



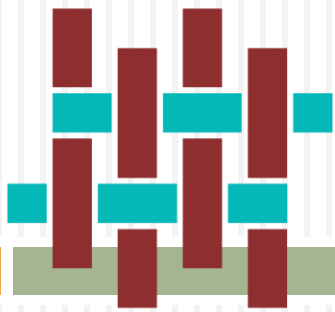
YOUTH-CENTRIC MOVEMENTS IN SOUTH ASIA:

TRENDS AND CHALLENGES FOR THE MODERN MISSIONS MOVEMENT IN INDIA

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Introduction

- Quick Brief on Interserve International
- Modern Missions Movement in the Global South
- Focus on South Asia
- Youth Centric-Movements
- Suggestions for Future Research and Implementation



Interserve



- Started in 1852 in response to women's suppression in Calcutta, North India (formerly called The Zenana Bible and Medical Mission)
- Focus on Asia and Arab world within the Global South region
- Emerging emphasis on Business-as-Mission within South Asia, especially in India

Focus on Modern Missions Movement

- Began in the late 1700s with William Carey, widely known as 'The Pioneer' of the modern missions movement and one of the first missionaries to India
- Sparked a global wave of missionaries across the 10/40 window
- Far-reaching effects, which are still felt today

South Asia: Reached or Unreached?

- According to the Center for the Study of Global Christianity, by the year 2020, India will be amongst the top 10 of the highest growth rate of Christians¹

Countries with the most Christians, 1970–2020

		1970		2010		2020			
	Country	Christians	%*	Country	Christians	%*	Country	Christians	%*
1	United States	190,323,000	90.9	United States	248,544,000	80.1	United States	263,344,000	78.1
2	Brazil	91,490,000	95.2	Brazil	177,337,000	91.0	Brazil	190,404,000	90.5
3	Germany	70,112,000	89.7	Russia	116,125,000	81.2	China	147,529,000	10.6
4	Mexico	50,458,000	97.3	Mexico	108,721,000	95.9	Mexico	120,260,000	95.5
5	Russia	50,000,000	38.4	China	106,485,000	7.9	Russia	118,286,000	83.9
6	United Kingdom	49,307,000	88.6	Philippines	84,742,000	90.9	Philippines	99,614,000	90.8
7	Italy	47,100,000	88.3	Nigeria	73,588,000	46.5	Nigeria	95,695,000	46.9
8	France	42,564,000	83.9	DR Congo	62,673,000	95.0	DR Congo	80,919,000	95.1
9	Philippines	33,254,000	93.8	Germany	57,705,000	70.1	India	67,356,000	4.9
10	Spain	33,792,000	97.7	India	57,271,000	4.7	Ethiopia	60,754,000	60.1

*% = Percent of country population

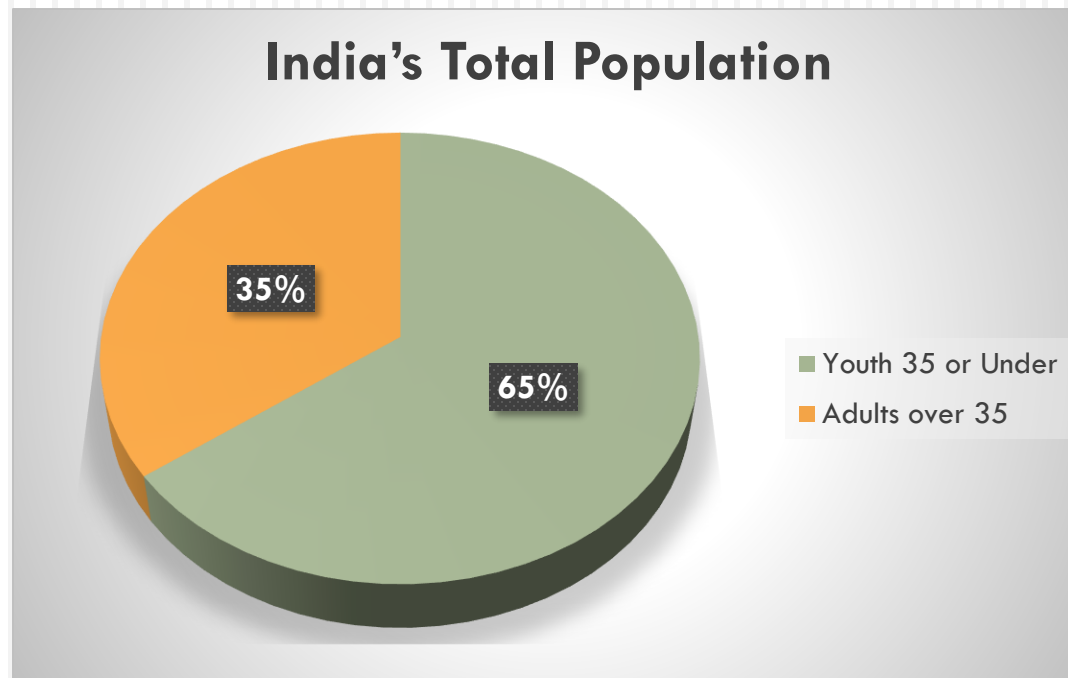
Center for the Study of Global Christianity, *Christianity in its Global Context*, June 2013

