

OPEN ACCESS



Journal of
African Studies and Development

July-September 2020
ISSN: 2141-2189
DOI: 10.5897/JASD
www.academicjournals.org



**ACADEMIC
JOURNALS**
expand your knowledge

About JASD

The Journal of African Studies and Development (JASD) is a peer reviewed open access journal. The journal is published quarterly and covers all areas of the subject such as African literatures, sociolinguistic topics of cultural interest, music, oral and written traditions etc.

Open Access Policy

Open Access is a publication model that enables the dissemination of research articles to the global community without any form of restriction. All articles published under open access can be accessed by anyone with internet connection.

The Journal of African Studies and Development is an Open Access journal. Abstracts and full texts of all articles published in this journal are freely accessible to everyone immediately after publication without any form of restriction.

Article License

All articles published by Journal of African Studies and Development are licensed under the [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/). This permits anyone to copy, redistribute, remix, transmit and adapt the work provided the original work and source is appropriately cited. Citation should include the article DOI. The article license is displayed on the abstract page the following statement:

This article is published under the terms of the [Creative Commons Attribution License 4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)

Please refer to <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/legalcode> for details about [Creative Commons Attribution License 4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)

Article Copyright

When an article is published in the journal, the author(s) of the article retain the copyright. Author(s) may republish the article as part of a book or other materials.

A copyright statement is displayed both on the abstract page and the full-text PDF of each article.

Example: Copyright ©2016 Author(s) retains the copyright of this article.

Self-Archiving Policy

JASD permits and encourage authors to archive any version of their article they find most suitable, including the published version on their institutional repository and any other suitable website.

Digital Archiving Policy

The Journal of African Studies and Development is committed to the long-term preservation of its content. All articles published by the journal are preserved by Portico. In addition, the journal encourages authors to archive the published version of their articles on their institutional repositories and as well as other appropriate websites.

<https://www.portico.org/publishers/ajournals/>

Metadata Harvesting

The Journal of African Studies and Development encourages metadata harvesting of all its content. The journal fully supports the Open Archives Initiative.

Memberships and Standards



Academic Journals strongly supports the Open Access initiative. Abstracts and full texts of all articles published by Academic Journals are freely accessible to everyone immediately after publication.



All articles published by Academic Journals are licensed under the [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License \(CC BY 4.0\)](#). This permits anyone to copy, redistribute, remix, transmit and adapt the work provided the original work and source is appropriately cited.



[Crossref](#) is an association of scholarly publishers that developed Digital Object Identification (DOI) system for the unique identification published materials. Academic Journals is a member of Crossref and uses the DOI system. All articles published by Academic Journals are issued DOI.

[Similarity Check](#) powered by iThenticate is an initiative started by CrossRef to help its members actively engage in efforts to prevent scholarly and professional plagiarism. Academic Journals is a member of Similarity Check.

[CrossRef Cited-by](#) Linking (formerly Forward Linking) is a service that allows you to discover how your publications are being cited and to incorporate that information into your online publication platform. Academic Journals is a member of [CrossRef Cited-by](#).



Academic Journals is a member of the [International Digital Publishing Forum \(IDPF\)](#). The IDPF is the global trade and standards organization dedicated to the development and promotion of electronic publishing and content consumption.

Contact

Editorial Office: iasd@academicjournals.org

Help Desk: helpdesk@academicjournals.org

Website: <https://academicjournals.org/journal/JASD>

Submit manuscript online <http://ms.academicjournals.org>

Academic Journals
73023 Victoria Island, Lagos, Nigeria
ICEA Building, 17th Floor,
Kenyatta Avenue, Nairobi, Kenya.

Editors

Dr. Charles K. Ayo
Covenant University
Ota,
Nigeria.

Dr. Jersone Tasso Moreira Silva
FUMEC University
Belo Horizonte, MG
Brazil.

Prof. Jephias Mapuva
Department of Geography (Development Studies
stream),
Bindura University of Science, Education,
Zimbabwe.

Editorial Board

Prof. David Owusu-Ansah
James Madison University
Harrisonburg, VA
USA.

Prof. Roger Tsafack Nanfosso
University of Yaounde II
Yaounde,
Cameroon.

Prof. Ratno Lukito
Faculty of Syariah and Law,
State Islamic University Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta
Yogyakarta,
Indonesia.

Dr. Michael Yanou
University of Buea
Buea,
Cameroon.

Dr. Teresa Kwiatkowska
Universidad Autonoma Metropolitana-Iztapalapa
Iztapalapa,
Mexico.

Dr. Godswill Amechi Nnaji
Dept. of Family Medicine
College of Health Sciences
Nnamdi Azikiwe University
Nnewi,
Nigeria.

Dr. Alejandro Natal Martinez
El Colegio Mexiquense
Mexico.

Dr. Oyedunni Arulogun
Department of Health Promotion & Education
Faculty of Public Health
College of Medicine
University of Ibadan
Nigeria.

Dr. Waleed Ibraheem Mokhtar El-azab
Egyptian Petroleum Research Institute (EPRI)
Cairo,
Egypt.

Dr. Neil McBeath
Sultan Qaboos University
Al Khod,
Oman.

Dr. Alfred Ndi
University of Yaounde I
Bamenda,
Cameroon.

Dr. Dunlop Ochieng
The Open University of Tanzania
Dar es Salaam,
Tanzania.

Dr. André Van Dokkum
African Studies Centre
Leiden,
The Netherlands.

Dr. Chris Denhere
University of Venda
Limpopo,
South Africa.

Dr. Eyo Mensah
Department of Linguistics and Communication Studies
University of Calabar
Nigeria.

Dr. Mark Kleyman
Department of Philosophy
Ivanovo State University of Chemistry and Technology
Ivanovo,
Russia.

Dr. Fortune Sibanda
Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies
Great Zimbabwe University
Masvingo,
Zimbabwe.

Dr. Ismail Hussein Amzat
UCSI University
Cheras,
Malaysia.

Prof. Ionel Bostan
Alexandru Ioan Cuza University
Iasi,
Romania.

Dr. Patrick Osatohanmwon Oviasuyi
Department of Public Administration
Faculty of Management Sciences
Ambrose Alli University
Nigeria.

Editorial Board

Ass. Prof. Mirela Matei
Petroleum and Gas University
Ploiesti,
Romania.

Dr. Elisa Backer
Faculty of Business
Federation University Australia
Australia.

Dr. Stanley Mpofu
Centre for Continuing Education
National University of Science and Technology
Zimbabwe.

Dr. Aliyu Mukhtar Katsina
Political Science International Islamic University
Malaysia (IIUM)
Malaysia.

Dr. Ahonaa Roy
Jindal School of Government and Public Policy
Jindal Global University
India.

Dr. Akunna Oledinma
Cranfield School of Management
Cranfield,
UK.

Dr. Eugénio Almeida
Center for International Studies – CEI-IUL,
Instituto Universitário de Lisboa (ISCTE-IUL),
Portugal.

Dr. Joseph Mukuni
School of Education,
Virginia Technology,
United States.

Dr. Enzo Loner
Sociology and Social Research,
Università degli Studi di Trento,
Italy.

Table of Content

| | |
|---|-----|
| Proliferation of churches in Nigeria: Causes, impacts and likely solutions Ogunbade Adewale Olusegun | 61 |
| Religious construction of disease: An exploratory appraisal of religious responses to the COVID-19 pandemic in Uganda Alexander Paul Isiko | 77 |
| Neglect and discrimination: A tale of Zimbabwe's inaccessible public transport system Thembelihle Ndebele | 97 |
| Curriculum reform in Zimbabwe: An analysis of early childhood development centers' state of readiness to embrace the new curriculum Thelma Dhlomo and Phylis Mawere | 104 |

Full Length Research Paper

Proliferation of churches in Nigeria: Causes, impacts and likely solutions

Ogunbade Adewale Olusegun

Department of Computer Science, Federal College of Animal Health and Production Technology Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria.

Received 13 October 2016; Accepted 14 December, 2016

The study aims to estimate the effect, causes and probable solutions of church proliferation in Nigeria. The study was based on the analysis of fifty structured questionnaires that were distributed among people both in and out of Churches of different denominations using purposive sampling technique method. Statistical descriptive method was used to analyze the information collected from the respondents. The result of the study reveals that the economic downturn being experienced in the nation causing lack of job and hardship is the major cause of church proliferation in Nigeria, and that church proliferation has overall positive impact. However, the negative side of it is more acute and has covered up the good side of it which makes people to see church proliferation as a menace to the nation.

Key words: Church, church proliferation, springing up, impact, church planting, alarming rate, church growth, general overseer, business organization, livelihood, congregation, pentecostal, stomach pastors, evangelism.

INTRODUCTION

The rate at which churches are springing up in Nigeria is alarming, almost every street in the nation has at least two churches not counting (put in consideration) the rooms and parlous (sitting rooms) which are converted to churches as revealed by a study which collaborated the redeemed Christian church of God five minutes walkable distance church planting vision across the nation. But as the number of church increases so also is the crime rate which ought not to be, and these call for urgent attention.

The proliferation has no positive impact or brings negative effect on the nation which makes people doubt if

churches have not been turned into business ventures, and to the extent that the Government wants to place taxes on churches like other business companies in the nation which will confirm churches to be business organizations. The increase in the Bible Schools and Colleges without regulation in this nation also contributed to the increase at the rate churches are springing up. Most students (Christians) especially jobless graduated Bible College students see it as a license to plant/open a church after completion of the college without considering the necessity of God calling. By this act, churches have

E-mail: wale_ogunbade@yahoo.com.

Author(s) agree that this article remain permanently open access under the terms of the [Creative Commons Attribution License 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)

been turning to business ventures with different names, missions, ideas and general overseers (GOs) without any positive impact on the country.

The reason why we are having four churches sharing the same plot of land with different names and three churches occupying a two-story building thereby leading to increase in the number of churches on a street is the major concern and focus of this study.

Aim and objectives

This study aims to evaluate the impact of the proliferation of churches in Nigeria. This is to;

1. Examine the cause(s) of the proliferation of churches in this nation.
2. Find out the impacts (both negative and positive) on the People, Religion and nation as a whole.
3. Provide the likely solutions to the church proliferation.

Statement of the problem

The list and names of churches in this nation is inexhaustible and incomplete. Churches springing up at will, rooms and sitting rooms are being converted to churches more than shops or business organizations without any meaningful impact. This study aims to find answers to the following researchable questions;

1. Why do we have many churches in Nigeria?
2. What cause(s) church proliferation?
3. Are the churches turned into profit making business venture?
4. What are the aims, intentions and missions of pastors establishing churches with different names?
5. What is the impact of church proliferation on the people, religion and Nation as a whole?
6. Is church proliferation a fulfillment of God commission to all men?
7. What are the steps to take in curbing this nemesis?

Significance of the study

The rate at which churches are springing up is the same with the way crimes and corruptions are spreading all over the nation. As the number of churches and pastors increases so is the atrocities perpetrated increases in the nation, instead of the other way round. The spreading of churches all over the nation that ought to bring reduction in crime and corruption rate has no impact or to rightly put it has negative impact. This study is going to find the reason(s) why the spreading of churches has negative impact, and also aims to examine the cause(s) of church proliferation in the nation that has no effect.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Churches are noted to be springing up at an alarming and unprecedented rate in all available spaces, shops, warehouses, hotels, sitting rooms, uncompleted building, both private and public school premises to mention a few. The proliferation of churches in Nigeria today is as a result of numerical strength of churches which was a result of church growth. This rapid multiplication of churches according to Ibiyinka (2011) borne out of the understanding that there is freedom of religious worship in Nigeria. The society is witnessing proliferation of churches which has brought changes in values, created job employment, Western Education by establishing both Elementary and Tertiary Institution and Hospitals. Likewise it is a great source of solution to people's problems.

However, the negative effects brought about by the proliferation of churches are over riding the good side of it which is reflecting in the current situation in the country where corruption and moral decadence are the order of the day. It is sad and disheartening that the springing up of churches nowadays fails to stop or reduce moral decadence in the society which ought to be the major impact of churches in our society. Many people were using the spreading of churches like wild fire for means of livelihood which flicked in our society for not becoming upright and not peaceful. There have been and still are many hot and cold wars in the name of religions according to Fayomi (1993) and confirmed by Nigeria Newspoint (2015).

The present rate of church proliferation in the country is such as having a minimum of fifty different churches on a street of few kilometers long, having some or more different churches sharing the same story building in Urban Areas and Cities where there are lack of space . This situation made the columnist of the Nigeria Newspoint (2015) categorically asserted that Nigeria is a country with the largest number of churches per capital in the world" and that Nigeria has become a fertile soil for the growth of independent churches. Many greedy pastors were taking advantages of freedom of worship or religious practices to launch new churches, religious organizations and societies as a means of livelihood, encouraging robberies, stealing, corruptions and crimes by praying for members that brought or donated a huge amount of money as gifts or worship offerings without propping to ascertain the source of the money.

The negative impacts on the nation is not peculiar on the proliferation of churches alone, the spreading of the two major religions, Christianity and Islam in the nation which led to increase in churches and mosques, in turn led to increase in the number of Pastors and Muslim clerics which has a negative impacts on the leaders at the helm of affairs of the nation. According to Olagoke (2016) a Muslim cleric, the propagation of the two religions has failed the nation and has no positive influence on the national leaders which resulted to the present economy

recession, wide spread corruption, high rate of criminal activities and corrupted leaders in the nation. The national leaders are under the teachings of either Pastors or Muslim clerics which ought to have positive impact on them, and this has reflected in the governance of the nation if the pastors and the Muslim clerics perform their roles as priests of God and not priests of stomachs. The way of governance and high rate of crimes witnessing in the nation are clear evidence of negative impacts of the proliferation of both churches and mosques on the nation, Nigeria.

CAUSES OF CHURCH PROLIFERATION

The following are some factors responsible for church proliferation in Nigeria:

1. Unemployment: The major causes of springing up of churches in the country is unemployments, most graduates being produced in our educational institutions do not have job opportunities and our institutions are still bringing out graduates every year which increase the number of jobless graduates in the country, some of them looking for means of livelihood undergo six month courses in one of the Bible Colleges in the nation and thereafter establish church without receiving any call and there by become General Overseers and gradually get on with life, open branches, spreading nationwide and adding to the numbers of churches in the nation.
2. Love of money: Many people because of love of money are using churches or religion to dupe innocent believers of their resources such as buildings, cars, properties and money by deceiving them with fake/false prophecies. Many see churches as a good venture where "cool" money can be raked in without stress and by this move out of their churches to go and establish their own with different name in other to be in control of such money.
3. Position and power: Nobody want to serve, everybody want to be the founder, general overseer and a master having many people to serve him. For this reason, they engineer little quarrel in their present church, take few people (members) along to establish their own church.
4. Worldly materials: Many people even the so called "Men of God " want to ride a bullet proof jeep, to build castle all over the world, to have personal private jet, to own a treasury and to be in possessions of all the money in the Church and that is why according to Shionwu (2012) in an interview granted said some churches were calling their congregations "customers" and bury all sort of things including life cows in other to attract people which led to having fifteen churches on the same street bearing different names.
5. Economic recession in the country which resulted into increase in poverty levels of the citizenry have led some people to convert their living room into churches since they can quotes some verses of the Bible and there after

intensify the growth of their churches.

6. Unhealthy rivalry among churches, pastors, ministers of God and even within the church: Boasting on the number of branches, pastors and congregations in their churches is a major problem in honoring the General Overseers in the society.

Others factors as said by Falayi (1998) include rapid evangelization, beliefs and practices, genuine thirst for spiritual nourishment, theological issues, fanaticism and leader tussles. The major church proliferation was observed at the end of 1973 revivals and crusades that served as a venue by which Pentecostalism got introduced into the country. Adamolekun (2012) the resultant effect was the springing up of new churches out of the parent churches on basis of lack of divine healing, baptism of the Holy Spirit and other Pentecostal manifestation in parent churches. Some of the churches established were for genuine reason of evangelism such as deeper life church, redeem Christian church, gospel faith mission while some were established for commercial purpose which led to the birth of proliferation of churches.

IMPACT OF PROLIFERATION OF CHURCHES

The proliferation of churches in Nigeria has both merit and demerit. One of the major positive social impacts of church growth which led to church proliferation is seen in the number of churches all over the country that established Nursery and Primary Schools, Secondary Schools and Universities which provided job opportunities for many people, likewise Teaching Hospitals and Mission Hospitals are also established by these churches that provided good health care services and job opportunities to many people.

People with different kind of spirituals and physicals problems got solutions to their problems through revivals and crusades organized by these churches that brought healing, deliverance from the bondage of oppressing powers and miracles. It makes people to realize that Nigeria is very religious and that many Christian churches abound in the country (Adamolekun, 2012). Another impact is the formation of Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) which stands as a pressure group and an umbrella which Christians use as a mouth-piece to fight any injustice or government politics that are against the interest of the Christians in the nation. Other merits include rapid evangelization, development of new leadership, provision of check and balance to orthodox churches, promote specialization in ministry and enhance the provision of an atmosphere in which human problems are at times solved. On the other hand, the negative impacts of Church Proliferation are as follows;

1. Noise pollution: The major problem of springing up of churches all over the nation is the noise pollution; it has

been described as an unwanted excessive harmonious sound that has undesired physiological and institutional effects on individuals. People living side by side with the church constantly experienced noise pollution emanating from blaring loud speakers at no respect to time in the day even worst during the night, which can cause noise induced hearing loss which can also lead to stress induced ailments like hypertension, diabetics and psychiatric problems. Noise can disturb sleep which can affect mental functioning and judgment.

2. Traffic congestion: Every street where churches are located always experience traffic jam during the churches special programme, for example there are always traffic jam on Lagos – Ibadan express way whenever one of the churches located along the route was having a special programme especially those conducted monthly which was always characterized with slower speed, longer trip and increase queuing which cause inconveniences to other road users. These can lead to three major environmental effects such as psychological and physiological effects due to longer time spent in the traffic jam. Secondly, there will be economic loss; some business appointment will not be met due to the hours spent in the traffic jam and also there is uncertainty and unreliability in every service of the vehicles. It can also lead to death of sick patient rushing to the hospital. The exposure to carbon monoxide by the people in the traffic jam can lead to Asthma, Bronchitis, Lung and Heart diseases and respiratory allergies. It can cause skin cancer and upset immune system.

3. Collapse of abandoned occupied building by churches due to the lack of space in the cities and urban areas: Churches occupy abandoned buildings around which can give way anytime and can cause injury or great calamity to the church or one of its congregation.

4. Improper ventilation: Air as informed by the medical experts serves as nourishment to our bodies just as much as food as drink. As mentioned earlier, churches use available space especially in urban area which will deny worshippers and people in the neighborhood to enjoy proper ventilation which can lead to the shortage of oxygen supply to the blood that can result to mental disorder. The other negative impacts mentioned by The Leader News Online (2015) are personality clashes, unhealthy competition for convert via homiletically propaganda, lack of unity, monetary crises, heresies, fanaticism and bickering. Also, the doctrinal differences that emanate as a result of split usually confuse the members of the churches.

Likewise, some churches are established for commercial purposes with the aim of enriching the founders at the expense of the congregations, Nigeria Newspoint (2015). Although churches proliferation has certain demerits as noted earlier, but Adesanya (2011) note that they are not strong enough for total commendations of the phenomenon. This is because according to him, Jesus

was reported in the bible to have said that the gospel should be preached to all nation (Mark 16:15) and Paul in Philippians 1:15 to18 support church proliferation for the expansion of the kingdom of God. This is because religion is not fossil but a living and dynamic phenomenon that will surely continue to increase.

LIKELIHOOD SOLUTION

Solutions to the negative impact brought about by church proliferation lie greatly on the effectiveness and readiness of government of the nation to enforce the laws of the land such as environmental law against noise pollution. If the enforcement of the law of environment on public noise pollution as implemented by Lagos state Government of Nigeria on June 18 and October 28, 2009 where by one of branches of Redeems Christian church of God and Mountain of fire church were shut down due to the use of Public Address System which caused disturbance to their Neighbors.

Likewise, the sunday service of Holy Life Bible Church was stopped and the door of the Church shut due to the disturbance of neighborhood with the public Address system by Lagos State Environmental Protection Agency, LASEPA (Daily Champion 2009), so if this law can be enforced nationwide the noise pollution will be reduced. Also, the agents of Government that deal with the inspection and approval of Building plans can be effective in their duties and make sure any church building plan that does not have provision for car park and well ventilated plan should not be approved and also inspecting the existing building used by churches to see that they are not occupying degenerated abandoned building that can collapse anytime.

