	-
London	13356	14184	11386	10078	9684	9757	12077	14733	14902
Wales	741	624	625	576	746	738	946	1148	1373

Source: ONS.GOV.UK (2019)

Appendix II: Hundreds march against knife crime in London



Source: BBC News (2015b)

Appendix III: A list of the names of young people killed was read out in Downing Street.



Source: BBC News (2015b)

Appendix IV: The Knife Angel



Source: British Ironwork Centre (2023)

Appendix V: A group of young people outside “The Bus Stop” - a double decker bus that has been transformed into a mobile youth centre with a cafe, consoles, and craft areas, to serve young people in areas where there is no youth centre.



Source: Williams (2018)

(“The Bus Stop” project partners with churches to deliver youth work and outreach in Scarborough, the borough of Yorkshire. It is sponsored by Laing Family Trusts and won a Christian Funders’ Forum Award in the Best Rural Project category in 2018)

Appendix VI: Fifty Church leaders' statistics across three cities in England (L, B & M)

S/N	Code Name/ Sex	Age Category (yrs.)	Level of Education	Length of Service(yrs.)	Church Denomination	Church Location
1	Peter/M	35-49	M.Sc.	12	RCCG*	London
2	Paul/M	50-64	M.Sc.	19	RCCG	London
3	Angela/F	50-64	M.A	20	RCCG	London
	Simon/M	50-64	B.Sc.	22	RCCG	London
5	Esther/F	50-64	B.Sc.	21	RCCG	London
6	Andrew/M	50-64	B.Sc.	21	RCCG	London
7	Abram/M	65+	M.Sc.	22	RCCG	London
8	Jane/F	50-64	M.A	16	RCCG	London
9	Mary/F	50-64	B.Sc.	15	RCCG	London
10	Renny/M	50-64	M.A	10	C of E*	London
11	Chris/M	50-64	B.Sc.	8	RCCG	London
12	Rachel/F	65+	B.Sc.	15	RCCG	London
13	Isaac/M	50-64	B.Sc.	16	CTV*	Manchester
14	John/M	50-64	M.A	18	NCC*	London
15	Joseph/M	50-64	M.A	20	RCCG	Manchester
16	Christie/F	35-49	M.A	20	NCC	Manchester
17	Jacob/M	50-64	B.Sc.	16	CTC*	Manchester
18	Abel/M	50-64	B.Sc.	23	RCCG	London
19	Adam/M	50-64	ACMA	20	NCC	London
20	Matthew/M	50-64	BSc	17	RCCG	London
21	Mark/M	50-64	B. A	22	NBC*	Birmingham
22	Luke/M	50-64	PhD	20	NCC	London
23	Sade/F	35-49	M.A	15	Reflecteen*	Manchester
24	Isaac/M	50-64	PhD	21	RCCG	London
25	Esau/M	35-49	M.Sc.	14	RCCG	Manchester
26	Heron/M	50-64	M.D	15	RCCG	Manchester

Appendix VI (continued): Fifty Church leaders' statistics across three cities in England (L, B & M)

27	Obed/M	50-64	M.D	15	RCCG	Manchester
28	Salmon/M	35-49	M.Sc.	16	RCCG	London
29	Perez/M	35-49	M.D	8	RCCG	Manchester
30	David/M	50-64	N/A*	15	RCCG	Manchester
31	Zerah/M	50-64	PhD	22	CC/CLC*	London
32	Ahaz/M	50-64	B.Sc.	33	RCCG	London
33	Josiah/M	50-64	M.D	21	RCCG	Birmingham
34	Asa/M	50-64	B.Sc.	13	RCCG	Birmingham
35	Uzziah/M	50-64	M.D	15	RCCG	Birmingham
36	Zadok/M	50-64	B.Sc.	12	RCCG	Manchester
37	Azor/M	50-64	N/A	16	RCCG	Manchester
38	Cain/M	50-64	PhD	4	RCCG	Manchester
39	Amon/M	50-64	N/A	20	RCCG	Birmingham
40	James/M	50-64	N/A	19	RCCG	Manchester
41	Bath/M	35-49	N/A	N/A	LCM*	London
42	Tunde/M	35-49	ACCA	7	RCCG	Birmingham
43	Segun/M	50-64	HND	12	RCCG	Birmingham
44	Ade/M	50-64	M.Sc.	13	RCCG	Birmingham
45	Joel/M	50-64	B. A	15	RCCG	Birmingham
46	Femi/M	50-64	B.Sc.	14	RCCG	Birmingham
47	Remi/M	50-64	B.Sc.	10	RCCG	Birmingham
48	Yomi/M	65+	ACCA	18	RCCG	London
49	Akin/M	35-49	B.Sc.	20	RCCG	Birmingham
50	Ruth/F	65+	M.D	13	RCCG	Birmingham