Youth-Centric Movements

- Currently, there are major youth-centric movements being sparked by local growth in population
- ➔ India has a large presence of youth-focused missions, such as Youth for Christ, Campus Crusade for Christ, Youth with a Mission, and other independent agencies
- ➔ Large focus on youth by mainline churches
- ➔ However, the long-term engagement is missing the mark

Youth-Centric Movements (Continued)

- India has a current population of over 1.2 billion people (and growing), and of this number, approximately 65% are 35 years of age or under²



²Source: D.R. David, 2002, India Leadership Study: A Summary for Indian Christian Leaders. Available at: <http://www.firstfruit.org/india-leadership-study/>

Current Research: IFOBA

➤ Research undertaken by
The Forum of Bible Agencies



FORUM OF BIBLE
AGENCIES
INTERNATIONAL

International → Indian Forum of Bible Agencies (IFOBA)³

- ▣ In Collaboration with IMA and Interserve
- ▣ Research Initiative entitled:
- ▣ “Scripture Engagement amongst NextGen Youth in South Asia”

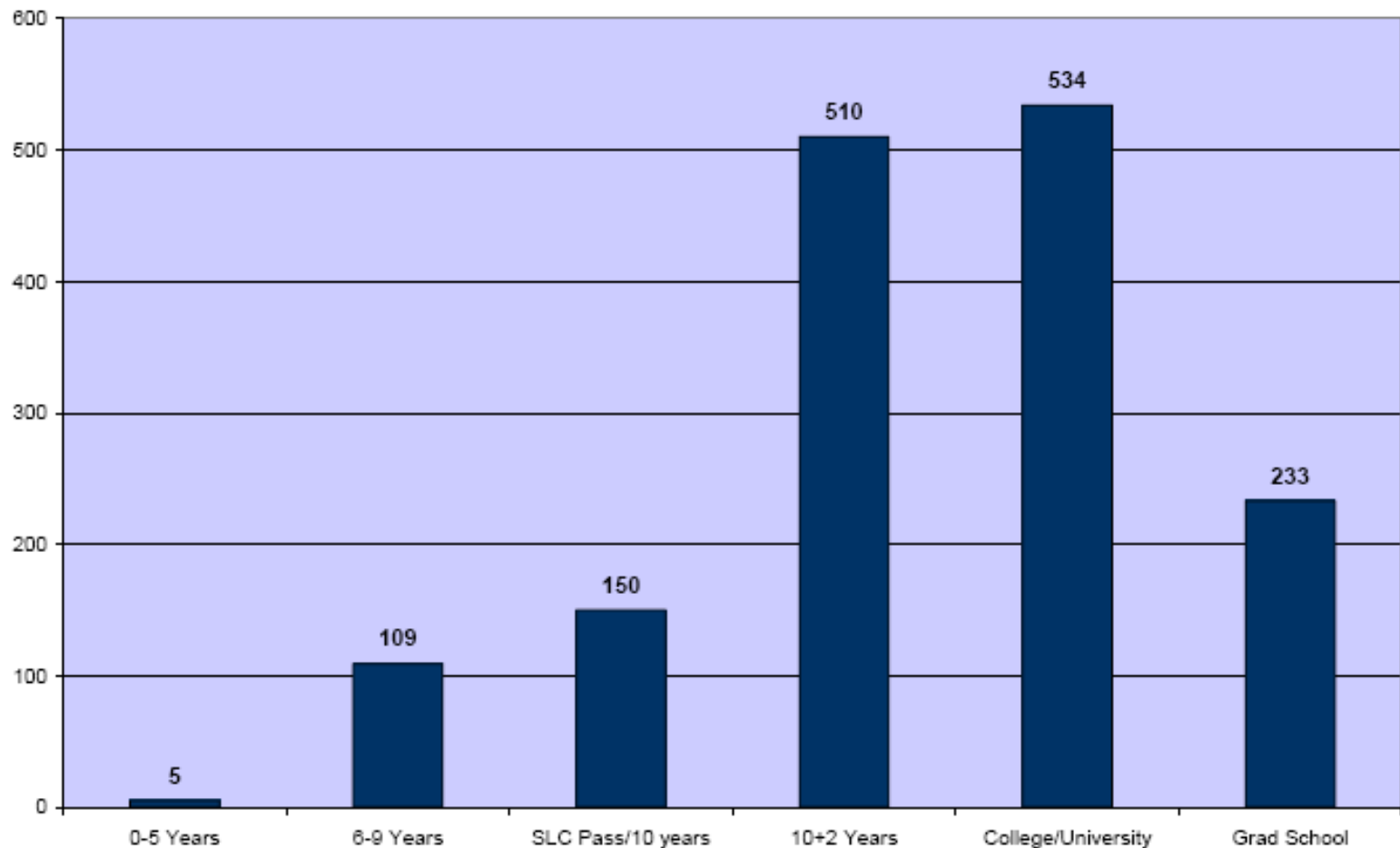
³Source: Srinivasagam, 2015, Scripture Engagement Research Project. Available at: <http://www.forum-intl.org/Default.aspx?PageID=15330284&A=SearchResult&SearchID=4980001&ObjectID=15330284&ObjectType=1>