Churches can be helpful in reducing the noise pollution by avoiding outside public address system usage during their programmes, to put themselves into the shoes of their neighbours. Also churches should try as much as possible to take full control of traffic around them during their services, to avoid traffic jam in their located areas. The teachings of General Overseers and Pastors in charge must be on Holiness and Righteousness that will be able to change moral decadence of the People in other to reduce the corruption and atrocities that are prominent in the nation which is underrating the positive impact of Church Proliferation.

DISCUSSION

Section A: Bio data result

Respondents (70%) as shown in Table 1 falls between the age range of 20 and 39 years, while other age ranges shared the remaining 30%. Male respondents were 58% while 42% were female (Table 2). Table 3 shows that 60%

Table 1. Age range.

| Variable | Frequency | Percentage | Valid percentage | Cumulative percentage |
|--------------|-----------|------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| 10-19 | 6 | 12.0 | 12.0 | 12.0 |
| 20-39 | 35 | 70.0 | 70.0 | 82.0 |
| Valid 40- 59 | 6 | 12.0 | 12.0 | 94.0 |
| 60 and above | 3 | 6.0 | 6.0 | 100.0 |
| Total | 50 | 100.0 | 100.0 | - |

Table 2. Gender.

| Variable | Frequency | Percentage | Valid percentage | Cumulative percentage |
|--------------|-----------|------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| Male | 29 | 58.0 | 58.0 | 58.0 |
| Valid Female | 21 | 42.0 | 42.0 | 100.0 |
| Total | 50 | 100.0 | 100.0 | - |

Table 3. Marital status.

| Variable | Frequency | Percentage | Valid percentage | Cumulative percentage |
|---------------|-----------|------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| Single | 30 | 60.0 | 60.0 | 60.0 |
| Valid Married | 18 | 36.0 | 36.0 | 96.0 |
| Divorce | 2 | 4.0 | 4.0 | 100.0 |
| Total | 50 | 100.0 | 100.0 | - |

Table 4. Occupation.

| Variable | Frequency | Percentage | Valid percentage | Cumulative percentage |
|-----------------|-----------|------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| Trader | 9 | 18.0 | 18.0 | 18.0 |
| Civil servant | 27 | 54.0 | 54.0 | 72.0 |
| Valid Applicant | 4 | 8.0 | 8.0 | 80.0 |
| Others | 10 | 20.0 | 20.0 | 100.0 |
| Total | 50 | 100.0 | 100.0 | - |

of the respondents were single, 36% were married while 4% were divorce. 54% of the respondents were working with government, 18% were traders, 4% were looking for job while 20% were engaging in different kind of works that were not given options to in the questionnaire distributed (Table 4). All the respondents were Christians as shown in the Table 5. Above. The Table 6 shows that 18% of the respondents were Catholic, 56% were Pentecostal, 16% attended white garment Church and 10% were Anglicans. Half of the respondents attended all weekly church services, 30% every Sunday, 6% once a month while 14% attended occasionally (Table 7). 72% of the respondents were workers in their church while 28% were just members (Table 8). As shown in the Table 9, 94% of the respondents were members of at least one group in the church while 6% did not belong to any church

group. Table10 shows that 76% of the respondents have attended at least one church before their present church while 24% have not change from their first church

Section B: Results

60% of the respondents agreed that lack of job contributed majorly to the cause of church proliferation, 12% sit on the fence while 28% disagree as shown in Table 11 and Figure 1. It was confirmed in the Table 12 and Figure 2 by respondents that different doctrines and beliefs of churches cause church proliferation while just 10% disagree and 8% did not take any decision. Likewise, 82% believed that not all pastors were called by God, only 2% disagree while 16% were indifferent.

Table 5. Religion.

| Variable | | Frequency | Percentage | Valid percentage | Cumulative percentage |
|----------|--------------|-----------|------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| Valid | Christianity | 50 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |

Table 6. If Christianity, what denomination?

| Variable | | Frequency | Percentage | Valid percentage | Cumulative percentage |
|----------|---------------|-----------|------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| | Catholic | 9 | 18.0 | 18.0 | 18.0 |
| | Pentecostal | 28 | 56.0 | 56.0 | 74.0 |
| Valid | White garment | 8 | 16.0 | 16.0 | 90.0 |
| | Anglican | 5 | 10.0 | 10.0 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 50 | 100.0 | 100.0 | - |

Table 7. How often do you attend church service?

| Variable | | Frequency | Percentage | Valid percentage | Cumulative percentage |
|----------|-----------------------|-----------|------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| | All weekly activities | 25 | 50.0 | 50.0 | 50.0 |
| | Every Sunday | 15 | 30.0 | 30.0 | 80.0 |
| Valid | Once a month | 3 | 6.0 | 6.0 | 86.0 |
| | Occasionally | 7 | 14.0 | 14.0 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 50 | 100.0 | 100.0 | - |

Table 8. Are you a church worker?

| Variable | | Frequency | Percentage | Valid percentage | Cumulative percentage |
|----------|-------|-----------|------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| | Yes | 36 | 72.0 | 72.0 | 72.0 |
| Valid | No | 14 | 28.0 | 28.0 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 50 | 100.0 | 100.0 | - |

Table 9. Which group do you belong to in the church?

| Variable | | Frequency | Percentage | Valid percentage | Cumulative percentage |
|----------|-----------------------|-----------|------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| | Men group | 10 | 20.0 | 21.3 | 21.3 |
| | Women group | 13 | 26.0 | 27.7 | 48.9 |
| Valid | Church worker | 17 | 34.0 | 36.2 | 85.1 |
| | Ministers / pastorate | 7 | 14.0 | 14.9 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 47 | 94.0 | 100.0 | - |
| Missing | System | 3 | 6.0 | - | - |
| Total | | 50 | 100.0 | - | - |

Table 13, 14, and Figure 3 shows that 72% agreed that the love of money is the root of church proliferation, 12% disagree while 16% sit on the fence. It was shown in Table 15 and Figure 4 that 84% supported that power tussle in the churches also lead to church proliferation, 6% disagree

while 10% cannot decide. 64% of the respondents agreed that some churches of nowadays have turned to business ventures while 20% did not support the point and 16% were indifferent (Table 16 and Figure 5). 60% agree that increase in bible colleges contributed immensely to the

Table 10. How many churches have you attended before?

| Variable | Frequency | Percentage | Valid percentage | Cumulative percentage |
|-------------|-----------|------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| 1 | 12 | 24.0 | 24.0 | 24.0 |
| 2 | 22 | 44.0 | 44.0 | 68.0 |
| Valid 3 | 5 | 10.0 | 10.0 | 78.0 |
| 4 | 7 | 14.0 | 14.0 | 92.0 |
| 5 and above | 4 | 8.0 | 8.0 | 100.0 |
| Total | 50 | 100.0 | 100.0 | - |

Table 11. Increase in the number of jobless people is the major cause of church proliferation in this nation.

| Variable | Frequency | Percentage | Valid percentage | Cumulative percentage |
|--------------------|-----------|------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| Strongly agree | 6 | 12.0 | 12.0 | 12.0 |
| Agree | 24 | 48.0 | 48.0 | 60.0 |
| Valid Indifference | 6 | 12.0 | 12.0 | 72.0 |
| Disagree | 8 | 16.0 | 16.0 | 88.0 |
| Strongly disagree | 6 | 12.0 | 12.0 | 100.0 |
| Total | 50 | 100.0 | 100.0 | - |

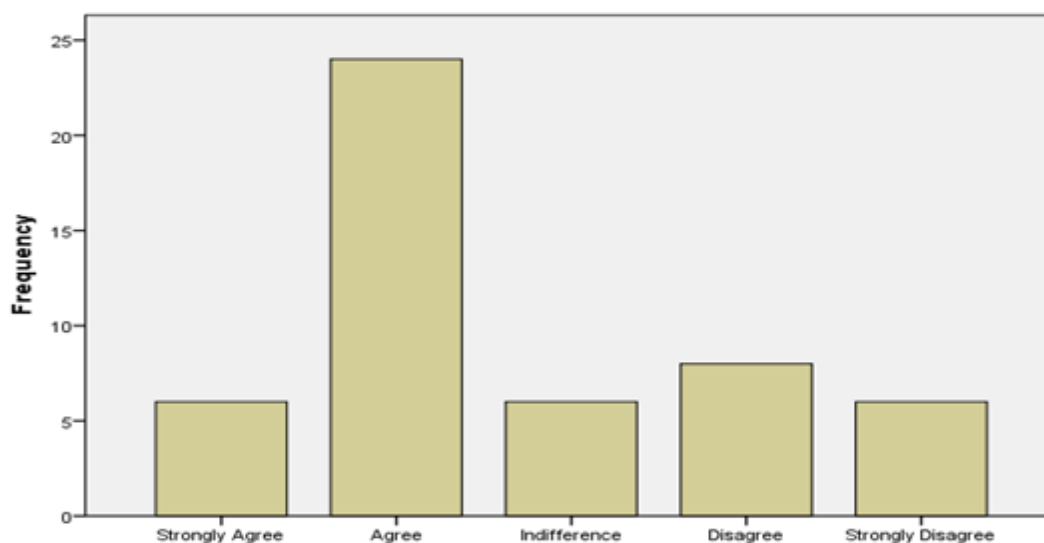


Figure 1. Increase in the number of jobless people is the major cause of church proliferation in this nation.

Table 12. Different doctrines and beliefs of churches cause increase in the number of churches springing up in this nation.

| Variable | Frequency | Percentage | Valid percentage | Cumulative percentage |
|--------------------|-----------|------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| Strongly agree | 19 | 38.0 | 38.0 | 38.0 |
| Agree | 22 | 44.0 | 44.0 | 82.0 |
| Valid Indifference | 4 | 8.0 | 8.0 | 90.0 |
| Disagree | 4 | 8.0 | 8.0 | 98.0 |
| Strongly disagree | 1 | 2.0 | 2.0 | 100.0 |
| Total | 50 | 100.0 | 100.0 | - |

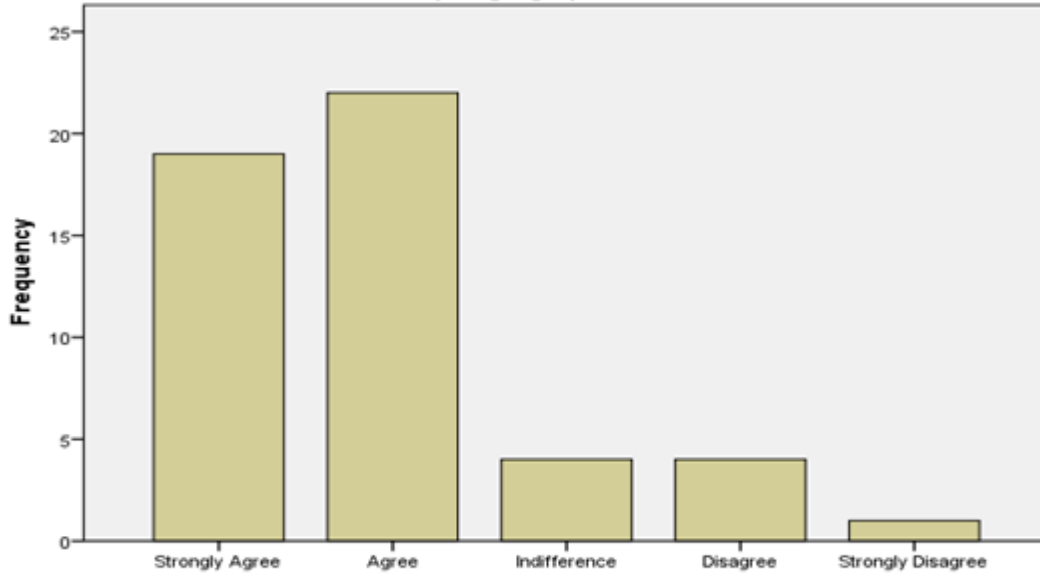


Figure 2. Different doctrines and beliefs of churches cause increase in the number of churches springing up in this nation.

Table 13. Not all founders, general overseers or pastors receive call from God.

| Variable | Frequency | Percentage | Valid percentage | Cumulative percentage |
|--------------------|-----------|------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| Strongly agree | 34 | 68.0 | 68.0 | 68.0 |
| Agree | 7 | 14.0 | 14.0 | 82.0 |
| Valid Indifference | 8 | 16.0 | 16.0 | 98.0 |
| Strongly disagree | 1 | 2.0 | 2.0 | 100.0 |
| Total | 50 | 100.0 | 100.0 | - |

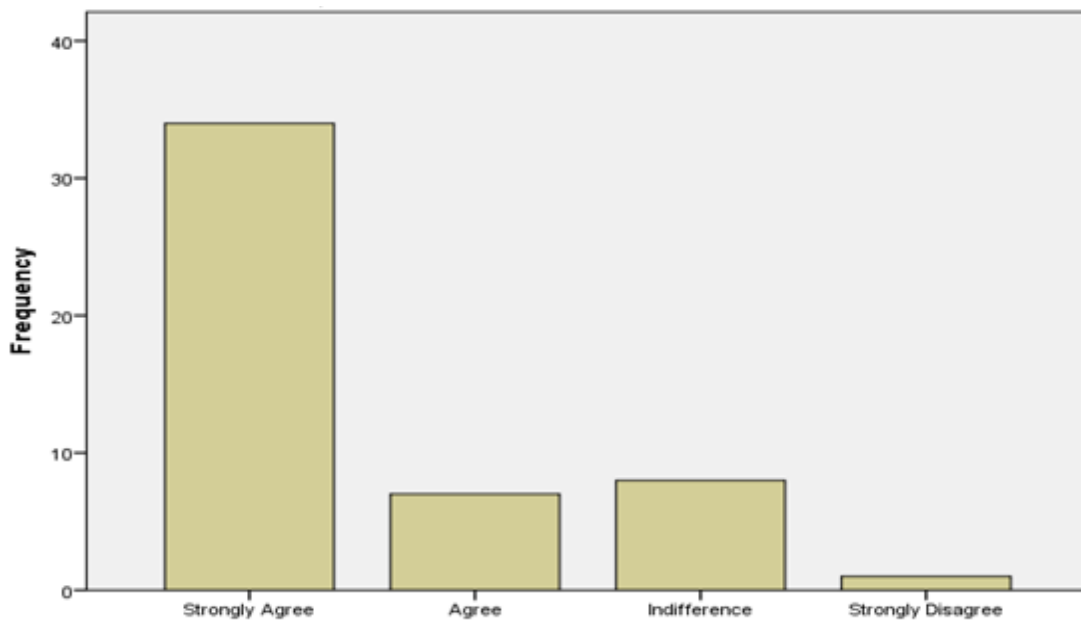


Figure 3. Not all founders, general overseers or pastors receive call from God.

Table 14. Majorly the love of money is the root of church proliferation being witnessed in this nation.

| Variable | Frequency | Percentage | Valid percentage | Cumulative percentage |
|-------------------|-----------|------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| Strongly agree | 28 | 56.0 | 56.0 | 56.0 |
| Agree | 8 | 16.0 | 16.0 | 72.0 |
| Indifference | 8 | 16.0 | 16.0 | 88.0 |
| Agree | 3 | 6.0 | 6.0 | 94.0 |
| Strongly disagree | 3 | 6.0 | 6.0 | 100.0 |
| Total | 50 | 100.0 | 100.0 | - |

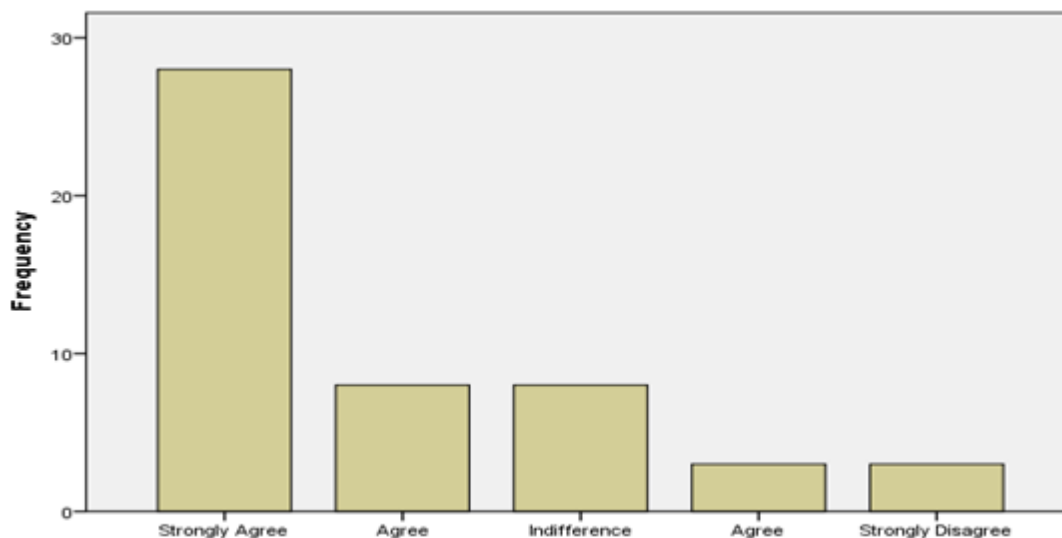


Figure 4. Majorly the love of money is the root of church proliferation being witnessed in this nation.

Table 15. Power tussle, arrogance and greediness constitute greatly to the uncontrollable rate of church proliferation.

| Variable | Frequency | Percentage | Valid percentage | Cumulative percentage |
|-------------------|-----------|------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| Strongly agree | 18 | 36.0 | 36.0 | 36.0 |
| Agree | 24 | 48.0 | 48.0 | 84.0 |
| Indifference | 5 | 10.0 | 10.0 | 94.0 |
| Disagree | 2 | 4.0 | 4.0 | 98.0 |
| Strongly disagree | 1 | 2.0 | 2.0 | 100.0 |
| Total | 50 | 100.0 | 100.0 | - |

church proliferation in the nation while 18% say no and 22% indifferent (Table 17). Table 18 and Figure 6 shows that 62% of the respondents agreed that lack of the knowledge of the words of God is part of the causes of church proliferation, while 18% did not see it that way and 20% undecided. 36% of the respondents agreed that the God commission to churches have been abandoned as a result of church proliferation, 30% disagreed while 34% cannot decide (Table 19).

Table 20 and Figure 7 shows that 78% confirmed that church proliferation has its positive impact while 16%

undecided and did not notice. 42% support the motion that church proliferation creates job opportunities while 42% did not take note of it and 16% cannot say (Table 21). The Table 22 shows that church proliferation causes more havoc than good to this nation was supported by 58.3%, 29.2% did not support the motion, 12.5% indifferent while 2% failed to show their opinion by leaving the column blank (Table 23 and Figure 6).

80% of the respondents agreed that most churches in this nation have lost focus of eternity due to church proliferation, 12% undecided while 8% disagreed. It has

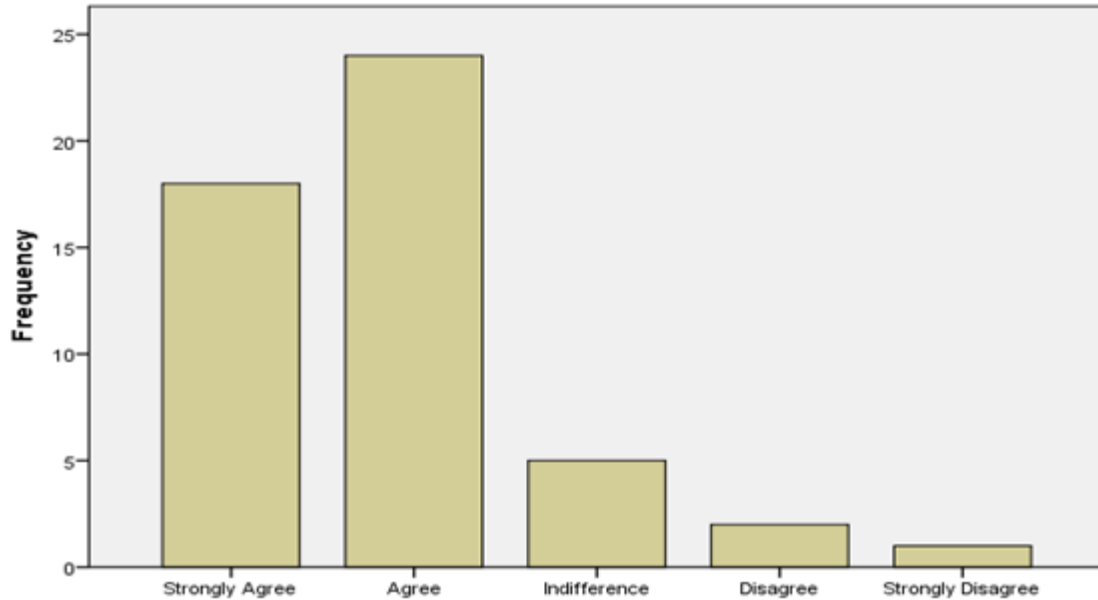


Figure 5. Power tussle, arrogance and greediness constitute greatly to the uncontrollable rate of church proliferation.