*Abbreviations - Full term: **RCCG** - The Redeemed Christian Church of God, **C of E** - Church of England (Anglican Church Communion), **CTV** - Christ the Vine Church, **NCC** - New Covenant Church, **CTC** - City to City Church, **NBC** - Newborn Church, **Reflecteen** - Reflecteen Hub Organisation, **CC/CCL** - Christian Concern, Christian Legal Centre, **LCM** - London City Mission, **N/A** - Information about educational level not available.

Appendix VII: Participant Recruitment/Invitation Letter



University of Essex



Research recruitment/ invitation Letter

Dear Sir/Madam,

Re: Invitation to Participate in Essex Business School Research Project

I am writing to invite you to participate in a research project, entitled 'Knife Crimes as a Leadership Challenge for Churches: A Narrative Approach'.

The purpose of this research is to investigate by a narrative approach, knife crimes as a leadership challenge for Churches, the sensemaking of leaders on the challenge of knife crimes in the British society, and by understanding this sensemaking, what solutions and practices might be available in tackling the challenge of knife crimes both within Church and in the broader British society. The research forms part of my postgraduate study and is being undertaken under the supervision of Dr. Simon Carmel and Dr. Noelia-Sarah Reynolds at Essex Business School.

The research will involve interviewing Church leaders by a narrative approach, whereby church leaders share their experiences of knife crimes in their communities and what sense they could make out of these experiences. All data collected will be treated in strictest confidence.

I attach an information sheet which provides further details about what participation in the research would entail and how anonymity and confidentiality will be managed.

Your participation and support will be highly appreciated. For further information, you can directly contact the researcher or the supervisor via emails shown below.

Thank you very much for your attention and consideration.

Yours sincerely,

Researcher(s)	Contact details
Researcher: Phillip Oyetunji	Po19007@essex.ac.uk
Supervisors: Dr. Simon Carmel Dr. Noelia-Sarah Reynolds	scarmel@essex.ac.uk nschnurr@essex.ac.uk

Appendix VIII: Participant Information Sheet



Participant Information Sheet

Project title

Knife Crimes as a Leadership Challenge for Churches: A Narrative Approach

Invitation to take part in a research study

My name is Phillip Oyetunji and I am a Postgraduate Research Student in Essex Business School at the University of Essex. I would like to invite you to take part in a research study. Before you decide whether or not to take part, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully.

What is the purpose of the study?

The purpose of this study is to explore by a narrative approach, knife crimes as a leadership challenge for Churches, the sensemaking of leaders on the challenge of knife crimes in the British society, and by understanding this sensemaking, what solutions and practices might be available in tackling the challenge of knife crimes both within Church and in the broader British society.

This study would employ qualitative narrative method of research by conducting narrative interviews with leaders of churches in London, Birmingham and Manchester. The data collected would be subject to the interpretative thematic method of analysis of the narratives of church leaders. The data collection aims to run for between six to nine months.

Why have I been invited to participate?

You are invited to participate in this study as a Church organisation leader and someone who has some knowledge and experience of the knife crimes in his community in the British society. An estimated number of 45 to 60 Church leaders are being invited to volunteer to participate in this exercise based upon their demographic location in three of the major hotspots' cities of knife crimes in the British society. These are London, Birmingham and Manchester.

Do I have to take part?