Current Research: IFOBA (Continued)

- An alliance of more than 25 leading international Bible agencies and other mission organisations (in partnership with local churches)
- Explored Engagement amongst Next Generation youth in South Asia → in order to facilitate more effective outreach within India
- Data gathered from 1541 respondents from India, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Bangladesh, China, Pakistan, Myanmar, and Bhutan

Respondents by Education

Respondents by Education



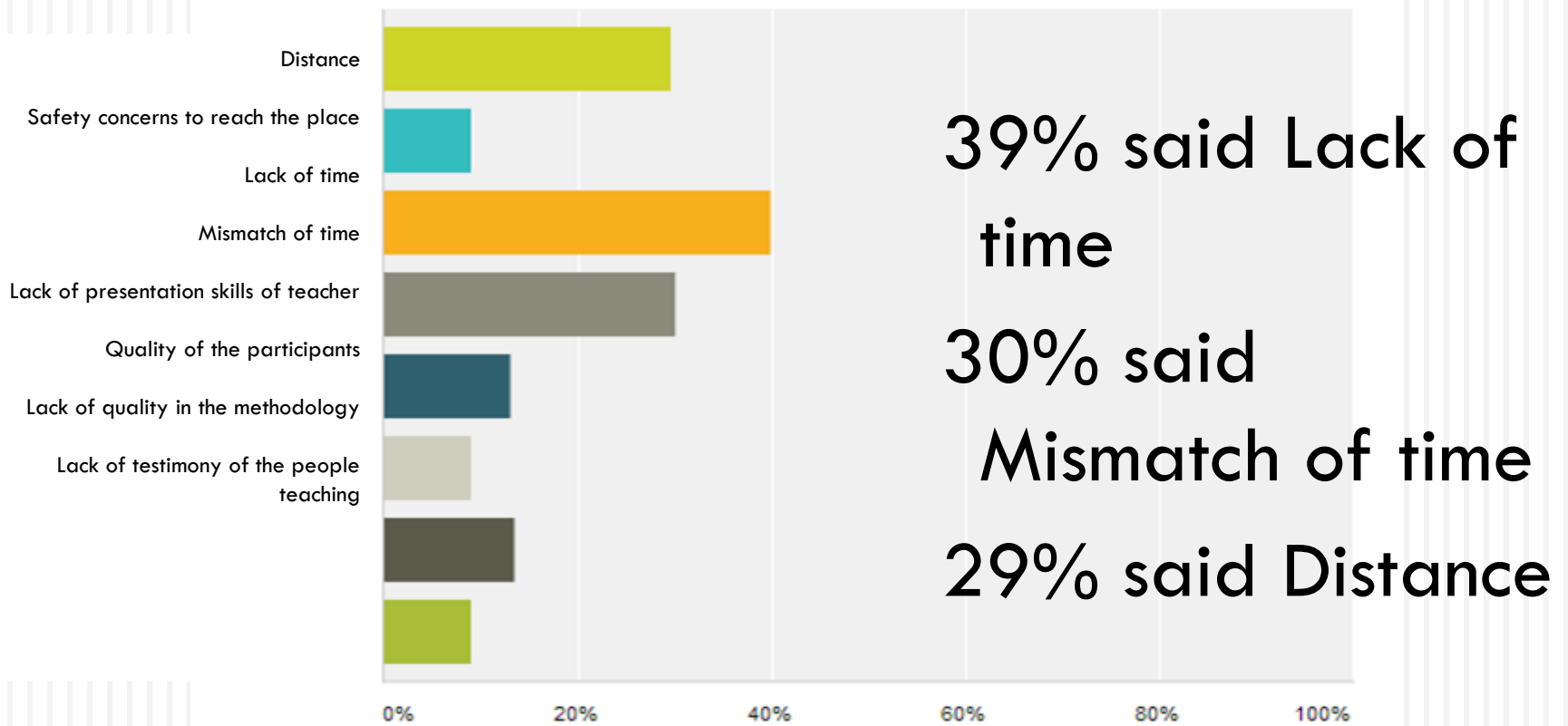
Current Research: IFOBA (cont.)