Table 16. Churches nowadays have become or turned to Business centers or ventures.

| Variable | Frequency | Percentage | Valid percentage | Cumulative percentage |
|-------------------|-----------|------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| Strongly agree | 18 | 36.0 | 36.0 | 36.0 |
| Agree | 14 | 28.0 | 28.0 | 64.0 |
| Indifference | 8 | 16.0 | 16.0 | 80.0 |
| Disagree | 7 | 14.0 | 14.0 | 94.0 |
| Strongly disagree | 3 | 6.0 | 6.0 | 100.0 |
| Total | 50 | 100.0 | 100.0 | - |

Table 17. Increase in bible colleges or schools contribute immensely to the springing up of churches in this country.

| Variable | Frequency | Percentage | Valid percentage | Cumulative percentage |
|-------------------|-----------|------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| Strongly agree | 18 | 36.0 | 36.0 | 36.0 |
| Agree | 12 | 24.0 | 24.0 | 60.0 |
| Indifference | 11 | 22.0 | 22.0 | 82.0 |
| Agree | 6 | 12.0 | 12.0 | 94.0 |
| Strongly disagree | 3 | 6.0 | 6.0 | 100.0 |
| Total | 50 | 100.0 | 100.0 | - |

Table 18. Church proliferation is as a result of lack of knowledge of the words of God by the masses or people.

| Variable | Frequency | Percentage | Valid percentage | Cumulative percentage |
|-------------------|-----------|------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| Strongly agree | 9 | 18.0 | 18.0 | 18.0 |
| Agree | 22 | 44.0 | 44.0 | 62.0 |
| Indifference | 10 | 20.0 | 20.0 | 82.0 |
| Agree | 6 | 12.0 | 12.0 | 94.0 |
| Strongly disagree | 3 | 6.0 | 6.0 | 100.0 |
| Total | 50 | 100.0 | 100.0 | - |

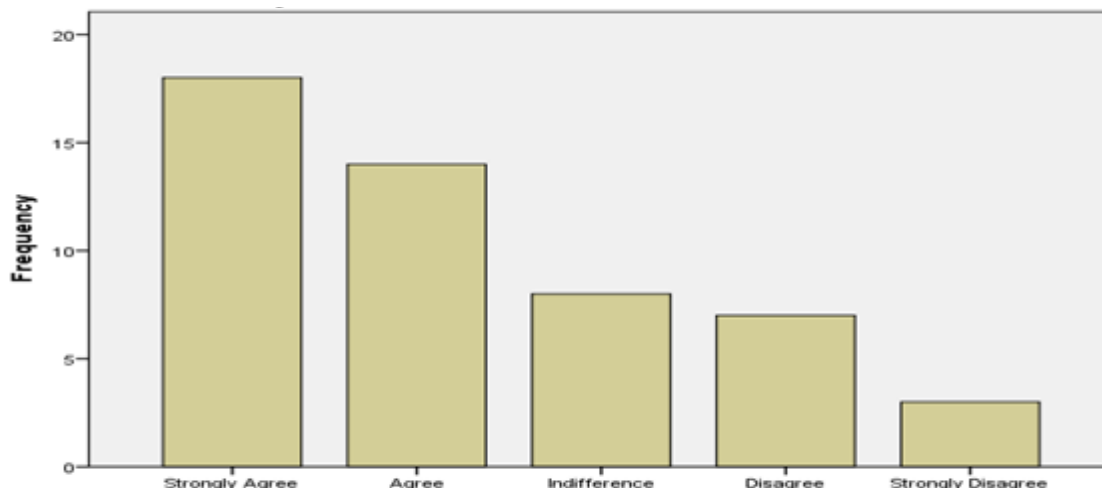


Figure 6. Churches nowadays have become or turned to business centers or ventures.

Table 19. God commission to churches are been jettisoned by church proliferation.

| Variable | Frequency | Percentage | Valid percentage | Cumulative percentage |
|-------------------|-----------|------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| Strongly agree | 3 | 6.0 | 6.0 | 6.0 |
| Agree | 15 | 30.0 | 30.0 | 36.0 |
| Indifference | 17 | 34.0 | 34.0 | 70.0 |
| Disagree | 12 | 24.0 | 24.0 | 94.0 |
| Strongly disagree | 3 | 6.0 | 6.0 | 100.0 |
| Total | 50 | 100.0 | 100.0 | - |

Table 20. Missionary schools, universities and hospitals are example of positive impact of church proliferation.

| Variable | Frequency | Percentage | Valid percentage | Cumulative percentage |
|----------------|-----------|------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| Strongly agree | 22 | 44.0 | 44.0 | 44.0 |
| Agree | 17 | 34.0 | 34.0 | 78.0 |
| Indifference | 8 | 16.0 | 16.0 | 94.0 |
| Disagree | 3 | 6.0 | 6.0 | 100.0 |
| Total | 50 | 100.0 | 100.0 | - |

been shown in Table 24 that church proliferation has led to the increase in both air and noise pollution in this nation was confirmed by 56%, while 22% disagreed and 22% also indifferent.

42% agreed that church proliferation also causes increase in deaf and hypertensive patients of the nation, 18% undecided while 40% disagreed (Table 25). 66% of the respondents confirmed that the crime rate in the nation increases as churches increases while just 16% disagreed and 18% cannot express their view (Table 26).

Table 27 and Figure 7 shows that righteousness and holiness have been neglected by churches nowadays, 16% disagreed while 10% undecided. 58% strongly disagreed that churches should be paying taxes, 18% undecided while 24% wanted churches to be paying taxes

in other to control the church proliferation (Table 28). Banning of public address system during the church services was strongly against by 66.7% of the respondents, 12.5% indifferent while 20.8% agreed to the opinion (Table 29, 30 and Figure 8). Stopping of establishment of churches in residential area was opposed by 62% while 16% supported it and 12% undecided.

From the Table 31 and Figure 9, it was clearly seen that 62% confirmed that the negative impact of church proliferation is more pronounced than that of its positive side while 24% did not see it the same way and 14% were indifferent. It has been confirmed that Christian Associations have failed in their supervisory duties as supported by 54% of the respondents while 26% did not support and 20 % undecided.

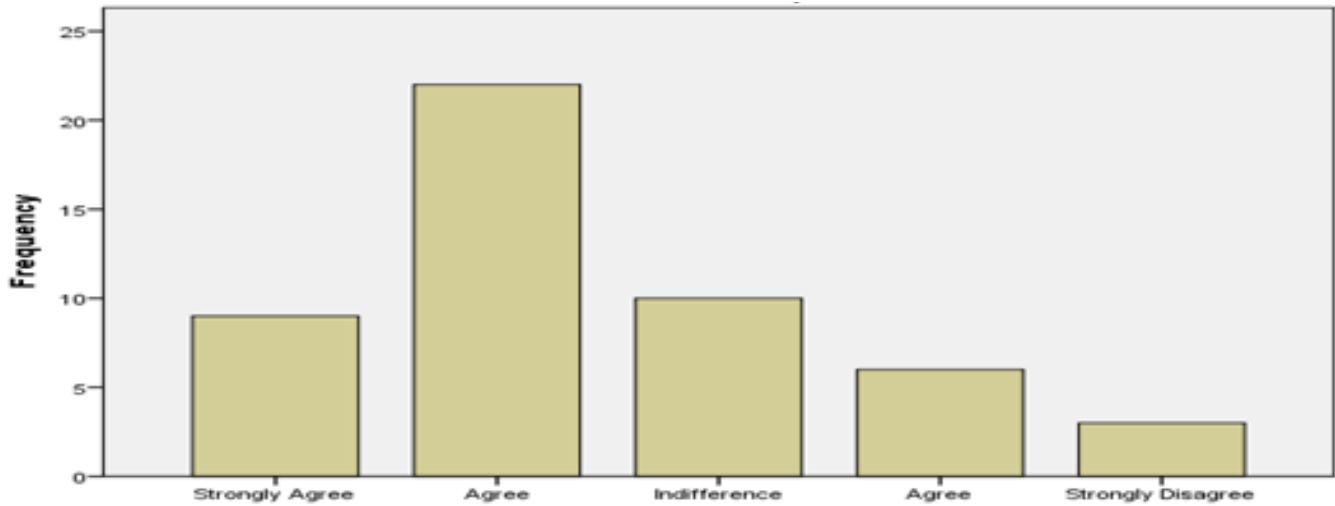


Figure 7. Church proliferation is as a result of lack of knowledge of the words of God by the masses or people.

Table 21. Church proliferation creates job opportunities for applicants of this nation.

| Variable | Frequency | Percentage | Valid percentage | Cumulative percentage |
|-------------------|-----------|------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| Strongly agree | 6 | 12.0 | 12.0 | 12.0 |
| Agree | 15 | 30.0 | 30.0 | 42.0 |
| Indifference | 8 | 16.0 | 16.0 | 58.0 |
| Disagree | 11 | 22.0 | 22.0 | 80.0 |
| Strongly disagree | 10 | 20.0 | 20.0 | 100.0 |
| Total | 50 | 100.0 | 100.0 | - |

Table 22. Church proliferation causes more havoc than remedy in this nation.

| Variable | Frequency | Percentage | Valid percentage | Cumulative percentage |
|-------------------|-----------|------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| Strongly agree | 15 | 30.0 | 31.3 | 31.3 |
| Agree | 13 | 26.0 | 27.1 | 58.3 |
| Indifference | 6 | 12.0 | 12.5 | 70.8 |
| Disagree | 11 | 22.0 | 22.9 | 93.8 |
| Strongly disagree | 3 | 6.0 | 6.3 | 100.0 |
| Total | 48 | 96.0 | 100.0 | - |
| Missing System | 2 | 4.0 | - | - |
| Total | 50 | 100.0 | - | - |

Table 23. Due to the uncontrollable springing up of churches in the country most churches have lost focus of eternity.

| Variable | Frequency | Percentage | Valid percentage | Cumulative percentage |
|-------------------|-----------|------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| Strongly agree | 29 | 58.0 | 58.0 | 58.0 |
| Agree | 11 | 22.0 | 22.0 | 80.0 |
| Indifference | 6 | 12.0 | 12.0 | 92.0 |
| Disagree | 3 | 6.0 | 6.0 | 98.0 |
| Strongly disagree | 1 | 2.0 | 2.0 | 100.0 |
| Total | 50 | 100.0 | 100.0 | - |

Table 24. Proliferation of churches has led to the increase in both air and noise pollution in the country.

| Variable | Frequency | Percentage | Valid percentage | Cumulative percentage |
|-------------------|-----------|------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| Strongly agree | 12 | 24.0 | 24.0 | 24.0 |
| Agree | 16 | 32.0 | 32.0 | 56.0 |
| Indifference | 11 | 22.0 | 22.0 | 78.0 |
| Agree | 7 | 14.0 | 14.0 | 92.0 |
| Strongly disagree | 4 | 8.0 | 8.0 | 100.0 |
| Total | 50 | 100.0 | 100.0 | - |

Table 25. It has also caused increase in deaf and hypertensive patient.

| Variable | Frequency | Percentage | Valid percentage | Cumulative percentage |
|-------------------|-----------|------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| Strongly agree | 2 | 4.0 | 4.0 | 4.0 |
| Agree | 19 | 38.0 | 38.0 | 42.0 |
| Indifference | 9 | 18.0 | 18.0 | 60.0 |
| Disagree | 8 | 16.0 | 16.0 | 76.0 |
| Strongly disagree | 12 | 24.0 | 24.0 | 100.0 |
| Total | 50 | 100.0 | 100.0 | - |

Table 26. As churches increase the crime rate in the nation increases.

| Variable | Frequency | Percentage | Valid percentage | Cumulative percentage |
|-------------------|-----------|------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| Strongly agree | 17 | 34.0 | 34.0 | 34.0 |
| Agree | 16 | 32.0 | 32.0 | 66.0 |
| Indifference | 9 | 18.0 | 18.0 | 84.0 |
| Disagree | 5 | 10.0 | 10.0 | 94.0 |
| Strongly disagree | 3 | 6.0 | 6.0 | 100.0 |
| Total | 50 | 100.0 | 100.0 | - |

Table 27. As churches springing up uncontrollably, righteousness and holiness have reduced drastically and have no place among churches of today.

| Variable | Frequency | Percentage | Valid percentage | Cumulative percentage |
|----------------|-----------|------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| Strongly agree | 16 | 32.0 | 32.0 | 32.0 |
| Agree | 21 | 42.0 | 42.0 | 74.0 |
| Indifference | 5 | 10.0 | 10.0 | 84.0 |
| Disagree | 8 | 16.0 | 16.0 | 100.0 |
| Total | 50 | 100.0 | 100.0 | - |

Table 28. To reduce the rate of church proliferation in this country churches should be ordered to be paying taxes on every branch opened like other business companies.

| Variable | Frequency | Percentage | Valid percentage | Cumulative percentage |
|-------------------|-----------|------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| Strongly agree | 5 | 10.0 | 10.0 | 10.0 |
| Agree | 7 | 14.0 | 14.0 | 24.0 |
| Indifference | 9 | 18.0 | 18.0 | 42.0 |
| Disagree | 8 | 16.0 | 16.0 | 58.0 |
| Strongly disagree | 21 | 42.0 | 42.0 | 100.0 |
| Total | 50 | 100.0 | 100.0 | - |

Table 29. Law should be promulgated and enforced to stop churches from using public address system during service.

| Variable | Frequency | Percentage | Valid percentage | Cumulative percentage |
|----------|-------------------|------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| Valid | Strongly agree | 4 | 8.0 | 8.3 |
| | Agree | 6 | 12.0 | 20.8 |
| | Indifference | 6 | 12.0 | 33.3 |
| | Disagree | 14 | 28.0 | 62.5 |
| | Strongly disagree | 18 | 36.0 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 48 | 96.0 | 100.0 |
| Missing | System | 2 | 4.0 | - |
| Total | | 50 | 100.0 | - |

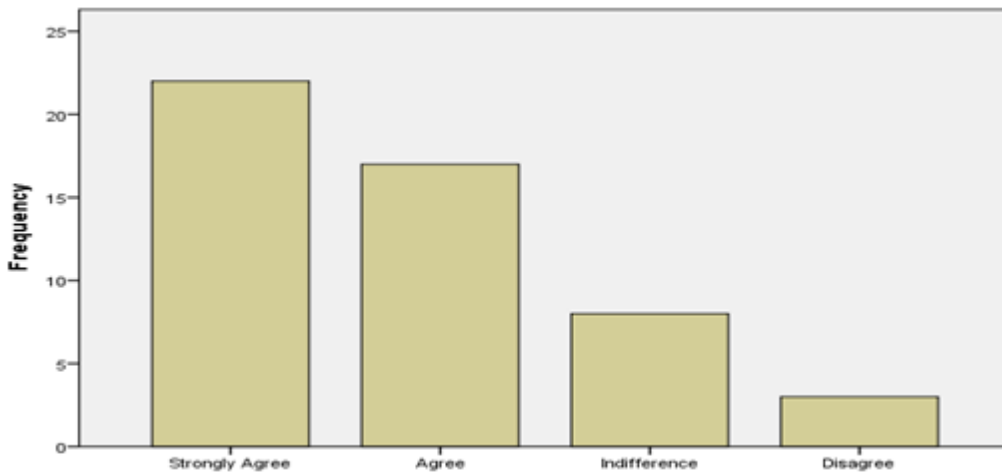


Figure 8. Missionary schools, universities and hospitals are example of positive impact of church proliferation.

Table 30. Government should not allow the establishment of churches in a residential area.

| Variable | Frequency | Percentage | Valid percentage | Cumulative percentage |
|----------|-------------------|------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| Valid | Strongly agree | 6 | 12.0 | 12.0 |
| | Agree | 2 | 4.0 | 16.0 |
| | Indifference | 6 | 12.0 | 28.0 |
| | Disagree | 12 | 24.0 | 52.0 |
| | Strongly disagree | 24 | 48.0 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 50 | 100.0 | 100.0 |

Table 31. The negative impact of church proliferation is more pronounced than its positive impact.

| Variable | Frequency | Percentage | Valid percentage | Cumulative percentage |
|----------|-------------------|------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| Valid | Strongly agree | 6 | 12.0 | 12.0 |
| | Agree | 25 | 50.0 | 62.0 |
| | Indifference | 7 | 14.0 | 76.0 |
| | Disagree | 3 | 6.0 | 82.0 |
| | Strongly disagree | 9 | 18.0 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 50 | 100.0 | 100.0 |

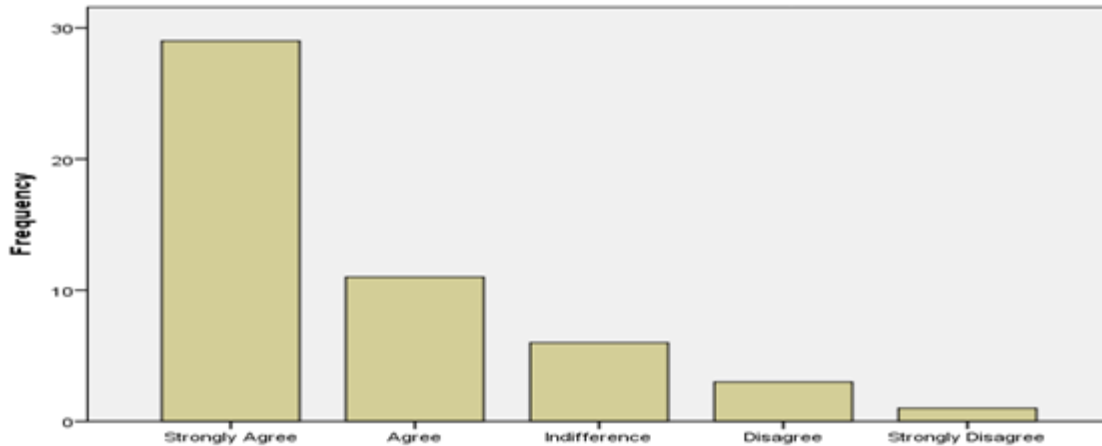


Figure 9. Due to the uncontrollable springing up of churches in the country most churches have lost focus of eternity.

Conclusion

This research work revealed that the wild fire springing up of churches in this country is not as a result of yielding to the commission given by God to human kind to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ to all nations but lack of job, love of money, power and position, people taking corners to become general overseers of churches in other to acquire worldly materials at the expense of their congregation.

By obeying their stomach call instead of calling from God, the so call stomach calling pastors are many in the nation there by causing the uncontrollable springing up of churches. This is the major reason why church proliferation does not have positive impact in this nation, as the number of churches, general overseers and pastors increases so also the crime rate. This has overshadowed the positive impact such as Missionary Schools, Universities, Hospital and etc. that come along with church proliferation. The health problem such as hearing And hypertensive ailments affecting people living in an environment where churches are located through the air and noise pollution caused by the use of public addresses system and carbon monoxides emitted from the generators and their congregation cars contributed a lot to the health hazard of the nation population.

The different Christian associations such as CAN, PF and others are not of help to the problem rather contributing to the negative impact of church proliferation, instead of them to be in control and regulate the growth of churches in the nation, their executives have derailed or failed in this spiritual work God has called them to rather pursuing after worldly materials.

In general, church proliferation would have been a great benefit unto this nation if this so called General Overseers and Pastors are really called by God and waited for God instructions/directions on the establishment of churches because, not all Pastors called by God are directed to

establish a church but due to the calling of stomach and hand work of men, churches are springing up uncontrollably without Spiritual impact which bring about the negative impact being experienced in the nation presently. Church proliferation has positive impact but the negative part of it is more and has covered up the good side of it which makes people to see church proliferation as menace to the nation.

RECOMMENDATION

Based on the outcome of the survey conducted and points raised in the concluding part of this study, the study will like to humbly recommend the following:

1. To all people attending churches, they should seek for God and know the living God. They should have the true knowledge of God and his ways and always put him above all their problems, by doing these they will not fall into the hand of stomach calling and fake miracle pastors. This will reduce the patronage of these fake miracle churches and force them to wind up in the nation. Likewise, the bible says we should test all spirits, if we know God and have the spirit of God in us, we will not enter or worship in any of these money oriented churches that are spread all over the nation.
2. To all stomach called fake miracle performing Pastors and General Overseers, God said "I know my sheep and my sheep know me "definitely you know you are not of God, the bible says "no liars, adulteress, thieves, wicked and evil doers will enter the kingdom of God. This means you are all aware of what will become of you at the end of the world if you do not desist from deceiving people. For you to enter the kingdom of God, stop your evil ways immediately and this will reduce greatly the negative impact Church Proliferation has on this nation.