It is up to an invited participant to decide whether he/she wishes to take part in this research study. If you do decide to take part, you will be asked to provide written consent. You are free to withdraw at any time, without giving a reason. If you wish to withdraw then please contact Mr Phillip Oyetunji (email: po19007@essex.ac.uk) or Dr. Simon Carmel (email: scarmel@essex.ac.uk). If you withdraw prior to anonymisation of data, then your data will be destroyed. Following anonymisation, it will not be possible to destroy the data you have provided.

What will happen to me if I take part?

This project is intended to be undertaken in only one phase. However, there might be a possibility of a second phase if the overall direction of data analysis and findings suggest a possible follow up interview. These are detailed below:

Phase 1: Main Interview

If you consented to participate in this study, I will plan and invite you to undertake an interview with myself (Phillip Oyetunji). This interview, which would approximately last for not more than an hour, will focus on sharing your stories, narratives, and sensemaking of knife crimes in the British society, and what could be the potential influence and implications that this sharing on knife crimes might have on leadership practices and solutions that might be available to the Church and the broader British society in dealing with these crimes. Due to the enhanced protection measures introduced by the University of Essex Management, to protect the researchers and participants against the spread and negative impact of the Covid-19 virus, the interview format would not be by face-to-face as earlier planned. The interview will now be conducted remotely using zoom conferencing or by telephone conferencing with video or audio-recording and, followed by transcription for analysis.

Phase 2: Follow up Phase (might not be needed)

Following the first interview, you might be invited to take part in the follow up interview. The interviewer would give a summary of the first interview and explain the process of the second interview. Transcripts from your first interview and data generated thus far will be used as prompts for the discussion.

Everything you say within the interviews or video/audio recorded will remain anonymised, and whilst we will be reporting on findings from the study in general, personal confidentiality will be maintained, with the exception of circumstances where it is likely to cause harm to you or others. In this case, we would contact the appropriate authorities, but we would discuss this with you first.

What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?

You might be expected to share stories of your experiences on knife crimes with possibility of someone in your church organisation or close to you having been a victim before. This might cause some emotional expression. At this stage, the interviewer would remind you of your rights to discontinue or withdraw from the interview. No further potential risks to the participants are envisaged in this exercise.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?

Your contribution to the discussions on these social problems of knife crimes in British society has the potential to inform and change the narratives of the church leaders and the broader British society. It could impact on their practices and available solutions on tackling knife crimes in the British society.

Will my information be kept confidential?

All recorded data (from interviews and audio-records) will be transcribed by myself or an experienced transcription company, in compliance with GDPR requirements. For analysis and storage purposes, all data will be anonymised so that you will not be identifiable from the transcripts. You will be assigned a participant number, and all person-identifiable data will be removed prior to analysis. All consent forms, copies of email correspondence, video/audio recordings, and transcripts will be kept temporarily in my devices such as phones and laptops that are password-protected, and data files that are encrypted. The field data would be stored securely in a Box folder or transferred to a University of Essex secured shared drive. Your data will be kept securely for ten years (i.e., until September 2030) before being destroyed. Your data, as a whole, will only be available to the research team.

In the production of research thesis, publication in books, academic journals or through presentation at conferences, your data will be presented in a way that your confidentiality is safeguarded, and such that no one will be able to link the data to your identity.

What is the legal basis for using the data and who is the Data Controller?

The approach to consent for this study (i.e. freely given, specific, informed and unambiguous) through our written consent form complies with requirements for GDPR.

The Data Controller at the University of Essex is Sara Stock, University Information Assurance Manager (dpo@essex.ac.uk).

What should I do if I want to take part?

If you decide that you wish to take part in this study, then please contact Mr Phillip Oyetunji by email (po19007@essex.ac.uk) to arrange consent and the interview date. Please respond to this invitation within four weeks of receiving the invitation, which would be by email.

What will happen to the results of the research study?

Data from this study will be used in the following ways: for research thesis production, future academic publications, such as in books, journals and conference papers. A copy of the research thesis would normally be deposited in University of Essex Academic research repository. The data collected and used in publications would be anonymised and in such a way that it would not be linked to the research participants. Some key aspects of research findings are expected to be sent to each of the research participants within a year of

completion of the research thesis.