- Women have higher FOE rates on average than their male counterparts
- Most youth have either one of their parents being a Christian, although 94 respondents had neither one of their parents being of Christian origin
- The majority of youth had been raised in a Christian home for most of their upbringing

Current Research: IFOBA (cont.)

- Of total respondents, a majority of youth attended church more than once a week, leading to higher FOE rates (in comparison to those attending once a week)
- Of survey respondents, many listed hindrances for engagement with Scripture within and outside of church settings
- Of the responses, there were 3 major reasons listed

Major Hindrances to Engagement



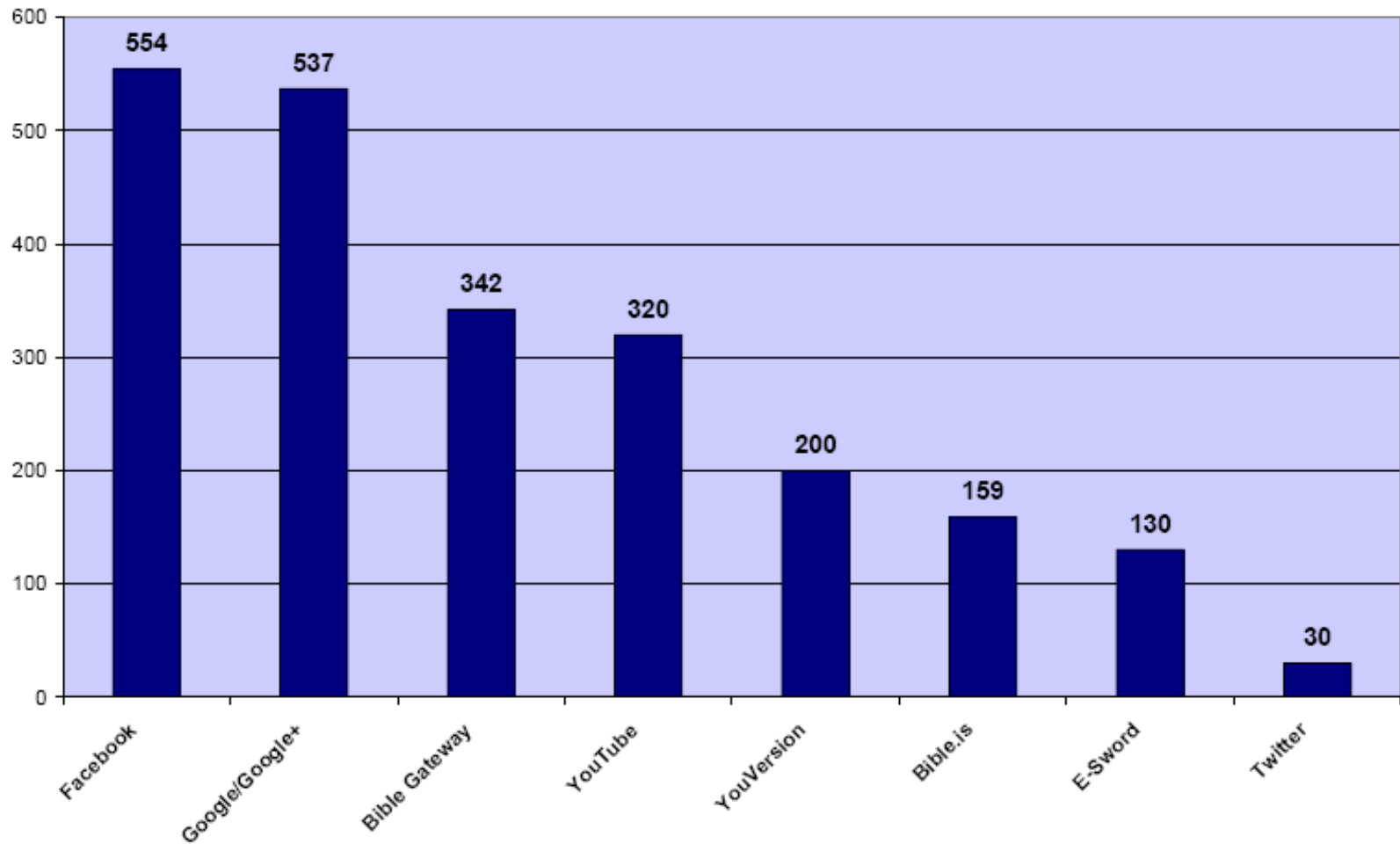
Current Research: IFOBA (cont.)