3. To the real men of God, they need to stop preaching prosperity only in their churches but to preach on righteousness and holiness and the true word of God to their congregation which will prevent their congregation from being deceived from fake miracles performing pastors that full the nation. By hearing the true words of God the congregation will be able to withstand any attempt or invitations in any form of the so called stomach called Pastors either to form a church or attending their church. Likewise, the real men of God should not mix up with the world and stop going after material things which can lead to misleading of their congregation and make them to fall into wrong hands which can lead to the spreading of fake churches.

4. The Christian association should wake up to their responsibilities of controlling, regulating and punishing ill churches that contravene the set goals to the association, they should forget about worldly pollution and face the work of God committed on their hands.

5. Government should enforce the law banning the use of outside public addresses system by churches located within residential areas. Government should monitor and close down churches that are not registered their names with the Corporate Affairs Commission in order to reduce those fake mushroom churches having negative impact in church Proliferation.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

The author has not declared any conflict of interests.

REFERENCES

- Adamolekun T (2012). Main Trends in Church Growth in Nigeria. *Eur. Sci. J.* October edition, 8(23):1857-7881.
- Daily Champion (2009). Lagos State Government Shuts Church' June 18th, 2009. P 10.
- Falayi O (2012). Proliferation of Churches: Causes and Effects on Church Growth. A case study of Ikere Local Government Area of Ado Ekiti" An Unpublished project Submitted to the RCCG Bible College, Lagos P 42.
- Fayomi MO (1993). The Christians Response to our Moral and Social Crisis. Ado Ekiti Paper Mills.
- Ibiyinka OA (2011). Environmental Effects of Church Proliferation: The Redeemed Christian Church of God as a case study" *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science* 1:15/special issue = October 2011.
- Nigeria Newspoint (2015). Evil of Proliferation of commercial oriented churches May 1st, 2015.
- Olagoke SA (2016). The role of religious leaders in repositioning children and youths in the -Economic development of Nigeria" A lecture presentation on August 31st, 2016.
- The Leader News Online (2015). "Proliferation of Churches in Nigeria" August 9th, 2015.

Full Length Research Paper

Religious construction of disease: An exploratory appraisal of religious responses to the COVID-19 pandemic in Uganda

Alexander Paul Isiko

Department of Religious Studies and Philosophy, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, Kyambogo University, Uganda.

Received 1 May, 2020; Accepted 30 July, 2020

This article presents empirical analysis of religious attitudes and interpretation of pandemics in Uganda. The study sought to analyze the religious explanatory models of pandemics offered by the three major religions of Uganda: Christianity, Islam and African Traditional religious belief system. The COVID-19 pandemic which ravaged the whole world, Uganda inclusive, was used as a case study. Based on a qualitative research process, the study relied on key informant interviews, media reports and online sources of information. It was established that pandemics have been part of human history. Pandemics provide an opportunity for human reflection on transcendent life since they are a challenge to science and human wisdom. Pandemics draw people closer to religion and the spiritual due to the fear, panic, and uncertainty with which they are associated. Religions are left with the responsibility of providing theological answers beyond what human beings can comprehend. The hope and trust that society has in religious institutions make them ultimate institutions to provide solace to millions of people affected with a pandemic for which scientists and politicians have no immediate answers. The study unravels the complementary role that religion and theological studies can make in understanding effective management and prevention of pandemics in society. It also adds to the continuous debate on the relationship between science and religion, arguing for the significance of religious ideas in making science effective enough to combat societal challenges like epidemics.

Key words: Pandemics, religion, religious, construction, disease, Tondism Faith, State, science, traditional healing, coronavirus, Covid-19.

INTRODUCTION

The coronavirus disease of 2019 (COVID-19) is an infectious disease that was first discovered towards the end of 2019 in the Chinese province of Hubei in Wuhan. It then spread to other countries across the globe (Shereen et al., 2020; Guo et al., 2020; Zu et al., 2020). Within the

first three months of 2020, the disease had ravaged the entire world, killing thousands of people, and leaving several others infected and bedridden (Shereen et al., 2020). The socio-economic lifestyle of the world was affected, with the most immediate intervention of 'social

E-mail: alexisiko@yahoo.com. Tel: +256702010996, +256782010996.

Author(s) agree that this article remain permanently open access under the terms of the [Creative Commons Attribution License 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)

distancing' prescribed for all people as a way of curtailing the spread of the disease. The phrase 'stay at home' became commonplace as a strategy to limit people's exposure to the virus. Several economies all over the world went into a total shutdown. Curfews were imposed in many countries. However, to situate the global significance of Coronavirus disease, it is important to explain the concept of 'pandemic'.

For a pandemic to occur, there must be an epidemic. The term epidemic has been used since antiquity to mean any disease that kills many people quickly in an unpleasant and arbitrary way regardless of age, gender, religion, race, nationality and /or health status of the victims. When an epidemic is experienced in several parts of the world at a given time, it is then categorised as a pandemic (Cunningham, 2008). Therefore, a pandemic is defined as an epidemic occurring worldwide, or over a very wide area, crossing international boundaries and usually affecting a large number of people (Kelly, 2011). The severity of a disease is not one of the defining elements of a pandemic, but the scale and geographical coverage of the disease (Kelly, 2011; Cunningham, 2008). By 11th March 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared COVID-19 a pandemic because it had spread to over 110 countries and territories around the world. Over 118,000 registered cases had been reported (Ducharme, 2020).

Whereas there exists numerous medical works on pandemics, composition of treatises about pandemics has, over the centuries, been a concern of religious scholars, interpreting the occurrence of diseases according to pious traditions, as well as guiding society on proper conduct during pandemics. Religious treatises on plagues serve as evidence of sustained concern by the religious elite about arguing both for and against the religious tenets regarding plagues (Dols, 1979). The sudden occurrence of pandemics has often been traumatizing for societies all over the globe with the initial search for answers more often associated to religion. This has been true of the major pandemics that the world has ever faced like the Black Death, Spanish flu and HIV/AIDS (Cunningham, 2008). Therefore, an inextricable relationship between religion and pandemics has existed for a long time. The occurrence of the COVID-19 pandemic has yet again rejuvenated the debate about the positioning of religion and religious ideologies on pandemics.

The debate proves the significance of religious explanatory models in understanding disease, notwithstanding biomedical advancements. Although COVID-19 had become an international emergency, there was a poor understanding of the disease among health professionals and a great deal of disagreements among scientists regarding its cause and origin (Bhagavathula et al., 2020). With no antiviral drugs nor vaccines, and the presence of carriers without obvious symptoms, traditional public health intervention measures were significantly ineffective (Sun et al., 2020) thus making biomedical explanations of the disease dissatisfying. In the case of

Uganda, a significant percentage of health workers were found to have a poor attitude towards COVID-19 (Olum et al., 2020), thereby providing an avenue for religious explanatory models to take advantage in a space which would have been adequately filled by biomedical knowledge. Nonetheless, even with availability of biomedical explanations, religious ideologies have been developed to explain emerging social problems like diseases.

In Uganda, the religious sector became pivotal during the pandemic. The government of Uganda relied on the religious institutions and their leaders to enforce early phase responses to the pandemic. At the same time, the religious sector is such a thriving industry in the country that apart from over 98% of the population claiming to belong to a particular religion, religions and their institutions play a critical role in the socio-political dispensation of the country (UBOS, 2016). Religions have a strong bearing on society's political direction, including influencing policy preferences (Isiko, 2019a). Because of the undebatable significance of religion in Uganda, the first overt response to COVID-19 was government engagement with religious leaders. For Uganda's case, a successful fight against COVID-19 lay in how much the religious leaders and institutions cooperated with government to enable it roll out its preventive programmes. On 16th March, 2020, the President held a meeting with members of the inter-religious council of Uganda (IRCU) as well as prominent city Born-Again pastors. The government 'convinced' religious leaders to close all places of worship including churches and mosques. This was aimed at decongesting places of worship because they were easy targets of virus transmission. Whereas it is true that other places with high concentration of people like bars, schools, institutions of higher learning, markets and public transport were ordered to close; it was a fragile move when it came to closure of places of worship. This is against the backdrop that Uganda by all standards is a conservatively religious country.

This article, therefore, deals with three specific issues. The first is an analysis of the socio-political positioning of religion amidst state directives on the COVID-19 pandemic. The second is an examination of the theological explanations to COVID-19 with regard to its cause and solution. The third is an analysis of the practical interventions and coping mechanisms of religious institutions amidst the prevailing circumstances of the disease, knowing that religions are social havens for the afflicted. It is, however, important that a description of Uganda's religious landscape be made to understand the conditions which influence religious reactions to pandemics.

UGANDA'S RELIGIOUS LANDSCAPE

Uganda's religious environment is not only pluralistic but

also fragile. Religious pluralism is manifested by the various religious faiths and denominations in the country. The constitution of the republic of Uganda provides for freedom of religion and worship. Therefore, any policies and measures that intend to curtail people's religious freedoms are likely to be resisted. Such a legal regime has led to unregulated multiplication of religious groups. The major religious traditions in the country include Christianity, Islam, and African traditional religious belief system. There also exist minority religious groups like Asian religions and cultic groups. According to the 2014 National Population and Housing Census, Christianity accounts for the biggest number of followers representing over 80% of the total population. This is followed by Islam with 13.7%. Traditionalists represent 1.7% of the population (UBOS, 2016; Isiko, 2019a). Other religious groups including Bahai, Hindus, Buddhists, Jews and the like make 0.2% of the total population. Christianity has several denominations including Roman Catholic church (39.3%), Anglican church (32%), Seventh day Adventist church (1.7%), Greek Orthodox church (0.1%), and several other minor protestant affiliated churches like the Baptists and Lutheran churches, representing about 0.3% of the population. In addition, classical Pentecostal and numerous neo-Pentecostal churches, popularly called Born Again churches, represent 11.1% of the population. Uganda is, therefore, a very religious country with a minimal 0.2% of the total population claiming not to belong to any religion. The country's religiosity is reflected in its motto on the National emblem: "For God and my Country". With such religiosity, an alteration of religious practice could be interpreted as an attack on the entire population. How then would the religious sector react to the government's directives to close places of worship and ban public religious gatherings despite COVID-19?

The Roman Catholic Church and Anglican Church had much political influence in post-independence Uganda. However, since the early 1990s to the present, neo Pentecostal churches' influence in the socio-political dispensation of Uganda is unquestionable because of their increasing population, and a unified response to government programmes (Isiko, 2019a). Born Again churches command a lot of appeal to the relatively young yet majority population of the country. For successful implementation of government health and education programmes, the Christian and Muslim population have been handy in ensuring their fruitfulness. On occasions when religious clerics have spoken ill about government programmes such as immunisation, elections and universal education, the response of the population has been negative as well.

African traditional belief system differs from one cultural society to another. There, however, exists some commonalities with respect to belief in a supreme being, referred to with different names, depending on the language of the cultural society. Nonetheless, traditional religious belief system is manifested in a belief in spirits,

diviners, traditional healers as well as cultural institutions that have been established under Ugandan law. Cultural institutions and kingdoms are looked at as the chief custodians of traditional religious belief systems. Traditional healing is a vibrant medical system used by over 60% of Ugandans in a country with inaccessible modern healthcare facilities (Isiko, 2019b, 2018; Abet, 2020). Therefore, when diseases like COVID-19 occur, it would be expected that traditional healers, trusted by the local people, would have an increased role to play. There is a lot of religious syncretism where most Ugandans who claim to be either Christians or Muslims continue to practice indigenous religious rituals, especially in times of crises like pandemics, largely explained by the failure of the Christian or Muslim God to rescue them from the sufferings. Asian religions that include Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism and Sikhism draw followers from non-Ugandans coming from Asian countries and Ugandans of Indian origin. There is minimal interaction between Asian religions with other religious traditions in the country. These hold negligible influence on the socio-political scene due to the insignificant number of adherents. Therefore, their responses to the COVID-19 pandemic are difficult to assess and are not part of this study.

Government's engagement with religious clerics through the Inter-Religious Council of Uganda (IRCU) in the fight against the HIV pandemic has been a success story. Ugandans believe in religious leaders so much that a lot more respect is attached to them than the political elites. State institutions are so dysfunctional that citizens trust religious leaders to be in position to communicate effectively to the state. Religious leaders are the newly found hope of the citizenry. Public trust in religious leaders has sometimes been abused by the religious clerics themselves. Religious clerics especially from the Born-Again churches and African traditional religious belief system take advantage of desperate and gullible Ugandans. The claim that they can heal all types of diseases and sicknesses, making some Ugandans abandon modern healthcare services in anticipation of miracles from religious clerics. Up to the present, some Born Again pastors claim to heal HIV/AIDS while traditional diviners and herbalists hold the claim to cure the same disease which science has proven to have no cure yet. These unproven claims by religious clerics accompanied by the gullibility of Ugandans prove a challenge to the fight against pandemics like HIV/AIDS and COVID-19.

The organizational structure of religious faiths determines their level of engagement with the State on public programmes. Mainstream religious faiths have some level of unity under the 'Inter Religious Council of Uganda' (IRCU). Recently, two loose associations of Born-Again churches have been admitted to full membership of the IRCU. These include the Born-Again Faith (BAF) and National Fellowship of Born Again and Pentecostal Churches (NFBPC) (Isiko, 2019a). The government finds it

easy to reach out to the religious faiths through these umbrella organizations. Some of the government programmes like HIV/AIDS prevention and election monitoring implemented by IRCU have received government funding. It was, therefore, not surprising that when there was an outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, government's first call went to these religious faiths. However, there is a challenge of non-institutionalisation of contemporary Born Again churches. Without formal organisational structures, it becomes difficult not only to regulate them but also have meaningful engagement with them. These numerous churches that stand on charismatic leaders have been known to sway the public away from public health programmes and education.

METHODOLOGY

This was a qualitative study that used an exploratory research design. This design is appropriate in dealing with such unexplained emergent social problems like COVID-19. Since the world and Uganda in particular had so many glorifications for science and medicine than any other, as the solution to COVID-19, the exploratory design provided an opportunity to make known the information about the religious dimension that the new disease had (Swedberg, 2018). This approach is recommended when little is known about a phenomenon, or one intends to describe it according to the subject's viewpoint. This applied to this study considering the belief that it is important to study phenomena from people's own perspective (Bouso et al., 2010, 2011). The study used the life context and experiences of the respondents with the new disease in their communities. COVID-19 had just emerged with need for its urgent explanations in the society. Since no academic studies had yet been undertaken on the relationship between religion and COVID-19, the exploratory research design enabled the researcher to use the empirical situation existing at the time of the disease. The study employed two methods of data collection; in-depth interviews with key informants, and a review of secondary data which included media reports and online sources of information. Using the snowball technique, a total of twenty-six key informants were identified and interviewed, usually through telephone voice calls. The key informants were drawn from the three dominant religious traditions: Christianity, Islam and African traditional faiths in the country. Key informants from the Christian faith included five (5) lay Christians, five (5) pastors and five (5) clergy drawn from the three dominant Christian denominations of Born Again Faith, Anglican Church of Uganda and Roman Catholic Church. Five (5) Sheiks and Muslim scholars were identified from the Muslim community in Uganda. Six African traditional faith leaders were drawn from three Ugandan cultural societies of the Basoga, Baganda and Acholi, taking two from each society. The Christian religious tradition had the biggest number of keyinformants because it represents over 80% of the total population in the country thus making the remaining percentage to be shared by the rest of the religions (UBOS, 2016).

Secondary data were drawn from radio and television news and programmes about the COVID-19 in Uganda; newspapers both hard and online sources; social media sites especially Facebook and WhatsApp; and journal articles. Live broadcasts of Nation Television Uganda (NTV), Uganda Broadcasting Corporation (UBC) Television and Nile Broadcasting services (NBS) Television were followed. These three television stations are considered as 'national because of their countrywide coverage, appeal, and largely broadcast in English, Uganda's official language. These television stations have news reporters from major towns of the country making it believable

that they present a true picture of what happens in the whole country. The study also relied on official government communications and reports passed over the media about the disease. In this case, a lot of messages were passed on to Ugandans through WhatsApp and Facebook. It was, however, a challenge to sieve factual information from fiction on social media outlets. Social media information was considered authentic if the same message was reported about in major media houses like the three television stations identified above and in major national newspapers of New Vision, The Independent and the Daily Monitor. Other seven Christian based television stations and one Islamic based television airing principally sermons during the COVID-19 pandemic were earnestly followed on a daily basis. The researcher viewed and listened to worship activities and sermons that were broadcast at different times on each of the media houses identified. Use of unconventional sources of information, like the ones enumerated above, has been applicable before in similar circumstances on pandemics. For example, due to the unusual circumstances during the Black Death, a more serious contagious disease of the 14th century, unpublished Turkish and Arabic sources became the backbone of supplying the needed information concerning the plague (Dols, 1979). This was therefore, the appropriate viable research approach available due to the countrywide lockdown. The challenge of lockdowns and quarantine for researchers on pandemics has been perennial, affecting the precision with which information about pandemics is reported. This was the case during the Black Death (Dols, 1979). In spite of the limited physical interaction with key informants, their views and opinions through any available means was more important than their physical contact with the researcher. Information presented in this article is based on empirical data collected up to the end of April 2020. Since this was neither a phenomenological nor a comparative study, but an exploration of the attitudes and interpretations of various religions to COVID-19, theological responses unique to specific religious traditions have been presented under each of the three studied religions.

RELIGIOUS RESPONSES TO THE PANDEMIC

In a preliminary study report entitled, 'In Crisis, We Pray: Religiosity and the COVID-19 Pandemic', it is highlighted that in times of crisis, religion becomes crucial in an attempt by humans to seek explanations and stress relief. The COVID-19 pandemic is no exception. The demand for religion has risen dramatically since the onset of the pandemic with political leaders and self-organised groups urging their fellow citizens to pray. The tendency for people to use religion to deal with crisis can be understood within the religious coping terminology. Religious coping means that people use religion as a means to deal with adversity and uncertainty. They pray, seek a closer relation to God, or explain the tragedy by reference to an Act of God. Empirical evidence suggests that people impacted by adverse life events such as cancer, heart problems, death in close family, divorce, or injury are more religious than others. Adversity, caused by natural disasters, instigates people across the globe to use their religion more intensively (Bentzen, 2020). From the analysis of both individual and institutional religious reactions, the following sub-sections answer the following questions: how are religions and religious institutions positioned in the socio-political interventions towards the COVID-19 pandemic?

What are the theological explanations behind the cause(s) of the COVID-19 pandemic? What are the religious reflections on what ought to be done to deal with the COVID-19 pandemic?

Religious institutions' positioning amidst socio-political interventions

The COVID-19 pandemic became a yardstick for which citizens measured responsiveness of their political leaders. The politicians' responses to the pandemic were a determinant of their commitment to provide leadership. The disease, therefore, became a socio-political force all over the world. Among the measures adopted by governments in the world to prevent COVID-19 was to ban public gatherings and closure of places of worship (Bwire, 2020). Although members of IRCU and other notable Born-Again church pastors were invited by the State before a public declaration of the measures was made, it was only a principle of courtesy which did not call for their input. One of the Co-presidents of the IRCU was quoted saying:

We were able to see him (the President), and this is what was decided.....on 18th March 2020, between 3-5pm, he will go live on air and address the nation. He has decided to put the entire nation on lockdown. All schools are going to close effective 19-20 March. Prayer services are not going to be conducted at all places of worship (Male, 2020).

These measures were a test of the already fragile religion-state relations in Uganda. According to the state, the pandemic was indiscriminate of one's religious affiliation or even non-affiliation. Whereas the religious leaders tried to resist the immediate closure of places of worship with arguments that they needed some time to prepare the believers in the wake of the pandemic, the President disregarded their pleas as he followed the advice of the doctors and scientists (H. Buyondo, personal interview, 1st April, 2020). In the circumstances, science took precedence over religion. The religious entities were powerless in a country which prides itself in religious belief and constitutional guarantees to freedom of worship and association.