Who is funding the research?

This research is a self-funded project and is without any external grant.

Who has reviewed the study?

This study has been reviewed and approved by the Essex Business School Ethics SubCommittee and the University of Essex Ethics Committee.

Concerns and Complaints

If you have any concerns about any aspect of the study or you have a complaint, in the first instance please contact the Investigator of the project, Mr Phillip Oyetunji, using the contact details below. If are still concerned, you think your complaint has not been addressed to your satisfaction or you feel that you cannot approach the principal investigator, please contact the Project Supervisors at Essex Business School, Dr Simon Carmel (email: scarmel@essex.ac.uk) and Dr Noelia-Sarah Reynolds (email: nschnurr@essex.ac.uk). If you are still not satisfied, please contact the University's Research Governance and Planning Manager, Sarah Manning-Press (e-mail sarahm@essex.ac.uk).

Name of the Researcher

Phillip Oyetunji, Research Student, Management and Organisational Studies, Essex Business School, University of Essex. Email: po19007@essex.ac.uk

Appendix IX: Participant Consent Form

Participant Consent form for Research Project: 'Knife Crimes as a Leadership Challenge for Churches: A Narrative Approach'

Dear participant,

This research is being carried out by Phillip Oyetunji under the supervision of Dr Simon Carmel and Dr Noelia-Sarah Reynolds.

If you agree to participate in this study, you will be interviewed by the researcher. The answers which you provide will be recorded through notes taken by the interviewer and audio recording.

Please see the attached Participant Information Sheet for details about the study and your rights as a participant.

Yours sincerely,

Phillip Oyetunji
Management and Organisational Studies
Essex Business School

<u>Statement of Consent</u>	<u>Please initial each box</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I confirm that I have read and understood the information provided in the Participant Information Sheet dated 27-02-20 for the above study. I have had an opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had any questions satisfactorily answered. 	<input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw from the project at any time without giving any reason and without penalty. I understand that any data collected up to the point of my withdrawal will be destroyed. 	<input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I understand that the identifiable data provided will be securely stored and accessible only to the members of the research team directly involved in the project, and that confidentiality will be maintained. 	<input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I understand that my fully anonymised data will be used for Doctoral thesis and academic publications 	<input type="checkbox"/>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I understand that the data collected about me will be used to support other research in the <u>future</u>, and may be shared anonymously with other researchers. 	<input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I give permission for the data to be stored in the form of anonymised data stored securely in a Box folder or transferred to a University of Essex secured shared drive so that they will be available for future research and learning activities by other individuals. Your data will be kept securely for 10 years (<u>i.e.</u> until September 2030) before being destroyed. 	<input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I agree for this interview to be audio recorded and where necessary for notes to be taken by the researcher. 	<input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I agree to participate in the research project, 'Knife Crimes as a Leadership Challenge for Churches: A Narrative Approach', being carried out by Phillip Oyetunji. 	<input type="checkbox"/>

Participant's signature

Date

Researcher's signature

Date

Appendix X: Initial Interview Questionnaire

Knife Crimes as a Leadership Challenge of Churches: A Narrative Approach

Field Research Questions

Respondent personal information

A. Respondent personal information

1. Are you 18 years old and over? (If the answer is no, the interview will not proceed further)
2. What is your name?
3. What is your age category (18-25, 26-34, 35-49, 50-64, 65, and over)?
4. What gender do you identify with?
5. What are your nationality and ethnic origin?
6. What level of education and professional qualifications are you?
7. What is the name of your church, and where are you located?
8. What is the name of your church denomination (Anglican, Catholic, Methodist, Evangelical, etc)?
9. How long have you been a church leader?
10. What are your contact details? (Email address and phone number)

Main Research Questions

1. As a church leader in this community for many years, what are your experiences of knife crimes thus far?
2. Could you tell me more about it?
3. How do you see your roles/activities/thoughts about Knife crimes in the society in relation to church leadership?
4. Is there any other personal experience or the experience of someone close to you that you might want to share?
5. Is there anything else you would like to add?