- Medium of access plays a greater role in engagement amongst youth than has previously been recognised → within most churches, this is not acknowledged or approved
- Needs to be a “healthier response” to technology
- *Case-In-Point: illumiNations.Bible App (Olive Technology)*⁴

⁴Source: Vijayam, J. 2018, Olive Technology In Partnership With The Seed Company Releases illumiNations.Bible Project. Available at: <http://www.prweb.com/releases/2018/02/prweb15171487.htm>

Is Technology the Key?

Social Media/Bible Software Use



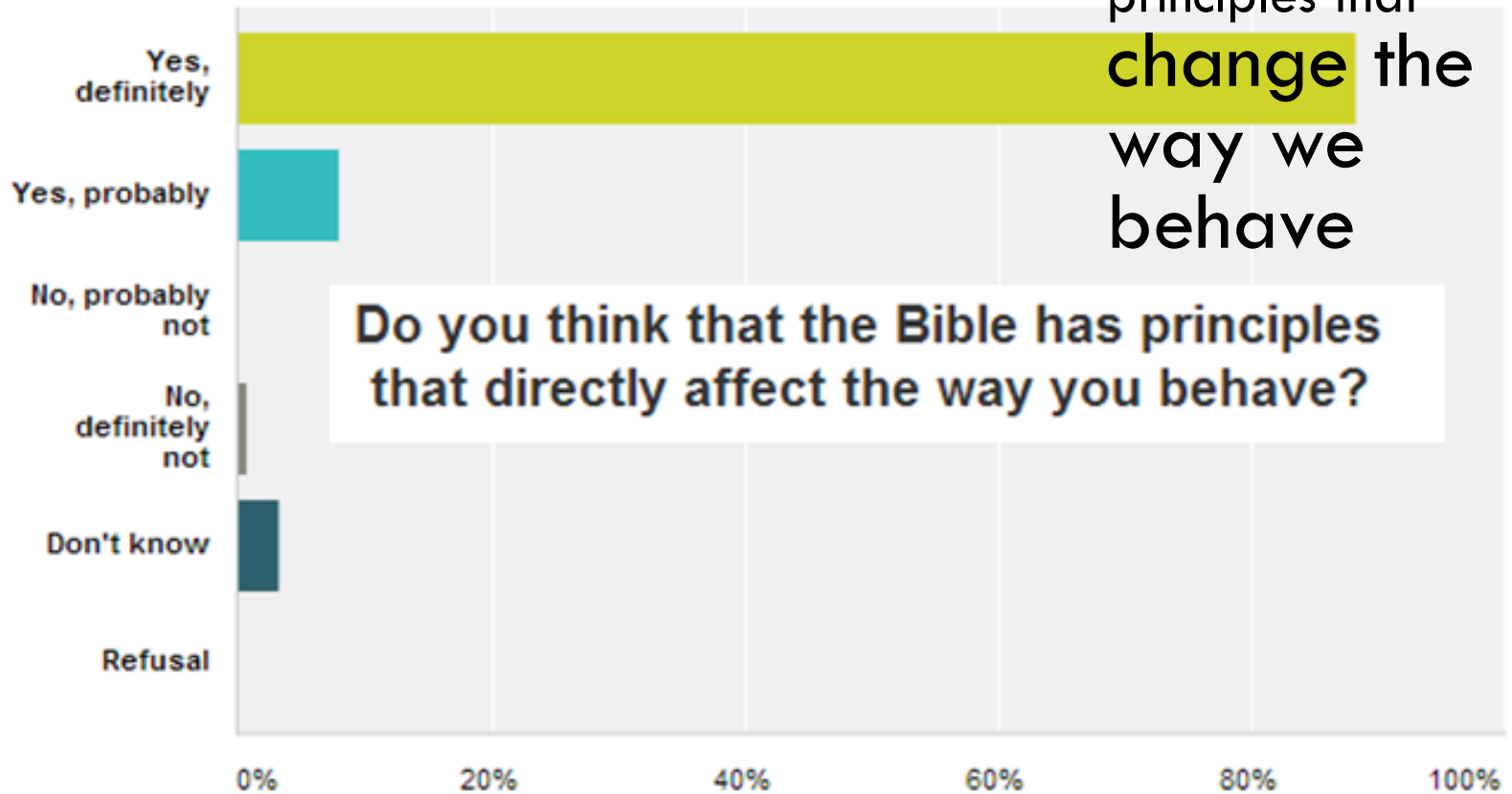
Impact of Technology on Youth

- 16-20 year olds have the lowest impact averages across all regions
- The need of the hour is placing an emphasis on connecting this age group to Scripture → making it applicable to daily life and increasing engagement
- Bible applications via cell/mobile phones are more widely utilised by 21-30 year olds – but are suitable materials being provided for this age range?