As a result, legal experts argued that constitutional guarantees should not be "suicide pacts" to thwart other fundamental rights. The continued exercise of freedom of worship and association in the time of COVID-19 pandemic would be detrimental to the lives of the worshippers, with high risk of infection (Turley, 2020). This demonstrated that in times of crises of such nature, politics, not religion, takes centre stage in guiding society. The closure of places of worship demonstrated the non-absoluteness of religious rights and freedoms in society. Freedom of worship and association can be restricted with

a sufficiently compelling purpose of State, and there cannot be anything more compelling than battling a pandemic; thus, limiting gathering was the most effective deterrent to the COVID-19 until a vaccine would be realized. Closure of places of worship falls within state jurisdiction of enforcing public order in times of mitigating public health risks like COVID-19 (Turley, 2020). It was during this pandemic that in the religious history of Uganda, all religions and their venerable leaders were brought to order by government indiscriminately (H. Buyondo, personal interview, April 1, 2020). This was based on the state's mandate to secure the "public good", that is a virus free community. In a rationalisation mode, religious elites acceded to the closure arguing that it was for the common good and wellbeing of everybody. They bowed to the coercive power of the state in fear of state reprisal. Religious clerics became conveyers of government directives on COVID-19, indicating a subsumed consensus among religious clerics. The directives were a manifestation of the superiority of the state over religion (G. Lubaale, personal interview, 1st April, 2020). However, non-contestation of the state decision could be viewed as conspiracy between the state and religious clerics to deny citizens their rights and freedoms.

Despite the state directives and sanctions, there appeared sections of unorganized Born-Again churches and pastors that attempted to defy. Unorganised Born-Again churches include those that do not belong to any Born-Again church umbrella organization, yet the state's engagement with religious institutions was with members of the IRCU [including the two major umbrella organizations of Born-Again churches, that is, Born-Again faith (BAF) and NAFBPC]. Among the defiant religious leaders was Pastor Augustine Yiga of the Revival Christian Church Kawaala (RCCK) and several other upcountry evangelical pastors. Ironically, Rev.Fr. Kiibi Deogratious Kateregga, a youthful Roman Catholic priest at St Joseph's Catholic Parish in Mpigi district, was among the defiant ones (Mbogo, 2020). Defiant religious leaders were influenced by ignorance and conspiracy theories about COVID-19. For example, the Daily Monitor newspaper reported the arrest of Pastor Augustine Yiga for uttering false information and spreading harmful propaganda in relation to the deadly COVID-19. Pastor Yiga in a televised interview had preached that there was no COVID-19 in Africa based on the argument that there had been no death recorded in Africa related to this virus. He further argued that COVID-19 was a mere flu which had existed in Africa since time immemorial (URN, 2020a). Unaffiliated churches like RCCK may have missed vital information from the President's address because of non-representation at the President's meeting with religious leaders. Defiance by upcountry pastors and the mainstream Roman Catholic priest may have been due to delayed receipt of information. There were also attempts by the Acholi cultural group to organize a traditional

healing ritual against COVID-19 contrary to government directives. The cultural leaders were threatened with arrests if they dared so. This was echoed in a televised presidential address when H.E Museveni said:

I have heard that the cultural leader of Acholi is organizing a ceremony called ryemo gemo, against the Coronavirus... these are to be arrested if they dare to do so but I don't want to arrest cultural leaders... I don't understand why some people would contest science. I advise the cultural and religious leaders to adhere to the Ministry of Health guidelines or else I will imprison them the way I did to Owobusobozi Bisaka (prophet) in Kibaale district, in the 1980s when he refused his followers from going to hospitals (President Yoweri Museveni, televised address on NBS TV, 2020, March 31 at 8:45pm).

President Museveni's attitude relegated African science and undermined African ideologies of homegrown science in favour of western epistemologies. His reference to another Prophet who was against biomedicine some four decades before, seems to suggest his subscription to the notion that what is religious is anti-science, in the western sense of it. Nevertheless, the threat to imprison non-adherent religious and cultural leaders implies the coercive element of the state over religion and cultural institutions. Apparently, the cultural leadership of the Acholi had organized to gather people in an exorcism ceremony called "ryemo gemo". Whereas this ritual was aimed at exorcising the COVID-19 pandemic believed to be a bad spirit from Acholi land, the state interpreted it as undermining the presidential directive to "stay at home" and ban on public gatherings. The fear of government was that such a cultural ritual would fuel the spread of the COVID-19 as people would not take government precautions seriously (Oketch, 2020). Since cultural practices can frustrate or promote efforts for pandemic prevention, critical engagement with culture is the best alternative in the fight against pandemics. However, previous studies show that identification of crucial cultural parameters of the epidemic is vital to the development of an efficient control strategy (Guitelle and Saeed, 2019; Bohret, 2018). To some people, in all the defiant cases identified above, religious extremism and seeking cheap popularity were responsible for the friction between the State and religion during the dire need to combat the pandemic in Uganda (H. Buyondo, personal interview, April 1, 2020). Very often, the President decreed that the fight against COVID-19 was a "war" which required unconventional means of dealing with it. The use of emergency powers of the President including a suspension of religious activities could not be resisted under a warlike situation. The State's subsequent reaction to defiant religious leaders was a demonstration of its ultimate authority despite the legal guarantees to religious freedom and expression. For example, the Uganda Police spokesperson said:

Pastor Augustine Yiga's utterance undermines government's efforts in fighting the pandemic and exposes the public to dangers of laxity in observing the guidelines issued by the Ministry of Health on control and prevention... Yiga's action is considered a direct attack on the people of Uganda. We appeal to the public to desist from making false or alarming utterances over COVID-19 and disregard information not from authorised government structures (URN, 2020a).

The above statement alludes to evidence that Government's earlier step to meet religious leaders before a public declaration of closure of places of worship was only to harness their support on a decision that government could not backtrack. The state simply wanted a 'religious window dressing' on the closure of places of worship so that the state could be seen as having taken a decision in consultation with religious leaders. Secondly, the statement postulates that religious opinions on the pandemic were not only unwelcome but also posed a great danger to public health and, therefore, the need for religious restraint. Thirdly, the implication was that scientific knowledge, but not religious ideologies, was the key to combat the pandemic. Parsitau (2020), writing at the onset of the COVID-19 in Kenya, argued that in times of pandemics like this one, science and medicine seem the more reliable solution.

Religious opinions that were not in tandem with those of the state on the COVID-19 were for the first time in the history of Uganda interpreted as treasonous. Religious responses to the pandemic were regarded helpful only when they tallied with government's ideology on the pandemic. For example, the subsequent closure of places of worship was applauded by the President in several of his national addresses about the pandemic. This further indicates that religious leaders responded in panic and fear of government's reprisals. Otherwise, amiable religious consensus about government stance to close places of worship would have been followed with statements from umbrella organisations of religious institutions like the IRCU, Uganda Joint Christian Council (UJCC) as well as BAF and NFBPC (E. Mateeka, personal interview, 31st March, 2020). President Museveni cajoled religious clerics into submission to the lockdown using his rhetoric rendition of the bible (Wabyanga, 2017). He quoted and made interpretation of Isaiah 26:20 to underscore the theological significance of lockdown and closure of places of worship. However, resistance to the State's directives to outlaw religious gatherings in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic can be understood in an African perspective. Social cohesion and social gatherings are of great importance in African societies. Kaseje (2020) has articulated the vitality of public attendance of religious services as being the highest in Africa with about 82% of religious service attendees in Uganda. Therefore, it was not surprising that measures to enforce social and physical distancing would prove to be more challenging.

THEOLOGICAL RESPONSES TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Analysis of variant theological explanations is made in relation to cause and what needs to be done to overcome the disease. This is against the backdrop that specific cultural and religious communities have their own understanding of occurrence of pandemics. The specific questions to be answered here are; why has the COVID-19 appeared at this time in the history of humankind? Who is responsible for sending the COVID-19 disease to humanity, God or Satan? Can the COVID-19 Pandemic be reversed, and if so, who holds the power to reverse it? What needs to be done to reverse the situation? Arguments in response to the above questions are restricted to the three religions of Christianity, Islam and African Traditional religious belief system.

Christianity

The theology of eschatology and apocalypse has been dominantly used to explain the occurrence of the COVID-19 Pandemic in both Christianity and Islam. Eschatology deals with the theology and/or science of the final destiny of the soul and humankind. It is concerned with the study of the end times of the world. On the other hand, apocalypses are largely revelations of secrets of a spiritual nature. Eschatology and apocalypse have some association with future expectation (Collins, 1974). Apocalyptic eschatology is used to mean the theology of revelations about the end of the world and humankind. Christians, and Muslims alike, have interpreted the COVID-19 pandemic as one of the signs of the end times. It is a vivid sign communicating the impending end of the world. Some religious clerics argued that whereas there have been pandemics before as a result of sin, the unique thing about the COVID-19 pandemic is that it has been preceded by several signs (H. Buyondo, personal interview, April 1, 2020). Such end sign triggers in Uganda include: the persistent HIV/AIDS disease, the over twenty-year civil war in Northern Uganda, Cholera and Ebola outbreak, locusts' invasion and now COVID-19. The argument here is that COVID-19 pandemic does not come to end the world but is a preparation of what is going to happen not far from now. A transcendent God aids this apocalyptic eschatological outlook of COVID-19.

However, Niringiye (2020) argued that the human quest for meaning from transcendence, in the face of a monstrous and inexplicable natural disaster, catastrophe or plague, is a natural instinct. It is the way to cope or deal with the panic, fear and uncertainty created by the catastrophe; faith in the supernatural is an essential part of human arsenal to either fight or flight. People's quest for transcendence explains their faith in the ultimate spiritual authority in the face of the pandemic. Therefore, Christian theological explanations of the COVID-19 pandemic are

rooted into two major aspects: one is, apocalyptic end times devotion and rhetoric, supported with end time prophetic writings and invoking modern day doomsday prophets and second is, the plea to unwavering trust in God, who promised deliverance to his own, who turn to him. In the first aspect, some Christians think that the COVID-19 pandemic is caused by human sin, igniting God's anger upon humanity. One of the interviewees shared a personal experience with an elderly female clergy in the Anglican Church, about the pandemic. He said thus:

First of all, when she met me, she shook my hand and we walked closely separated by almost half an inch. And as she talked to me, she said the COVID-19 pandemic is God's wrath on people who have gone contrary to his will. Hoping that the situation will get better, she told me that God is angry about what has gone wrong in the world and she says he is more troubled with the western countries. She said, "most whites don't worship God, but their own things. Most evils such as homosexuality find deep root in Europe. No wonder, more whites are dying of the disease" (B. Niwamanya, personal interview, March 29, 2020).

The clergy's theological insights attribute the origin of the COVID-19 to God but not Satan. It is the "good" God who has brought the virus upon his disobedient people. He, therefore, uses the virus as a punishment upon the sinful. Moreover, because the religious cleric is sure of her righteousness, she is not afraid of the infection that comes from close physical contact with the infected individuals. That is why she gladly shakes the interviewee's hand as they move closely together. This theology denies the contagiousness nature of COVID-19 among the faithful. It also generates the belief that it is not meaningful for an obedient Christian to flee from the disease because it will not affect him/her. The pandemic is caused by God's anger due to the sinful nature of the world today. Among the specific causes are humankind's denial to worship God and condoning homosexuality. Christian ideology on the cause of pandemics has been consistent over the centuries pegging it to sinful acts, though these differ depending on the lifestyle and environment of the time. For example, whereas Stearns (2009) identified pride, lust, impiety, simony, indecent clothing and filial disobedience as responsible for the Black Death in the 14th century, homosexuality, corruption and refusal to worship God are identified as the sins in the circumstances of COVID-19.

These explanations were perfected with biblical text referencing. The most common texts shared by Ugandan priests and pastors during the COVID-19 are Numbers 16:1-35; 2 Chronicles 7:13-14; Jeremiah 17:14-18; Psalms 91:5-7; John 14:1 and Mathew 17:14. These specific biblical texts carry four messages. The first one is a portrayal of God as the source of disasters and pandemics. Secondly, pandemics are a result of human sin; thirdly, a call to humankind to repent through prayer. And fourthly, is a message of hope and encouragement to

those hit by the pandemic. Numbers 16:1-35 has received wide acknowledgement during the pandemic. This text provides a narrative of God's wrath upon the people of Israel for disobedience and contesting the power of God through Moses, the prophet. God was determined to kill the whole community because of the sins committed by the three families of Korah, Dathan and Abiram (vs.21), but in verse 22, Moses' intercession reversed God's anger, killing only members of the three sinful families. 2 Chronicles 7:13-14, indicates that God is responsible for sending natural disasters and epidemics like diseases upon His people, but is quick to acknowledge in verse 14 that through prayer and repentance, God can reverse the situation. In Jeremiah 17:14-18, the prophet invites God to cause disasters on the people of Judah for their sinfulness but at the same time he asks God to spare him amongst the community because he was sinless. Mathew 17:14 indicates that when one humbles self, God can bring total healing to the diseased. In this text, prayer is prescribed as the solution to disease. The texts of John 14:1 and Psalms 91:5-7 carry messages of encouragement to the distressed, including those who have been struck with plagues, like the COVID-19.

This theology vindicates the righteous but punishes the sinful. Proponents of this theology were convinced that this was the reason why countries like China and those in Europe and America had experienced a more devastating effect of COVID-19 than Africa because the former were more sinful than the latter. Apostle Dr. Joseph Serwadda, pastor of Victory Church, Ndeeba, supported this view when he said thus:

The pandemic is a harvest for our sinfulness. In Italy, in 2019 there was the biggest gay parade and some people think that this is the time for God to punish our sinfulness. However, people should not fear because God will spare them for they are not part of the sinful (Combating COVID-19. Dream TV, 2020, March 30 at 3:00 pm).

By April 23, 2020, a world total of 2,667,527 confirmed COVID-19 cases had been recorded. China had 82,798 confirmed cases of COVID-19, United States with the highest at 849,094, Italy with third highest at 187,327 and Spain with second highest at 213,024. A combined total of only 26,870 confirmed cases was attributed to the African continent (Worldometers, 2020). The 93rd World Health Organization (WHO) situation report on COVID-19 indicated that by the third week of April, there were globally 2,471,136 confirmed COVID-19 cases; half of them from the European region and about 925,291 cases from the American region. This was against a total of only 16,115 cases from the African region (WHO, 2020).

There was a conspiracy ideology that pitted China against God for attempting to make an artificial moon. On the other hand, God was angered with Europe and America for legalizing homosexuality, prostitution and gambling to the extent of admitting homosexual persons to

the clerical order of the church. Nevertheless, this argument was challenged by the COVID-19 cases, however minimal, in African countries, including Uganda, yet they had put up a strong resistance against homosexuality. This was then attributed to an increasing number of people in Africa who have forsaken God, engaged in corruption and amassed ill-gotten wealth. According to this theology, these would be the likely victims of the COVID-19 in Africa. This African Christian thinking identified the Christian God with specific circumstances in and of Africa. According to this theology, COVID-19 was sent by God and when the wicked are consumed, it would disappear. Therefore, social distancing, shaking hands or washing hands was not so useful as long as one is not a sinner. The theology of transcendence, in the COVID-19 pandemic, has been glorified on account that despite the scientific advancement of countries like China, India, and those in Europe and America, the cure or vaccine to the disease remains elusive, thus the need to understand that God is over and above wisdom and science (J. Kyarikunda, personal interview, March 30, 2020).

To the Christian tradition, whereas the COVID-19 is caused by God, there are two things that could be done to change the situation. Firstly, prayer and repentance would make God reverse the situation. Secondly, Christians were to remain hopeful of God's intervention. Words of hope and encouragement would keep the afflicted until God responded to their prayers. These thoughts dominated sermons of Christian clerics, usually done in their homes. Again, biblical textual references of mainly Psalms 91:5-7 and John 14:1 were common. Specifically, Psalms 91:5-7 states thus; you need not fear any dangers at night or sudden attacks during the day or the plagues that strike in the dark. While John 14:1 says, do not be worried and upset. These texts illuminate God's power, presence, intentions and protection against fear of COVID-19. God is portrayed as the ultimate security of the people in the face of the pandemic. However, these texts do not allude to being protected from the infection but rather promises bodily deliverance from the pandemic. Whereas Christians could get infected with the pandemic, they were forbidden from worry and fears. This was against the background that even in perilous times like the COVID-19 times; Christians are reminded that God is their shelter, protector and deliverer (Riggleman, 2020).

Some Christians, however, contested the theology of "human sin and God's anger" as the cause of COVID-19. For example, Niringiye (2020) suggested that over reference to biblical texts during the pandemic reflected more of fear and panic caused by the disease than Christians' faith in God. For example, people were gripped with joblessness and lack of food and other basics due to the lockdown. There was uncertainty over closure of educational institutions. Ban on public transport made it difficult for citizens to access medical care facilities. There was panic buying of foodstuffs. In a society made of

extended family networks, people were cut off from caring for helpless distant relatives due to ban on travel and social gatherings.

Skepticisms were raised on the effectiveness of the overly referenced biblical texts of 2 Chronicles 7:14 and Psalms 91:5-7, as prescription for COVID-19. For example, in the first text, the prerequisites for the healing of the land is “humble yourselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways”, often interpreted to mean calling for prayer vigils and assemblies and crying out to God in repentance. However, the requirement to turn from the wicked ways cannot be achieved through prayer assemblies. There is need for humility before engagement in prayer which is a rarity among the faithful. With glorification of science alone in the case of Uganda, there was a black-out on religious opinion of the pandemic. How then would God respond to Uganda’s prayers alongside exaltation of science? Besides, the contextual meaning of the text demands for national repentance just like God required Ancient Israel to repent as a nation. God’s promise to secure Israel’s deliverance was only when there was national repentance (Hill, 2003). This is contrary to Christian attitude in Uganda which exalts the clergy, Born Again pastors and prophets as the only righteous, capable of achieving repentance on national behalf. In the second text, the idea is that in the time of plagues, God has a preferential treatment for those who trust in him. As is evident, just like “He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous” (Matthew 5:45), so it is with COVID-19; it is killing both the righteous and the unrighteous. For example, the COVID-19 case of an eight months’ baby from Iganga District of Uganda, along with its adult parents, is a contradiction to the notion of preferential treatment. The biblical text would find it difficult to account for the baby’s infection, considered sinless. In the same vein, since African Christian thinkers postulated that the COVID-19 was a result of the sinfulness of western countries, then the good but angered God would not have allowed the disease to attack his obedient Christians in Africa. The indiscriminate nature of COVID-19 raises the question of theodicy, as it was with the Black Death. Some Christian scholars attribute the death of children and other innocent victims to pandemics for their failure to honour their parents, or conversely, by their death being a punishment for the sins of their parents (Stearns, 2009).

However, in Numbers 16:22, Moses and Aaron protested God’s anger over the entire community for the sins committed by individuals. After the contestation, God restricted the punishment to only those who had committed sin. This further raises the question of intercession, as to why God reverses his anger upon the righteous only after petitions are made to him by those he trusts. In Uganda’s context, it meant that the country needed to have a distinguished Moses and Aaron, upon whom God has breathed to intercede. In a society with

thousands of clergy and pastors, each claiming to have been ‘called by God’, yet engaged in charlatan acts, having that righteous person to intercede for the nation would be a challenge. What is important here, however, is neither God’s action of reversal nor the righteousness of the petitioners but the prayers and petitions that enable the righteous to overcome the pandemic. In an interview with another Anglican priest, he said thus:

2 Chronicles 7:14 is being quoted and also Isaiah to say Coronavirus is as a result of sin and God’s anger. I don’t believe so. Yet the source of COVID-19 is an atheist country. I would call it a biological weapon but not the good God spanking through coronavirus (E. Mateeka, personal interview, March 31, 2020).

The statement above reveals that some Christians are persuaded by an ideology which is a mix of theology and conspiracy theories. The ideology that COVID-19 comes from the good God as a punishment upon „his people” is not comprehensible to those who believe in science. The disease emerged from the Chinese town of Wuhan; yet, China is known to be a non-Christian country. Therefore, the “Chinese people of Wuhan” cannot be a people of the Christian God. It would, therefore, be difficult to understand how the Christian God would bring punishment upon a people who do not have a relationship with him. However, to the proponents of the theology of “human sin and destruction”, over time God uses “non-believers” to bring destruction upon those who have abandoned his ways. Two vivid examples come out here. First, is in 2 Kings 17:1-23, when the God of Israel caused the Assyrian Emperor to attack and conquer Samaria. As Israelites were then taken to Assyria as prisoners of war, Assyrians got resettled in the Israelites’ vibrant city of Samaria. This was because the Israelites (God’s people) had sinned against their God. The other is in 2 Kings 24:1 to 25:1-21, when God caused the “unbelieving” Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, to destroy Jerusalem and eventually exiled the Israelites in Babylon for about seventy years. God brought this disaster upon Judah and Jerusalem because of the sinfulness of their king, Zedekiah.