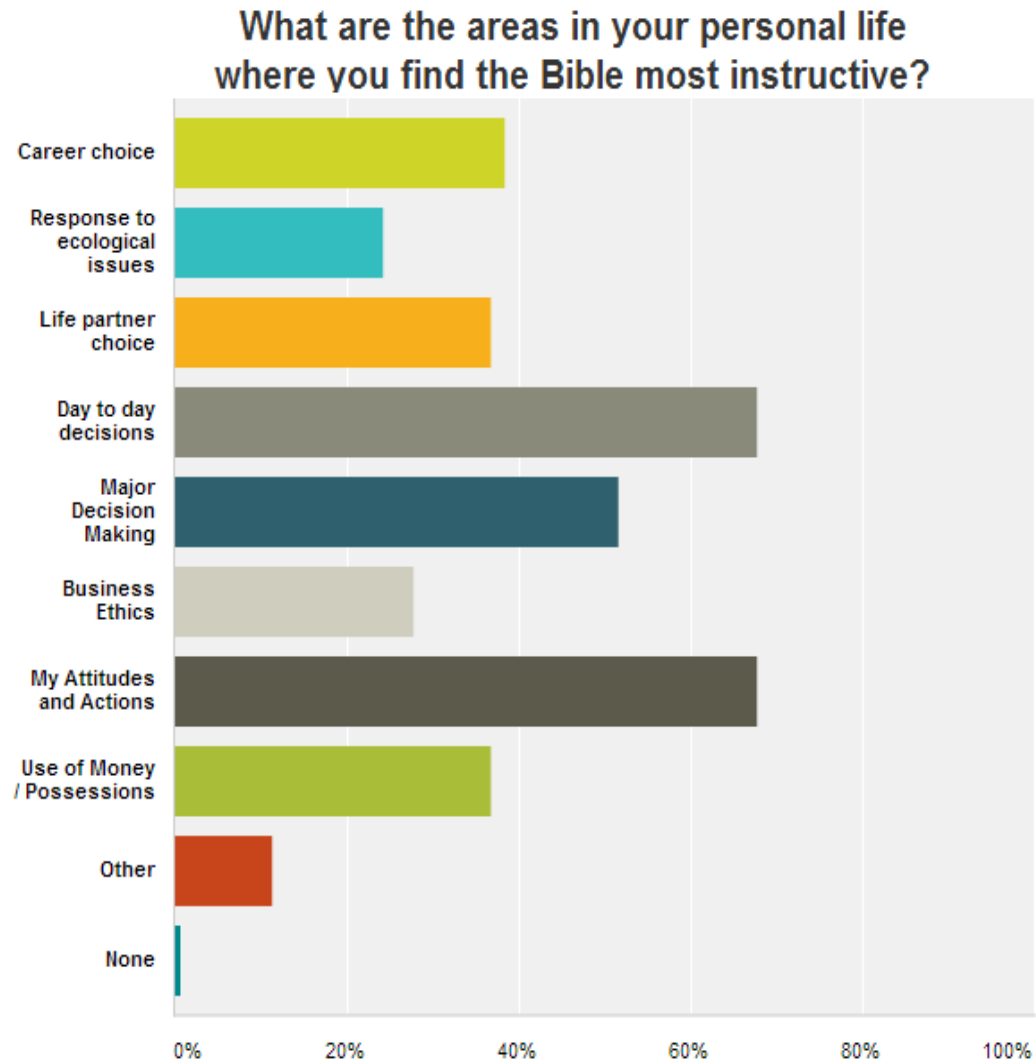
Application of Scripture to Daily Life

90% of respondents said that the Bible has principles that **change the way we behave**

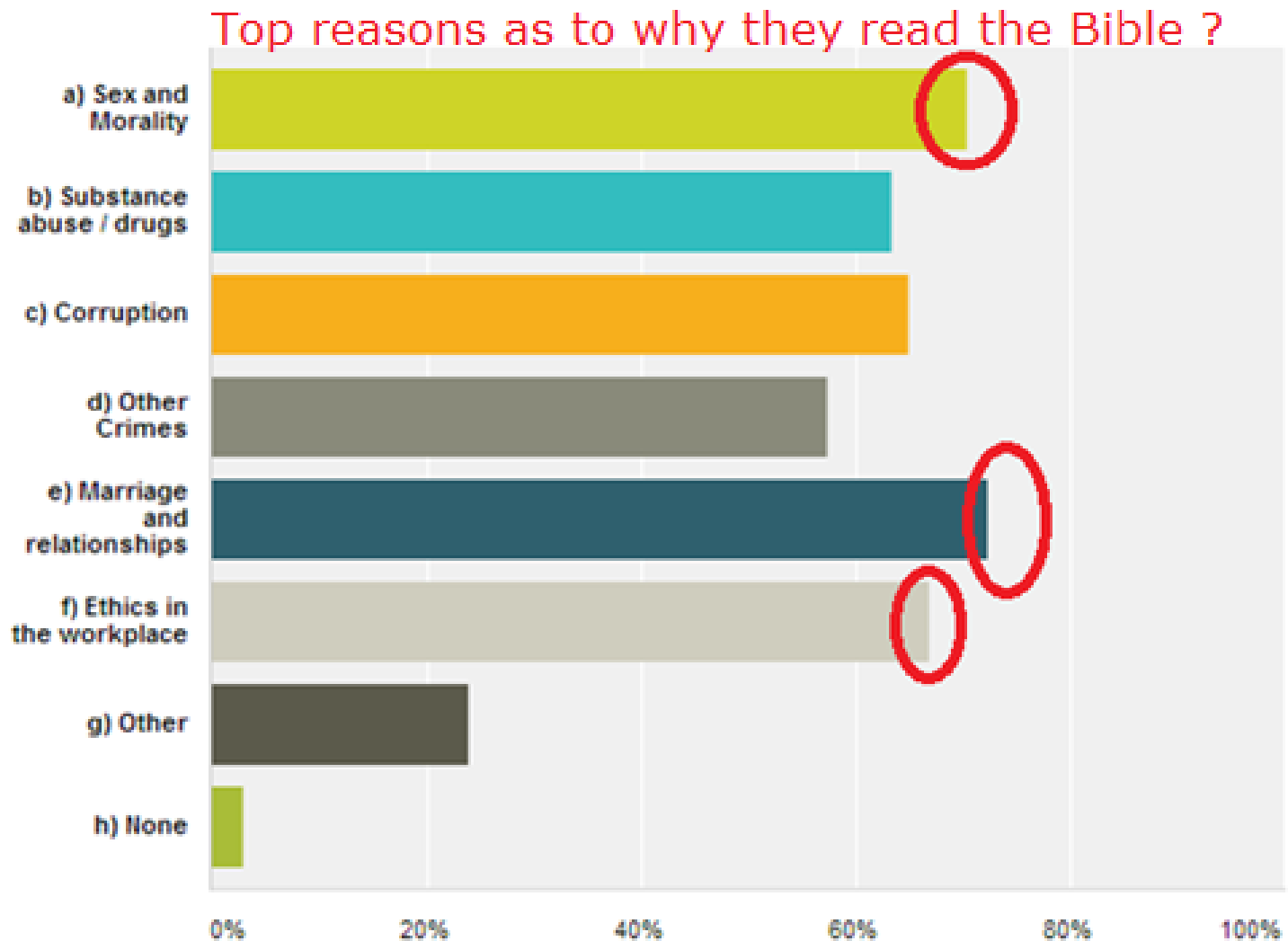
Do you think that the Bible has principles that directly affect the way you behave?