The argument here is that whereas the COVID-19 might have begun from what the Christian tradition call an atheist country of China, God’s target was the Christian countries of Europe, America and Africa who, by the fourth month of the pandemic, had registered worst records of the Corona virus at a time when China was steadily recovering. This would account for the bigger number of COVID-19 cases registered by the 24th April, 2020, in the largely Christian countries of: Spain (213,024), Italy (189,973), France (159,460), Germany (153,129), United Kingdom (139,246) and the United States (869,170), in comparison to China with 83,884 cases (Johns Hopkins University, 2020; Worldometers, 2020). This ideology, however, fails to account for an equally worse COVID-19 scenario in a largely Muslim dominated country of Iran with 87,026

cases (Johns Hopkins University, 2020). It, however, should be noted that whereas God used Assyria and Babylon to punish the Israelites for their sinfulness, he was neither at peace with the Assyrians nor Babylonians. This could account for the initial suffering of the Chinese from COVID-19 for their refusal to accept Christianity, yet he used them as a weapon against the Christian nations.

The above theology was strengthened by conspiracy theories ranging from a calculation of the distances between Wuhan, where COVID-19 began, and other cities that were ravaged by the virus. The belief that some populated cities within China were not very much affected by COVID-19 as countries thousands of kilometres away from Wuhan pointed to a calculated plan by China to produce a virus that would destroy much of Europe and America. In some circumstances, theological conspiracists denied the existence of COVID-19 as a natural disease caused by either God or Satan but a biological warfare between China and America. These theologians argued that whereas prayers were a necessity in times of disasters like the COVID-19, the call for prayers could be misdirected to a wrong enemy, the disease. What needed to be prayed for was an end of the biological war between China and America. For many Ugandans, COVID-19 was not a black man's disease but for the Asians and Whites. No wonder, early responses to the disease manifested in popular culture described it as a 'Chinese disease'. Yet others argued that COVID-19 was for the affluent and those who travelled most often to countries outside of Africa. Among the proponents of this theological conspiracy were Apostle Dr Joseph Serwadda, Rev. Emmanuel Mateeka and a Nigerian Born Again pastor, Apostle Suleiman Johnson of Omega Fire Ministries. In a televised programme, Apostle Dr. Joseph Serwadda argued:

The COVID-19 pandemic is not a disease but a chemical or biological warfare between China and America. This situation does not call for prayers against the disease but prayers against a war between the two countries for which Uganda is just an unintended casualty. People are praying for different things and leaving the real issue of warfare between America and China. This is because Beijing, despite its proximity to Wuhan, has lost very few people to the virus compared to countries thousands of miles away from China (Combating COVID-19. Dream TV, 2020, March 30 at 3:00pm).

Arguments by theological conspiracists were ingrained in the theory of the "new world order" which, according to them, takes people away from God since science is taking over the world. They reasoned that the COVID-19 was part of the new world order project championed by China to overtake and outcompete America in trade, politics, science and technology. The COVID-19 was an intentional creation of China as part of the anti-Christ. The measure to ban public gatherings, to reduce and contain the virus was

targeted at disrupting the believers from gathering to pray because they knew when believers gather together to pray, their plans and agenda would end up in futility. Theological conspiracists called for defiance to such measures as prayers of the saints would stop those mischievous plans.

Although it is usual for scholarly works to downplay conspiracy theories, such beliefs should not be ignored because they can have underlying implications during an epidemic, including undermining public trust in preventive measures (Smallman, 2015). There has been renewed interest in analysing consequences of such conspiracy theories with regard to COVID-19. For example, Bavel et al. (in press) have argued that belief in conspiracy theories has been linked to vaccine hesitancy, climate denial, extremist political views and prejudice. COVID-19 conspiracy theories may be similarly problematic. For instance, people who believe that alternative remedies can help them fight off the virus may be less likely to follow health officials' advice and instead opt for less effective (at best) or lethal (at worst) alternatives. Conspiracy beliefs may also fuel hostility towards groups seen as accessories to the virus. The attribution of the disease to Chinese produced a culture of stigma against the Chinese working majorly in the manufacturing and construction industry. They also produce complacency to the pandemic; especially, if the belief is propagated by religious clerics who are trusted by the population. Although combating conspiracy theories remains a challenge, some evidence suggests that giving people factual information prior to exposure to conspiracy theories can reduce conspiracy theory beliefs.

The COVID-19 pandemic in Uganda rejuvenated the debate on prophecy, miracles and healing power. This argument was between Christian apologists on one hand and Christian skeptics and nominalists on the other. Days before Uganda registered the first COVID-19 case, Christian apologists had prophesied that Uganda was to be spared by God from this disease. Pastor Robert Kayanja had prophesied that this disease would never reach Uganda, just as God had restricted the locusts' invasion to some parts of the country (Bigeye, 2020). In a YouTube video, Prophet Isaiah Mbuga of Christ's Heart Ministries International claimed to have received a revelation a few years ago about COVID-19 pandemic that would put the whole world on tension (Mbuga, 2020). In another YouTube video, Prophet Elvis Mbonye of Zoe Ministries claimed to have been alerted by God that the COVID-19 would not spread to Uganda, but he hesitated to release the prophecy (Celebrity talk UG, 2020). Followers of Prophet Elvis Mbonye had earlier advised the COVID-19 hard hit country of China to bow at the feet of this prophet to have the disease wiped away. Christian apologists had convinced their followers that Born-Again Christians would be spared of the disease because of their faith in God. Both classical and neo- Pentecostal churches are popularly known for, among other things, their focus on

miracle performance in the name of Jesus. For these churches, miracle performance and prophecy are the yardsticks of a pastor's anointing. These two are a foundation of Pentecostal churches since they are a manifestation of God's presence through exercise of these spiritual gifts. Short of the ability to predict the future or perform miracles is a symptom of either lack of the Holy Spirit, or falsity.

However, the pre-COVID-19 prophetic utterances did not materialise hence creating a paradoxical experience. Barely two weeks after Pastor Robert Kayanja's prophecy, Uganda recorded its first COVID-19 case (The Independent, 2020). This relates to Jeremiah 23:16-17 which admonishes people not to listen to prophets who fill them with false hopes, telling them what they have imagined rather than what God has said. The prophetic claims of Elvis Mbonye to have been alerted by God a year earlier about the pandemic and his conspicuous silence was not in tandem with Israelite prophetic traditions for which Christians are heirs. A prophet's silence about God's word ignited wrath upon him. Prophet Jeremiah is such an example, and he makes it clear that God makes it impossible for his prophet to withhold his word. Jeremiah 20:9 says;

But if I say, "I will not mention his word or speak anymore in his name," his word is in my heart like a fire, a fire shut up in my bones. I am weary of holding it in; indeed, I cannot (NIV).

Commentaries on this text put Prophet Elvis Mbonye's prophetic claim into contention. Guzik (2018) of the Enduring Word Bible Commentary holds the impossibility of denying God's call and that God's word is not only irreversible but also irrepressible. He also argues that from Jeremiah's experience, attempt to refuse to speak God's word brings a lot more suffering to the bearer of the message. Thus, to find release from suffering in silence was impossible for such silence became more intolerable than suffering. Adam Clarke Commentary complements the above interpretation stating that the strongly raging fire meant that Jeremiah was obliged to deliver God's message in order to get rid of the tortures which he felt from suppressing the solemn message God had given him (Clarke, 2020). It is dangerous to refuse to go when called as it is to run without a call (Adam, 2020). Jeremiah 20:9 cannot be read in isolation from verses 7 and 8. Verse 7 speaks of God deceiving Jeremiah; while in verse 8 he complains about speaking only violence and destruction. Albeit his dislike to proclaim doom, he is compelled to speak anyway (W. Kuloba, personal interview, April 19, 2020). The impossibility to withhold God's message is made clearer in Jeremiah 23:22, which says:

If they had known my secret thoughts, then they could have proclaimed my message to my people and could have made them give up the evil lives they live and the wicked things they do.

As recorded in Jeremiah 23:28, God says that the prophet who hears his message should proclaim that message faithfully. To some other people, it would be important to understand why Prophet Elvis Mbonye would withhold the word from God, given the circumstances at the time (W. Kuloba, personal interview, April 19, 2020). Granted that he received the COVID-19 prophecy, a message of destruction, the prophet could have intended avoiding disorienting his blossoming ministry of mainly young professional followers who were at the beginning of their careers. Therefore, since prophetic utterances carried an effect on both the carrier of the message and recipients but not God (the source), then withholding the message would be meant to please the audience and also have a safe haven for the prophet. It is also a possibility that Prophet Elvis Mbonye could have weighed the social impact that his utterance could enlist in the event that COVID-19 did not happen. His choice to keep quiet could have been influenced by non-fulfilment of prophetic utterances by a contemporary prophet, Pastor Robert Kayanja of the Miracle Centre Cathedral-Rubaga. On the run towards the 2006 Uganda Presidential elections, Pastor Robert Kayanja had prophesied that out of the five presidential candidates, one of them would die as two would pull out of the presidential race thereby having the winner at 61% votes (Wallis, 2006; Ruteikara, 2006; Nakagwa, 2006). There is also a possibility that claims by Prophet Elvis Mbonye aimed to create an impression that such a phenomenal disease could not have eluded his prophetic eye. The silence of Prophet Elvis Mbonye and his contemporaries raises questions about their own credibility as God's prophets.

Alternatively, non-fulfillment of pre COVID-19 prophecies led to an evolution of prophetic messages into messages of healing and deliverance. For example, Apostle Grace Lubega of Phaneroo ministries proclaimed miraculous healing upon COVID-19 victims in Uganda.

Referencing Acts 10:38; Isaiah 26:3, Apostle Grace Lubega believed that the world was going to hear supernatural healing of the Christian God (Sseruyigo, 2020). The COVID-19 ravage in the country put the belief in prophecy, miracles and healing into question. In the year 2017, in a YouTube preaching, Pastor Isaiah Mbuga had prophesied that the disease that would come by the end of 2019 or thereabout would devastate only the 'non-born-again' Christians (Mbuga, 2020). However, news of eleven members of Watoto Church, majority of whom children coming from a Christian ministry work in the United Kingdom and Canada, challenged the religious exclusiveness that postulated non-believers as the only victims to the virus (P. Sserubidde, personal interview, April 6, 2020). The unfulfilled prophecies about the COVID-19 provided an opportunity for skeptics of Born-Again pastors to question their authenticity. This exposed the religious charlatanism that was prevalent among Born Again pastors in the country.

Social critics and commentators challenged the

self-proclaimed miracle performing and healing pastors to move to the COVID-19 treatment hospitals of Entebbe and Mulago to heal the patients (URN, 2020b). At the same time, they questioned the conspicuous silence of maverick city pastors whose Christian based televisions broadcast followers who get „healed“ of HIV and cancer in their churches. The conduct and character exhibited, as well as the words spoken about COVID-19 by the Born-Again pastors mentioned above need to be analysed in line with Jeremiah 23:16-32. Jeremiah warned the people of Israel against prophets who provide false hope, proclaiming that all will be well with them despite the disasters and pandemics around them. These kinds of prophets claim to have God's message which they use to soothe the wicked, yet God's anger will surely fall upon them. These texts portray that Born-Again pastors who claimed to have heard God's word about COVID-19 before it struck could be a figment of their minds, and at best, personal dreams because God's word cannot be withheld from the intended recipients.

However, the panic and fear with which Christians responded to the pandemic may account for their silence. It is also true that government directives and restrictions put on the religious sector could have, in one way or the other, made these pastors impotent. There was fear for state reprisal to anyone who made statements contrary to the government pandemic response. This was witnessed in the arrest and imprisonment of Pastor Augustine Yiga of the Revival Christian church Kawaala when he boldly came out to contest the existence of the COVID-19 in Uganda. All these could have denied the pastors space to exercise their spiritual gift of prophecy and healing. None the less, the unfulfilled prophecies, the challenge to religious exclusiveness, exposure of religious charlatans in pastors, the total silence of healing prophets, and denial of space to the healing prophets amidst the COVID-19 pandemic could have indicated that the pandemic was not a spiritual problem worthy of a spiritual solution. God has created human beings with the capacity to find possible cure. It is a mistake to think that medicine is not God's healing power intended to heal the bodies of his sick people.

African traditional religious belief system

African Traditional theological attitude towards the COVID-19 is analyzed based on the responses of diviners, traditional healers and cultural institutions. These are the most visible institutions through which African traditional religiosity is manifested. Two African traditional belief systems were studied; one is Tondism faith from southern Uganda, predominantly practised by the Bantu societies of Buganda, Busoga, Bunyoro and Ankole-Kigezi, and another from the north, practised by the Acholi cultural society. However, unlike Christianity and Islam with unified codes of faith and doctrines, African traditional religious

belief systems differ from one society to another. Also, African traditional religious emphasis on ritual rather than doctrines translates into different ways and activities for different cultural societies. According to Tondism faith in Uganda, the supreme god named *Katonda* is responsible for sending the COVID-19 upon humanity. Pandemics have been the way of *Katonda* whenever he wishes to express his displeasure with actions of humankind. Pandemics are not new, only that each time *Katonda* decides to send one, it manifests in different forms (J. A. Lubowa, personal interview, April 21, 2020). Tondism faith disagrees with conspiracy theologians who believe that the COVID-19 is a manifestation of a biological warfare between China and the United States. Conspiracists were suggesting that COVID-19 could have been a human error. Tondism believes that COVID-19 is not connected to human science, though *Katonda* uses humans to have his will fulfilled. Whenever *Katonda* wants to punish humankind, he does so through his creation, including human beings, making it believable to be the work of human beings. This faith believes that COVID-19 is one of God's creations.

Tondism faith attributes the cause of COVID-19 to humankind's disregard of nature and culture. Nature and culture are the epitomic manifestation of *Katonda's* being. Antagonism with nature and one's culture is a contestation of *Katonda's* being and his existence. On one hand, whenever people forsake „nature“, also called *obutonde*, many problems arise. For example, the origin of COVID-19 is attributed to eating of wild game meat at a Wuhan market in China. Hunting wild animals for food amounts to destruction of nature. On the other hand, *Katonda* is displeased with humankind's attempt to forsake culture. This is manifested by abandonment of African traditional religious beliefs, while adopting Christianity and Islam; replacement of *Katonda* and African spirits and mediums with the Christian Jesus and Islam's Prophet Muhammad as divine intermediaries; denigrating African cultures in favour of western colonial cultures; and accepting western forms of education in disfavour of African cultural education.

According to this faith, China, Europe and USA are more affected with COVID-19 because they have done a lot of injustice to other races of the world. For example, through colonialism, they did away with African forms of worship and brought a politically inclined religion. They also removed the word „*Katonda*“ and instituted it with the Christian god, Jesus. This is in addition to contesting *Katonda's* power. Despite the fact that *Katonda* created human beings differently, proving that each race and cultural society have a special way to worship him with different names for example; *Katonda* (Buganda), *Imana* (Rwanda), *Ruhanga* (Ankole-Kigezi), *Kibumba* (Busoga) interalia, the whites have taken African societies away from proper worship of their God. Therefore, the big punishments have to begin with the whites then Africans later. Through COVID-19, God *demonstrates* his anger

upon those who disorganise his plans for humanity in diversity. This theology implies that COVID-19 would then spare the African race. However, the fewer COVID-19 cases in Africa is a demonstration that neither Africans nor non-Africans have been righteous enough in the sight of *Katonda*. Africans have also strayed from their traditional faith and culture, following colonial religions undeservedly. Despite the anger of *Katonda*, Tondism faith prescribes prayer as the solution to COVID-19. The followers got engaged in prayers ever since the disease struck. The prayers were both at individual and institutional level. Ban on public gatherings made believers to establish prayer sites, also called *ebiyoto*, in their homes to plead for *Katonda's* mercy against the COVID-19. *Katonda* revealed to them his requirement of a sheep as a burnt offering. Since then, they held prayer vigils and sacrificial rituals of sheep and cows in all the most sacred places of the faith countrywide. The rituals started at Walusinsi, a prayer mountain in Luweero district (Bulemeezi in Kikyusa subcounty), but also believed to be the origin of all humanity. Similar rituals were made at Kireku and Milinze in Bulemeezi as well as at Nnyizze near Kalagala falls on River Nile (Kayunga district). Other places included Birunga in Rwanda (likely the Virunga mountain ranges also called Mountain Mufumbiro in Kisoro), at the source of River Kagera, Mabeere ga Nnyinamwiru in Fort Portal, and finally at Nakayima tree in Mubende district. The sacrificial rituals were intended to avert the anger of *Katonda*. Although anger reversal is gradual, it certainly comes to fruitfulness. The prayer sessions portrayed the *Katonda's* universal character, as these were held in different parts of the country. Most believers claimed that *Katonda* had already responded to their prayers. One of the leaders of this faith had this to say:

We have got a response from Katonda, saying that if we continue doing what he has instructed us to do, our people are not going to be destroyed by coronavirus. Katonda is ready to reduce on his anger upon humanity and for all humanity not only for Ugandans. Because when we pray, we are praying for the whole world not Uganda alone (Ssaabakabona (High Priest), personal interview, April 21, 2020).

The above claim by the *Ssaabakabona* (High Priest) demonstrates the agility of Tondism god in times of disasters. *Katonda* is quick to respond to the pleas of his believers, not allowing them to suffer any more, once they do his will. He is a responsive god to the plight of those who come in his sight. Secondly, *Katonda's* will is not restricted to those who worship him; as his forgiveness and eventual end of the disease benefits the whole world including the Chinese, Europeans and Americans, in spite of having a different theological orientation. It further portrays the universality of *Katonda's* healing powers. This theological thinking differs from the religious exclusiveness and uncertain response from the supreme being

common with monotheistic religions of Christianity and Islam.

Tondism faith also attested to availability of a traditional medicine for COVID-19. *Katonda cannot* bring a disease without a cure. The argument is that *Katonda* gives human beings power to find cure for all diseases, including COVID-19. However, the availability of medicine does not replace the unceasing prayers to *Katonda*. The prayers facilitate *Katonda's* revelation of the medicine as human effort and wisdom do not account for the discovery of the medicine, but *Katonda* makes it readily available as he wishes. The medicine is part of the sacred knowledge that *Katonda* or his agents give to those he chooses. Therefore, the medicine is not a scientific discovery but of a divine revelation.

Apart from the Tondism faith prominently in Busoga, Buganda and western Uganda, there arose distinct responses from the Luo community of the Acholi in the north of the country. The Acholi cultural community invoked their longtime practice of *ryemo gemo*, that is, the chasing of evil spirits that cause pandemics. Literally, *ryemo* means exorcism and *gemo* means bad or evil spirit. Therefore, the Luo phrase '*ryemo gemo*' means 'exorcism of bad spirit'. *Ryemo gemo*, the chasing or exorcism of bad spirits that cause pandemics, is part of the religious belief system of the Acholi. The Acholi believe that *gemo*, or bad spirit, comes suddenly and causes a mysterious illness and death in many people within a very short period of time, typical of COVID-19 with neither cure nor vaccine. *Gemo* appears because of lack of respect to the gods. It is also believed that lack of respect for habitats of the gods like hills, mountains and water bodies could cause *gemo*. This belief translates into a practice that requires natives to make a communal loud voice before daybreak or in the late evening. This involves the banging of jerry cans, pots, pans, drums and any other object capable of producing noise in order to chase away the bad spirit (Mao, 2020)

To the Acholi, COVID-19 was the *gemo*, a bad spirit, which had invaded their community. Contrary to other religious faiths, the traditional belief system of the Acholi recognises bad spirit but not the good God as the source of COVID-19. COVID-19 could be eliminated by chasing this bad spirit (*gemo*) from the land through a ritual called *ryemo gemo*. This had to be done at night to get the bad spirit unawares. Communal loud noise would chase away COVID-19. This Acholi belief system demonstrates that dealing with COVID-19 was a communal task, involving everybody, but not selected technocrats as was being done by government. The Acholi community accomplished this ritual in a desperate attempt to scare away COVID-19 (Oketch, 2020). To the Acholi, there are no compromises with *gemo*, and therefore, no need to humble themselves, just like the Christians.

The appearance of *gemo* is not only a reminder about the unhappiness of the gods, but also the need for reconciliation with the spiritual after the COVID-19 has been exorcised from the community. Whereas there are no

pleadings and intercessions to the good god to have the evil spirit out of the land, a latent theology is ripe where the good god(s) of Acholi withdraws to let the bad spirit of COVID-19 ravage the community. Such is an expression of displeasure with the living. For both Tondism faith and *ryemo gemo* practice, disease is analysed as a result of profaning the gods, yet healing is constructed as a product of appeasement of the gods (Isiko, 2019b).