Application of Scripture to Daily Life (Continued)



Application of Scripture to Daily Life



Challenge or Opportunity?

- There is an unmistakable gap that has developed, forcing youth to find connections outside of the traditional church → but it is still a growing need
- How do we engage youth in a culture saturated with spiritual misdirection?
- Is there a need for a solution that is completely different, or something that has been tried before?

Niche Opportunity

- More of a push needs to be undertaken by garnering youth to reach other youth → a for youth, by youth movement
- This model is reaping fruit already, in places in North India (Delhi, Kolkata, Lucknow), as well as the South (Hyderabad, Bangalore, Mumbai)
- Examples include:
 - Agnel School (for Orphans) → Delhi
 - 3rd Home Initiative (for IT professionals) → Kolkata
 - GLOMOS Action Ministries (for students) → Lucknow
 - Olive Technology (for business graduates) → Hyderabad
 - Chai 3:16 (for teenagers) → Bangalore
 - Shanti Nivas Residential School (for young women) → Mumbai

Implementation and Multiplication

- Unfortunately, most initiatives are small-solutions, isolated in metropolis cities or villages, and are reliant on outside funding
- Local churches, youth organisations, missions need to step up to fill the gap
- Without a youth-centric movement, much of the impetus of the modern missions movement will not be sustainable long-term

Platform for Young Professionals

- Following in the footsteps of William Carey, who paved the way for tentmaking (as a cobbler) and established initiatives (schools, printing press, horticultural farms)
 - could there be a way to develop this even further?
- ▣ Is there a way to combine potential of youth with possibilities for the future?
- ▣ Could business-as-mission be an answer to this problem?

Business as Mission (BAM) Model

- Original concept of BAM originated with the Nestorians in 600 A.D.
- Modern Missions Movement with William Carey and other missionaries
- Developed into 21st Century language with Dr. C. Neal Johnson's primer *Business as Mission*

“A for-profit commercial business venture that is Christian-led, intentionally devoted to being used as an instrument of God’s holistic mission (mission Dei), to the world, and is operated in a cross-cultural environment, either domestic or international”⁵

⁵Source: Johnson, C. Neal. *Business as Mission: A Comprehensive Guide to Theory and Practice*. Downer's Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press 2009.

Signs of the Times

- Business is a booming market within India → most youth developing careers in IT, major metropolis hubs based in Bangalore, Mumbai, Hyderabad; growing population
- BAM ventures capitalising on this trend → in Hi-Tech City/Twin Cities in Hyderabad, there are several Christian businesses
- Changes are reflected in youth' attitudes towards technology

Movements for Mission

- What role can we play in the bigger picture of world evangelisation?
- Can youth leaders pave the path for others to follow?
- Is there scope for a sustainable model of youth-centric movements that move beyond South Asia and affect change in other nations within the Global South?

Future Research and Implementation

- Scope of current research extends to youth movements currently being undertaken within church-based initiatives
- Beyond isolated initiatives, there needs to be wider research conducted on how youth who are pioneering movements are gaining traction amongst peers
- Focus on how Christian youth affect non-Christian youth

Future Research and Implementation (continued)

- Wider issue affecting global youth within the 16-20 youth bracket extends to similar issues of moral crisis, post-modernity, and effects of technological change
- South Asian diaspora in countries outside of homeland
→ what changes can occur, and how does this change the landscape of Christianity in the modern era
- What role does the church play, if any?

Future Research and Implementation (cont.)

- Increasing impacts of outside forces beyond our control (need to consider spiritual forces, religious fanaticism, corruption within systemic injustice)
- Restorative justice vs. retributive justice shows the former can seek to answer the latter in a more meaningful manner
- Christian leaders must champion the cause of Christ amongst our youth and widen the network of change for God's glory



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