Ryemo gemo put the Acholi cultural leaders and politicians on a collision course with the State. The state objected to the practice arguing that it could promote complacency among the people, yet it was also in contradiction with science. The threat to have the cultural leaders arrested for allowing this practice did not deter the Acholi community from fulfilling the ritual (Oketch, 2020). However, some scholars have argued for the complementarity of science and religion. Science and religion are neither enemies nor are they in competition with each other. There is nothing wrong with people praying and casting out the demons of disease if that is how they understand it, even as they wash hands, self-isolate, self-quarantine and maintain social distance as advised by science and medical practitioners. Faith and science should not be in contradiction with each other (Parsitau, 2020).

Despite the arguments against *ryemo gemo*, traditional healing traditions are rooted in medical anthropological studies and practices. Effective public health measures against pandemics require cultural considerations of communities in which they occur (Bohret, 2018). Using *ryemo gemo*, the Acholi had successfully treated sicknesses before the importation of western medicine. *Ryemo gemo* was based on profound scientific reasons not easily explained with modern science. The practice was thought to complement government's efforts of social distancing to curb the pandemic (Adong, 2020). Exorcism is a widespread religious practice, associated with Quranic healers, charismatic Born-Again Christians and traditional healers in Uganda. Carolyn Orbann, a health science professor at University of Missouri, argues that since humans are both biological and cultural beings, when a disease spreads through large parts of the world's population, human beings are likely to cope in both biological and cultural ways (How culture affects the spread of pandemics like COVID-19. fury.org). Disregarding *ryemo gemo* contradicted with World Health Organisation (WHO) guidelines for handling pandemics of this nature. WHO dictates that special attention must be given to the actual perception of the outbreak by the community, and in particular, specific cultural elements and local beliefs must be taken into account to ensure proper messages, confidence, and close cooperation of the community (Hewlett and Amola, 2003). The negative attitude towards *ryemo gemo* amidst the pandemic unravels the continued struggle between African traditional healing systems and western science complicated by the colonial programming of African minds to think that what is

western is superior to African forms of science. None the less, the tradition of *ryemo gemo* ought to be studied by the state to see how it could complement government's response to the pandemic.

Islam

Islamic theological responses to COVID-19 in Uganda are rooted in the teachings of the Quran and traditions of Prophet Muhammad. Through the Quran, we get to know Islamic explanatory model of epidemics. Islamic explanatory model attempts to explain the occurrence, cause and preventive measures of epidemics. In this subsection, analysis of the cause(s) and treatments of COVID-19 is made, as well as the preventive measures prescribed according to the Islamic faith. To the Muslims, pandemics like the COVID-19 emanate from Allah (M. Katuramu, personal interview, April 09, 2020). God is responsible for sending disasters and epidemics to humankind. All the good and bad originate from God. Muslims are admonished to accept God's wishes for humankind (M. Katuramu, personal interview, April 09, 2020). According to Islam, the COVID-19 is not an accident but an incident which was predetermined by God, years before it struck humankind. There are three outstanding responses that explain God's expression of anger through epidemics; God's resolve to make humanity realize his supremacy over the world through natural calamities beyond human control; Allah's attempt to test the faith of humanity; and finally, pandemics as a punitive measure to the disobedient.

In the first instance, God sends COVID-19 as a demonstration of his supremacy over the whole world. COVID-19 has made both the developing and powerful economies bow in defeat. Science has not helped, with no successful attempt to procure a vaccine. The disease has grossly affected countries of Europe, America and China, despite their sophisticated healthcare infrastructure. The superpowers have not succeeded in preventing the spread of an invisible coronavirus. The COVID-19 is a reminder to all human beings that they are weak. Regardless of humanity's social standing and financial position, all human beings are helpless (Koire, 2020). Weakness and helplessness of human beings amidst COVID-19 further demonstrate the unequivocal equality of humanity before God, the supreme leader, for the virus affects the rich and poor, the young and old, educated and the illiterate.

Apart from Allah's demonstration of his supremacy, pandemics are a test of human beings' faith in God. God planned to put humans in a state of fear, panic, famine, poverty, and incurable diseases to test their resilient faith (M. Katuramu, personal interview, April 9, 2020). In spite of the intentional yet undesirable incident Muslims are expected to return to Allah and his messenger for guidance. This is because for everything that happens in the life of a Muslim, Islam has a solution to it. Allah allows

trials and tribulations upon humanity to test whether humankind can stick or return to him as the ultimate guide. To explain this further, Koire (2020) quotes the Quran as follows:

“Do you think that you will enter paradise without such trials as came to those who passed away before you? They were afflicted with severe poverty and ailments and were so shaken that even the messenger and those who believed along with him said, „when will the help of Allah come? “ Yes! Certainly, the help of Allah is near!”

From the above assertions, the impression is that COVID-19 is part of the continuous trials that believing people undergo. Secondly, COVID-19 is just one of the several epidemics that God has been sending to humanity over the years. Thirdly, the saints in paradise experienced diseases of such a nature, but it was their endurance that made them able to have their way to paradise. Fourthly, panic experienced during pandemics like COVID-19 is a natural process which is experienced by humans, including those whom God has chosen. But above all, God's intervention is a matter of time. He surely comes to deliver those who have endured and trusted him during the pandemic. Therefore, Islam prescribes patience, endurance and unquestionable trust and faith in God, for these lure Allah to deliver one from pandemics.

Finally, pandemics are used as a punitive measure against the sinful. The sinful nature of humankind is responsible for epidemics like COVID-19 (A. Musoke, personal interview, 20th April, 2020). The sinful nature of China, the original epicentre of COVID-19, is demonstrated through murder of Muslims, with no democracy and freedom of worship. On the other hand, the United States, the second epicentre is accused of antagonising people all over the world, causing sufferings to millions of people in Muslim countries through unjustified wars. This is accompanied by the irreligiosity of European countries, who have abandoned God. This argument is based on the increasing numbers of COVID-19 victims in China, United States and Europe against the relatively smaller numbers of victims in African countries. However, when epidemics strike, they also affect the righteous, allowing a relatively small percentage of them to suffer along with the sinful so that the righteous do not take God for granted and lapse into sinfulness.

Despite the predetermined occurrence of COVID-19, Islamic theology provides for preventive measures against pandemics. Muslims are taught to take precautionary steps to ensure that they neither get infected nor infect others with COVID-19. Precautionary measures are drawn from the traditions of the Prophet. The unravelling of COVID-19 pandemic control practices like social distancing, self-isolation and the obsession with hygienic practices are inherent Islamic practices (Khan, 2020). Therefore, the directives of government and control measures of the Ministry of Health do not, in any way,

contradict with Islamic belief and practice. Khan has identified five major areas which Prophet Muhammad emphasized on how Muslims should conduct themselves when faced with infectious diseases like COVID-19. These are travel bans and quarantine, social distancing and isolation, observing hygiene, seeking medical treatment, and free medical treatment. With regard to observance of hygiene, Islam teaches that cleanliness is part of faith. Muslims wash their hands repeatedly five times a day, before any of the five obligatory daily prayers. The tradition of Jami'al-Tirmidh reports that when the Prophet would sneeze, he would cover his face and muffle the sneeze effectively containing the spread of airborne bacteria and viruses (Khan, 2020). Ministry of Health guidelines including; regular washing of hands, use of handkerchiefs to sneeze and immediate disposal, and wearing of face masks to control virus transmission are a true reflection of a practising Muslim.

Prophet Muhammad prescribed quarantine and travel bans as preventive measures some 1400 years ago. He gave instructions on what to do if there was an outbreak of an infectious disease. Abdal-Rahman Ibn Awf said: I heard the messenger of Allah (PBUH) say, “If you hear that the plague is in the land, do not go there, and if it breaks out in a land where you are, do not leave, fleeing from it.” This means that not proceeding into a land with an epidemic would secure one from likely infection. It would also ensure that the disease does not spread to other areas if one left under uncertainty of infection. This Islamic principle exactly refers to the modern quarantine being practised during the COVID-19. This however, means that the pandemic will certainly affect both the faithful and sinners since they would be in the same land affected by the infectious disease (H. Male, personal interview, March 15, 2020). Writing about the Black Death of the 14th century, Dols (1979) stated that the Islamic argument is that whereas pandemics affect both the faithful and infidels, the purposes for which God unleashes the pandemic to both are different. For the faithful, it was looked at as martyrdom but punishment for the infidels.

Social distancing is cited among the traditions of Prophet Muhammad. He distanced himself from a leprous man, granting his pledge and wishes without touching him. The prophet admonished his followers to keep a health community, by isolating sick persons from healthy ones (Khan, 2020). This teaching relates to the preventive measures of non- interaction to avoid chances of infection. The Ministry of Health has encouraged self-isolation of COVID-19 infected persons and their contacts. This is in addition to institutional quarantine and isolated centres for treatment of COVID-19 patients away from the rest of patients with other ailments. The prophet further encouraged Muslims to seek treatment alongside prayer. Abu Dawud teaches that the Prophet Muhammad said: “Make use of medical treatment, for Allah has not made a disease without appointing a remedy for it, with the exception of one disease, namely old age” (Rasool, 2020).

For all the three religious traditions, prayer was not only the denominator but also the ultimate psycho-social approach believed to be effective against COVID-19 pandemic in Uganda. The State organised national prayers that brought religious leaders from the major religious denominations in the country, including Muslims, Anglican Church of Uganda, Roman Catholic Church, Orthodox Church in Uganda, Seventh Adventist Church, as well as selected Born-Again pastors in Kampala. The Minister for Health proposed a combination of God and science to fight the disease. She emphasised that prayers, wisdom and science originate from God. She said the following words:

If all of us in Uganda could fall on our knees and ask for forgiveness, I am very sure that God will hear from heaven, forgive us and heal our land, and will be protected from COVID-19. So, for us in the Ministry of Health, we are combining both; we pray and we also have scientists to guide us on the response. In any case, the wisdom that the scientists are using is given to them by God so you cannot delink God from COVID-19 neither can you delink God from the response. He is the ultimate authority in this response. So, I appeal to Ugandans to continue praying (Jane Ruth Aceng, Minister for Health (Televised address on COVID-19. NBS Television, April 2, 2020. Kampala).

The national prayers signified the high level of religiosity within the socio-political dispensation of the country. The religious attitude of the Minister indicates the inextricable relationship between COVID-19 and the spiritual world. It also points to human weaknesses, omissions and commissions bringing displeasure to the spiritual, thereby allowing the disease to ravage humanity. It is therefore, the responsibility of humans to approach the spiritual in order to have a reversal of the situation to normalcy. In order to have, it will take the mercy of the spiritual to reveal a cure or vaccine of COVID-19 to humanity through science. This then makes the spiritual squarely linked to the source of the virus, yet its end cannot be realized without divine intervention.

Although Uganda has a significant percentage of 1.7% followers of African traditional religious beliefs, they were excluded from ecumenical prayers for national intercession against the pandemic. This was in addition to outright condemnation of *ryemo gemo*, a form of exorcism among the Acholi cultural community. Tondism faith leaders were only granted permission to perform their rituals away from public sight at their various ritual sites countrywide. This provides an idea about the nature of a supreme being that Ugandan politicians thought could avert the COVID-19 pandemic. It also indicates the unending colonial mentality towards African religiosity, as inferior to that of the outsiders. On one hand, it was argued that national prayers were a deliberate attempt by both the government and religious leaders to divert the already panicked population into a semblance of normalcy. Prayers would

help restore hope in a population that was scared of the capacity of government to handle the pandemic amidst an ailing healthcare infrastructure. On the other hand, religious leaders, who had made unfulfilled prophecies about COVID-19 and were also unable to deploy their miracle healing powers over COVID-19 patients could no longer convince an already desperate population that there was hope in believing in the supreme being.

Practical interventions of religious institutions

Prayers and divine interventions brought hope among the people. The pandemic, however, brought about practical needs at both individual and community levels which were to be met if the disease was to be defeated. Apart from the bodily harm of the disease, society had been affected economically and mentally, necessitating a holistic approach to the pandemic. The pandemic presented an opportunity for churches to fill the glaring gaps and practically serve the last and the least in a manner that reveals who a Christ like character. It was an opportunity for the church to put its egos aside and creatively heed Jesus' instructions to feed the flock. Places of worship were to be converted into temporary hospitals or food pantries where those in need could obtain treatment and essential goods. The church could use the funds of those who had faithfully donated to it over the years to buy ventilators and personal protective gears for the hospitals and health workers at the frontline. This could as well be an opportunity for the church to purchase hygiene products and distribute them to those who were in isolation and quarantine. In such a crisis, this was expected to be the mandate of the church (Niringiye, 2020). Islamic ideology emphasises free medical care and financial assistance during a pandemic as crucial elements in controlling the spread of the disease (Khan, 2020). Assured supply of essential goods enables citizens to abide by sanctions required to prevent the disease. For African traditional religiosity, generosity to the wider community and helping afflicted neighbours is a virtue. There was agreement among interviewed respondents that religious institutions needed to step up and attend to the practical needs of affected followers beyond supplications. In the New Vision editorial, it was written:

But in the trying moment, some of the faithful need much more than prayer since many families are not in position to put food on the table. There may be families of widows, orphans, beggars or just ordinary people in our parishes who depend on an active economy to raise the food. The government does not have the structures to deliver welfare. But the churches, because they are in the community, are better placed to step in (New Vision Editorial, March 31, 2020).

Here, analysis is made of the contributions that were made by religious bodies to the fight against COVID-19. Strengths

and gaps in these practical interventions are identified. There were both early and later responses to the pandemic; by especially Christian and Islamic establishments. The early interventions included immediate reactions after the lockdown whereas the later responses involved actions of religious bodies, a month after lockdown. There was popular opinion that religious institutions had not done enough during the early response phase, with the exception of encouraging followers to live by the standard operating procedures of COVID-19. They failed to attend to practical needs of the most vulnerable during COVID-19 (L. Namatende, personal interview, March 30, 2020).

Early phase religious responses to COVID-19 did not meet public expectations. For example, whereas the Roman Catholic Church, Anglican Church and Muslim community in Uganda own some of the best hospitals in the country, none ever volunteered to provide isolation and treatment centres for COVID-19 patients although later, the Roman Catholic hospital of Lacor in Gulu expressed readiness to work with government to deal with the COVID-19. Instead, religious institutions were much more concerned with how religious ministers would survive during the lockdown. One of the interviewee was concerned with churches continued stance to provide mobile money numbers for their congregation to send tithes and offerings, oblivious that a great majority of the congregation were not working and instead needed their help (J. Namusoke, personal interview, March 30, 2020). These kinds of criticisms did not spare cultural institutions, especially the more powerful Kingdoms of Buganda, Busoga, Toro and Bunyoro. Public argument was that cultural institutions were very wealthy, capable enough to complement government response to the disease.

Therefore, in the initial stages of the lockdown, there was noticeable lip service from religious and cultural institutions. The church and Muslim community took a backstage, possibly, because of the unconventional mechanisms that had been taken by government to combat COVID-19. Religious institutions' attitude of passivity, inactivity, distance or mute indifference in the face of such a monumental catastrophe was driven by thinking that it was an absolute responsibility of the state. The same attitude had been exhibited by African religious leaders during the initial stages of the Aids pandemic (Oluduro, 2010). Religious leaders, tend to hold a latent ideology that it is a right for them to receive from the believers but not an obligation to share with the congregants. The thinking that religious faiths are just spiritual entities to be concerned with only the spiritual needs of the people is strong among African Christian and Islamic clerics. This passive early response is also attributed to the dependence syndrome of cultural, African Christian and Islamic institutions. Most churches in Uganda, especially the numerous neo-Pentecostal ones, survive on donations from powerful American churches. Most mosques in Uganda have been built by Muslim

philanthropists. African Christian pastoral activities are limited to visiting and praying for afflicted believers, but not meeting their practical needs. This religious passivity, notwithstanding poverty and dependence is not in tandem with the local financial church collections in terms of tithes and offertories. Some African scholars like Parsitau (2020) have argued against neo-Pentecostal churches' attitude stating how church spaces in Africa are not about people but church founders who use the tithes and offerings to enrich themselves for a luxurious lifestyle. Such churches do not subscribe to a people centred theology or a gospel of social justice.

Later, active religious response to COVID-19 pandemic was influenced by the President's call to companies and business people to donate to the State. The State was in dire need of finances to procure food for the vulnerable urban poor who had been taken away from work. The State also wanted vehicles to reach out to all COVID-19 patients and suspected cases in all corners of the country. The vehicles would also aid in the distribution of food to vulnerable Ugandans. Specific religious bodies heeded the President's call and began donating lots of money to the COVID-19 national response taskforce.

Some Christian ministries like the Robert Kayanja Ministries distributed food and other essentials to people in the slums, regardless of their religious affiliation. They used their influence to mobilise donations from believers. Food supplies and money was further received from House of Prayer Ministries International of Pastor Aloysius Busingo; Church of Uganda; Prophet Samuel Kakande of the Synagogue church of all nations Mulago; and Owobusobozi Bisaka, a cult leader from Kibaale district. Cultural institutions like Buganda, Busoga, and Bunyoro kingdoms donated food and money to the national response taskforce. Several individual Muslims, just like Christian business persons, donated generously to the taskforce. However, this later religious response attracted a lot of criticisms. Firstly, just a few of the numerous and thriving neo-Pentecostal churches in Kampala responded to the call to contribute. This is against the background that Born-Again churches in Kampala collect a lot of money on a daily basis from followers besides having several commercial enterprises that raise lots of profits.

The timing of the religious bodies' active response was suggestive that their contribution was populist having conceded to public pressure to help the needy. They also made donations at a time when there was a media highlight of companies that were donating, and therefore may have wanted public recognition. Moreover, it was a time when the President was making personal mention of individual contributions. The idea was not their deep concern for the suffering Ugandans, but a desire to reciprocate the government's tolerant stance for freedom of worship. Secondly, the churches did not get donations from what they had stocked over the years but appealed to well-wishers to donate for COVID-19 through the church. Some of the born-again churches that had been

accommodating believers for several months having prayer vigils chased them without any form of transport facilitation at the time when the government announced ban on public gatherings. This action did not tally with the same churches' gesture to donate for COVID-19 purposes. However, church leaders and Muslim clerics ably used the mass media to spread information about the COVID-19. The inter-religious council of Uganda (IRCU) helped in the interpretation of the COVID-19 guidelines in at least seven different local languages of Uganda so that the natives could understand them better.

Coping mechanisms by religious institutions against COVID-19

Places of worship have variant public programmes and rituals which call for public participation. In Uganda, religion is a public affair. Mainstream Christian denominations of Church of Uganda and Roman Catholic Church are so ritualistic that followers make it a point to attend Sunday congregational prayers, to pay tithe, offertory and partake in Holy Communion. Several born again churches hold daily overnight prayers with congregants camping at the churches for several days and sometimes months. The congregants are the major source of financial sustenance for these churches. Several of these religious institutions were taking care of vulnerable people like orphans and widows. Open air preaching especially among born again churches had become the order of the day with thousands of Christians gathered in one place. The closure of places of worship led to shortfalls in financial collections (G. Lubaale, personal interview, 1st April, 2020). Religious clerics could not find alternative sources of employment in such a short time to generate personal revenue. The lockdown led to loss of touch with parishioners. Some religious institutions were unable to meet their bills in addition to maintaining business entities like the radio and television stations. In a nutshell, religious institutions were challenged theologically and financially with much of their pastoral work coming to a standstill. The pandemic made it difficult for religious institutions to reach out to the flock. The religious voice was submerged in the wake of presidential directives to control COVID-19. In this subsection, an analysis of coping mechanisms adopted by religious institutions is made amidst the challenges identified above. The religious institutions adopted two coping mechanisms. These were; firstly, innovative ways of reaching out to the followers and secondly, adopting non-conventional ways of mobilizing financial resources from the flock.

The closure of places of worship and ban on congregational prayers made churches and mosques to use several media platforms like television to reach out to their congregations. Religious based media houses like Top Television, Top radio, Impact radio, Salt media and Salaam TV among others were more effectively used to

reach out to the believers. Some Born Again churches in Uganda own more than one radio station which made it easy for them to transmit the gospel to the followers during the shutdown. Churches without their own radio stations would buy telecasting time from established ones to allow them preaching time. It became usual for Muslim Jumah prayers to be performed and aired live on the major televisions of the country. Commercial media houses devoted much of Saturday and Sunday to provide telecasting space for Sabbath celebrations and Sunday services respectively for different churches in the city. Such services usually had less than ten people in the church audience, but believing that thousands were following the services on television. The concept of online church became rejuvenated in Uganda during the COVID-19 to a scale never seen before. The use of social media platforms alongside televisions and radios became very popular during the pandemic. Facebook live, YouTube and WhatsApp media became the most popularly used social media platforms for preaching. However, the village churches could not afford opportunities to conduct online churches due to lack of access to technology, internet and power supply. They were neither afforded chance to have their services on radio and television stations due to lack of financial resources to pay for telecast time. The village churches adopted the practice of family churches, involving prayers in the company of only family members.

To forestall the financial lapses caused by the shutdown, some religious leaders came up with innovative means of collecting tithe and offertory. Pastors and other religious clerics encouraged followers to use mobile money networks to send in their offering. The demand for offertory and tithes by the religious leaders was well crafted by all denominations that this occupied debate in the religious space during the initial response to the pandemic. Other religious clerics proposed to parishioners to use the traditional system of keeping tithe and offertories in a pot or box to be sent to the churches at the end of each month. Furthermore, others gave out their bank accounts for Christians to pay tithe and offertories through bank transfer. Others advised that though there was ban on public gatherings, Christians in their individual capacity could occasionally pass by the churches and pay their tithe and offertory.

Conclusion

Understanding the cultural and religious construction of disease is critical in designing effective preventive measures of pandemics. Religious ideologies and theologies determine community's response to pandemics. Religious pluralism in society calls for studying religious ideas of specific communities which demand modified approaches to control pandemics. Nonetheless, socio-political directives act as controls to religious extremism that proves detrimental to an effective pandemic control

programme. The COVID-19 fight in Uganda demonstrated that religion and its institutions are instrumental in mobilising citizens to abide by government programmes, especially public health programmes. The trust and hope that citizens have in religious clerics can be a blessing to society to control pandemics of this nature, yet if misused, it could be disastrous in a national fight against social and natural calamities. Therefore, whereas medical interventions are critical in the fight against disease, Uganda's scenario demonstrated that religion and its institutions can be the tranquillizer in the whole medical response to an epidemic. On the other hand, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic revolutionized the religious sector to a level never witnessed before. For example, the right to freedom of worship was determined and curtailed by a natural disaster rather than the State. COVID-19 pandemic challenged the relevance of some religious rituals and traditions. For example, the social distancing strategy employed to curb the spread of the virus meant that there would neither be hugging nor shaking of hands to wish brethren love and peace as it has always been customary during Anglican and Roman catholic church services. The theology behind communal prayers was challenged too, with a ban on Jumah and Sunday services. Extravagant church marriages could not be celebrated, with attendees restricted to less than ten people including the groom and the bride. The pandemic revolutionized worship in this country putting emphasis on online churches and social media preaching.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

The author has not declared any conflict of interests.

REFERENCES

- Abet T (2020). Minister warns traditional doctors over COVID-19 treatment. Daily Monitor. www.monitor.co.ug. Accessed 20-04-2020.
- Adong L (2020). Nwoyalei WA, Rahmani J, Mahabadi MA, Bandari DK (2020). Novel coronavirus (COVID-19) knowledge and perceptions: A survey on healthcare workers. *MedRxiv* [Preprint]. doi:10.2196/19160.
- Bigeye (2020). Coronavirus won't come to Uganda, says Pastor Kayanja. [bigeye.ug. https://bigeye/corona-virus-wont-come-to-uganda-says-pastor-kayanja/](https://bigeye/corona-virus-wont-come-to-uganda-says-pastor-kayanja/)
- Bohret I (2018). The Role of Culture in Response to Epidemics. *PGCert: Global Health Modul: Community Approaches to Health* (preprint). Doi: 10.13140/RG.2.2.30525.10721
- Bouso RS, Poles K, Serafim TS, Miranda MG (2011). Religious beliefs, illness and death: family's perspectives in illness experience. *Revista da Escola de Enfermagem da USP* 45(2):391-397. www.ee.usp.br/reeusp/
- Bouso RS, Serafim TS, Misko MD (2010). The Relationship Between Religion, Illness and Death in Life Histories of Family Members of Children with Life-Threatening Diseases. *Revista Latino-Americana de Enfermagem* 18(2):156-162. <https://doi.org/10.1590/S0104-11692010000200003>
- Bwire J (2020). Museveni orders closure of schools, suspends religious gatherings over coronavirus. Daily Monitor. <https://www.monitor.co.ug/News/National/Museveni-closes-schools-religiousgatherings-coronavirus/688334-5495888-srauuwz/index.html>.
- Celebrity talk UG (2020). Prophet Elvis Mbonye says he foresaw coronavirus. (YouTube video). <https://youtu.be/ndcDb0aUmal>.
- Clarke A (2020). Commentary on Jeremiah 20. The Adam Clarke commentary <https://www.studydrive.com/commentaries/acc/jeremiah-20.html>.18.32). Accessed 19-04-2020
- Collins JT (1974). Apocalyptic eschatology as the transcendence of death. *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 36(1):21-43. www.jstor.org/stable/43713642 Accessed on 04-04-2020.
- Cunningham A (2008). Epidemics, Pandemics, and the Doomsday Scenario. *Historically Speaking* 9(7):29-31.
- Dols M (1979). The Second Plague Pandemic and Its Recurrences in The Middle East:1347-1894. *Journal of The Economic and Social History of the Orient* 22(2):162-189. Doi: 10.2307/3631953
- Ducharme J (2020). World Health Organisation declares COVID-19 a, Pandemic": Here's what that Means. Time. <https://time.com/5791661/who-coronavirus-pandemic-delcaration/>. Accessed 27-04-2020.
- Guitelle V, Saeed A (2019). The Importance of culture in managing mental health response to pandemics. In Huremovic, D. (ed). *Psychiatry of Pandemics* pp. 55-64. Springer Nature. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-15346-5_5
- Guo YR, Cao QD, Hong ZS, Tan YY, Chen SD, Jin HJ, Yan Y (2020). The origin, transmission and clinical therapies on coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) outbreak—An update on the status. *Military Medical Research* 7(1):1-10. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40779-020-00240-0>
- Guzik D (2018). Jeremiah 20-Jeremiah in the Stocks. *Enduring word bible commentary*. enduringword.com. accessed 19-04-2020.
- Hewlett BS, Amola RP (2003). Cultural contexts of Ebola in Northern Uganda. *Emerging Infectious Diseases* 9(10):1242-1248. <https://dx.doi.org/10.3201/eid0910.020493>.
- Hill AE (2003). 1 and 2 Chronicles: NIV Application Commentary. NIV Application Commentary series.
- Isiko AP (2018). Gender roles in traditional healing practices in Busoga (Doctoral dissertation). Leiden University. Leiden
- Isiko AP (2019a). State Regulation of Religion in Uganda: Fears and Dilemmas of Born-Again churches. *Journal of African Studies and Development* 11(6):99-117. Doi: 10.5807/JASD2019.0551
- Isiko AP (2019b). The Nexus between Traditional Healing and Societal Organisation: Reflections on Busoga Society Socio-Cultural, Economic and Political Organisation. *Journal of Arts and Humanities* 8(8):71-88. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.18533/journal.v8i8.1693>.
- Johns Hopkins University (2020). COVID-19 Map. Johns Hopkins Coronavirus Resource center. coronavirus.jhu.edu
- Kaseje N (2020). Why Sub-Saharan Africa needs a unique response to COVID-19. *World Economic Forum*. www.weforum.org. Accessed 03.04.2020.
- Kelly H (2011). The Classical Definition of a Pandemic Is Not Elusive. *Bulletin of the World Health Organisation* 89(7):469-544. July 2011. Doi: 10.2471/BLT.11.088815
- Khan A (2020). Prophet Muhammad's Teachings regarding Pandemics. alhakam.org. accessed 10-04-2020.
- Koire H (2020). Coronavirus-an Islamic perspective. *New Vision*. www.newvision.co.ug. Accessed 20-04-2020).
- Male M (2020). President suspends all church services for thirty days over coronavirus. Uganda Christian news. <https://www.ugchristiannews.com/president-suspends-all-church-services-for-30-days-over-coronavirus/>
- Mao N (2020). What would Okot p'Bitek tell Museveni about „ryemo gemo”? Daily Monitor. www.monitor.co.ug. Accessed 06-04-2020).
- Mbogo S (2020). Catholic Priest arrested for celebrating mass. Daily Monitor. Retrieved from www.monitor.co.ug.
- Mbuga I (2020). Coronavirus prophecy 2017: Bishop Isaiah Mbuga (Video file). <https://bit.ly/2P5Z6mb>

- Nakagwa F (2006). One Presidential candidate to die, Pastor Kayanja prophesies. *New Vision*, January 01, 2006.
- Niringiye DZ (2020). Faith in the face of COVID-19 Pandemic. (Facebook status update). Retrieved from <https://www.facebook.com/78441111188/posts/10158682919611189/>
- Oketch B (2020). Lango Residents Bang Saucepans, Jerrycans To Scare Away Coronavirus. *Daily Monitor*. www.monitor.co.ug Accessed 04-04-2020.
- Oluduro O (2010). The role of religious leaders in curbing the spread of HIV/AIDS in Nigeria. *PER* 13(3):208-236. <https://ssrn.com/abstract=1752912>. Accessed 12-04-2020.
- Olum R, Chekwech G, Wekha G, Nassozi DR, Bongomin F (2020). Coronavirus Disease-2019: Knowledge, Attitude, and Practices of Health Care Workers at Makerere University Teaching Hospitals, Uganda. *Frontiers in Public Health* 8:181. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpubh.2020.00181>
- Parsitau D (2020). Religion in the age of Coronavirus. *The Elephant*. theelephant.info. Accessed 13-04-2020.
- Phaneroo Ministries International (2020). A prayer against coronavirus (YouTube video file). <https://youtu.be/vFzYUs71nc>
- Rasool AS (2020) Islam on pandemic. *Daily Times*. dailytimes.com.pk/582110/islam-on-pandemic/. Accessed 10-04-2020.
- Riggleman H (2020). Why is Psalm 91 important during COVID-19. www.christianity.com. Accessed 18-04-2020.
- Ruteikara S (2006). Pastor Kayanja need not explain prophecy. *New Vision*, January 15, 2006.
- Shereen MA, Khan S, Kazmi A, Bashir N, Siddique R (2020). COVID-19 infection: Origin, transmission, and characteristics of human coronaviruses. *Journal of Advanced Research* 24:91-98. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jare.2020.03.005>
- Smallman S (2015). Whom Do You Trust? Doubt and Conspiracy Theories in the 2009 Influenza Pandemic. *Journal of International and Global Studies* 6(2):1-24. https://pdxscholar.library.pdx.edu/is_fac.
- Sseruyigo A (2020). Stay at Peace-Apostle Grace Lubega. *Uganda Christian News*. www.ugchristiannews.com. Accessed on 05-04-2020.
- Stearns J (2009). New Directions in the Study of Religious Responses to the Black Death. *History Compass* 7(5):363-1375, doi:10.1111/j.1478-0542.2009.00634.x. Accessed 12-04-2020.
- Sun J, He WT, Wang L, Lai A, Ji X, Zhai X, Veit M (2020). COVID-19: epidemiology, evolution, and cross-disciplinary perspectives. *Trends in Molecular Medicine* 26(5):483-495. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.molmed.2020.02.008>
- Swedberg R (2018). On the uses of exploratory research and exploratory. In J. Gerring, C. Elman, and J. Ma-honey (Eds.), *Producing Knowledge*. Forthcoming.
- The Independent (2020, March 22). Uganda Confirms first COVID-19 case. *The Independent*. <https://www.independent.co.ug/uganda-confirms-first-covid-19-case/>
- Turley J (2020). Why the government can shut down church gatherings during pandemic. *The Hill*, thehill.com/opinion/judiciary/492332/. published 11-04-2020. Accessed on 16-04-2020.
- UBOS (2016). The National Population and Housing Census report 2014. Main Report. Kampala, Uganda.
- URN (2020a). Pastor Yiga arrested for misleading the public on COVID-19. *Daily monitor*.
- URN (2020b). COVID-19 pandemic exposes church Fraudsters-Pastor Male. *The Independent*. www.independent.co.ug. Accessed on 07-04-2020.
- Wabyanga RK (2017). The Political Functions of Yoweri Museveni's Bible Hermeneutics in Uganda. *International Journal of Humanities Social Sciences and Education* 4(5):1-11. <http://dx.doi.org/10.20431/2349-0381.0405001>
- Wallis D (2006). Pastors and Prophecies Call Uganda Election. *Reuters*. <https://www.rgn.org/articles/20544/>
- WHO (2020). Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19): Situation Report-93. <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/situation-reports>.
- Worldometers (2020). Coronavirus live update. *Worldometers*. www.worldometers.info/coronavirus. Accessed 23-04-2020.
- Zu ZY, Jiang MD, Xu PP, Chen W, Ni QQ, Lu GM, Zhang LJ (2020). Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19): A perspective from China. *Radiology*. <https://pubs.rsna.org/doi/full/10.1148/radiol.202000490>

Perspective

Neglect and discrimination: A tale of Zimbabwe's inaccessible public transport system

Thembelihle Ndebele

Disability Resources and Advocacy Trust, Zimbabwe.

Received 14 May, 2020; Accepted 7 September, 2020

Lack of disability accessible services is commonplace in many African countries. This includes health care, educational, recreational and transportation services amongst many others. In Zimbabwe in particular, the deteriorating socio-economic situation has exposed the glaring insufficiencies of the public transport system. The expression that best describes this situation is neglect and discrimination. This paper illustrates the inaccessibility and discriminatory nature of public transport in Zimbabwe and highlights the causes and consequences of this situation. Mixed qualitative methods including observations and a review of various literature sources have been used to support the assertions made in this paper. The findings discussed here reveal that the discrimination of persons with disabilities emanates from within government structures, thus making it difficult for any progress to be made, as far as developing accessible public transportation services for persons with disabilities.

Key words: Disability, Zimbabwe, public transport, discrimination, accessibility.

INTRODUCTION

While Zimbabwe can be described on paper as having an inclusive society, because it has the right policy framework and has even ratified international conventions such as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD); the truth is that in practice, the environment is far from inclusive. This paper makes this assertion and uses the issue of public transportation to demonstrate and validate this claim. The paper will thus show the discriminative nature of public transport facilities in Zimbabwe, showing

that it is in fact, inaccessible to persons with disabilities. The paper will go further and discuss the root cause of the discriminatory attitudes towards people with disabilities in Zimbabwe. It will also highlight the effects of inaccessible public transport systems on persons with disabilities, emphasizing that this failure in service delivery has far-reaching negative consequences that go beyond mobility limitation, and also include social exclusion, isolation and neglect of persons with disabilities.

E-mail: ndebele.the@gmail.com. Tel: +263778034636.

Author(s) agree that this article remain permanently open access under the terms of the [Creative Commons Attribution License 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)



Figure 1. Sidewalk stalls along Herbert Chitepo Street in Bulawayo.
Source: Dube-Moyo (2019).

The impetus for this paper therefore, is to provide a scholastic discussion on the issue that will reach audiences beyond the local Zimbabwean community, in the hope that much needed support can be garnered to help make meaningful change for a population demographic that has been so often overlooked. This paper thus, hopes to stimulate conversation on the need for disability-inclusive transportation services within Africa, more specifically, Zimbabwe.

THE GLARING ISSUE OF PUBLIC TRANSPORT INACCESSIBILITY IN ZIMBABWE

Persons with disabilities in poor contexts are often deprived of basic services (Eide and Ingstad, 2013). In Zimbabwe in particular, this includes a lack of access to adequate healthcare services, transport services (Daily News, 2020) and other social services. The public transportation system there, excludes and inhibits access by persons with disabilities (Kett and Deluca, 2016). This happens in one of two ways. Firstly, public transport in Zimbabwe is inaccessible because the vehicles used largely in the public transport sector are not modified to allow access for a disabled user, particularly one who has a physical disability. Secondly, inaccessibility is not just an issue of unavailability of suitably modified public

transport facilities. It also includes a lack of affordability of the transportation service. The discussions below demonstrate the glaring inaccessibility of public transport in Zimbabwe, providing evidence from observations, literature and media reports.

Inaccessibility as unavailability of suitably modified transportation services

Over the Christmas holiday period in December 2019, I walked along a street called Herbert Chitepo in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe between sixth and seventh avenue. This section of the city is close to what was used to be the old commuter omnibus rank, Egodini, before it was shut down for re-development. This place has become a hive of activity, with very little space on the sidewalks to walk on because of impromptu sidewalk stalls that line the sidewalk, leaving a narrow pathway, meant to accommodate people walking in both directions, as shown in Figure 1 (Dube-Moyo, 2019).

As I was navigating my way along these sidewalks, I noticed a man in a wheelchair, ahead of me. I was still considering the inconvenience that he must have been experiencing, moving along the sidewalk, as it was particularly packed on that day, with lots of foot traffic. He was able to push himself along for a couple of metres,



Figure 2. The disability inaccessible commuter omnibus in Zimbabwe.
Source: Jeffrey (2014)

after which, he would stop, and the street vendors would attempt to move their wares, just so that they could widen the sidewalk just that little bit, allowing him to continue with his trip. As I was still processing this image, I then realised that the man ahead of me was heading towards a kombi (a commuter minibus). Figure 2 clearly shows what the commuter omnibuses look like, and exactly how they are inaccessible for persons with disabilities.

I wondered what the procedure was going to be for him to get onto the commuter omnibus. So, I took a moment to see exactly how he was going to get inside. The man approached the conductor, and had a brief conversation with him, after-which, the kombi conductor looked to one of the other passengers to ask him for assistance to lift the man in the wheelchair into the kombi. They placed him in the seat nearest to the kombi door. Once they had done that, the conductor took the foldable wheelchair and placed it in the boot. While that situation seemed to have been solved, it was disheartening to see the indignity the public transport services impose on persons with disabilities. This situation while unfortunate, is also illegal, considering that section 22 of the Zimbabwean Constitution makes specific provision for the treatment of persons with disabilities with dignity and respect (Government of Zimbabwe, 2013).

Around July of 2019, there was a glimmer of hope that the public transportation situation would improve for

persons with disabilities. During that time, the President of Zimbabwe announced to the citizens, that the government would procure buses that would ease the transport challenges of the citizens (Global Accessibility News, 2019). Unfortunately, the new buses do not have the necessary modifications that enable access for disabled persons, as demonstrated in Figure 3 (Harare Live, 2019); so much so that most people with disabilities opt for kombis that cost more than the buses in general.

I will admit, because I had seen decent accessible public transportation options in other developed countries, I found it infuriating that even in this era of advanced technologies and constant information sharing, that kombis are the main mode of transport, and yet they are highly inaccessible especially for the individual with physical disabilities. However, to add on to the problem of unavailability of suitable public transport, persons with disabilities also contend with excessive charges when using public transportation.

Inaccessibility as unaffordability

As already indicated, accessibility also relates to affordability. Wheelchair users in Zimbabwe are sometimes charged double fares so as to accommodate them, and their mobility aids (Jeffrey, 2014). This



Figure 3. The recently purchased disability inaccessible buses in Zimbabwe.
Source: Harare Live (2019).

prejudices persons with disabilities who are often also financially and economically disadvantaged (United Nations High Commission for Refugees, 2013). In most countries, governments step in to provide fare concessions for persons with disabilities and other disadvantaged persons. This is not necessarily the case in Zimbabwe. While the buses that were procured by the government to ease the public transport crisis in Zimbabwe charge relatively low fares, because of a subsidy received from the government; they are often overcrowded, so much so, as already mentioned, that persons with disabilities opt for the less crowded, also inaccessible exorbitant kombis (Global Accessibility News, 2019). The cost barriers compound the inaccessibility issue, making persons with disabilities less likely to commute, thus limiting their mobility, because in this instance unaffordability of the public transport makes it inaccessible. Thus, these levels of discrimination towards persons with disabilities in Zimbabwe leave them contending with both unavailability and unaffordability of public transport. Questions then arise as to why this current discrimination in service provision prevails. Is the transport inaccessibility problem known to government? Or is the government itself discriminating against persons with disabilities?

Is the transport inaccessibility problem known to government?

In the past, the issue of inaccessible public transport systems in Zimbabwe has been discussed in opinion columns of local Zimbabwean newspapers such as the Chronicle, and The Herald, and the Daily News. The Chronicle and The Herald are government publications, and thus indicating that the issue of poor public transportation is a known one, even within government. There is other evidence from the media which indicates that this is a well-known and publicised issue within Zimbabwe, and yet the public transportation system in the country still excludes persons with disabilities because of its inaccessibility. For instance, Dr. Joshua Malinga, a special advisor on disability issues in the President's Office, was quoted stating that one of the common complaints government has received from persons with disabilities, is that of a lack of accessible public transport (Mabika, 2019). Similarly, one Member of Parliament, the late Miriam Mushayi was quoted by a media outlet acknowledging that public services in Zimbabwe are not disability friendly, and that the issue of transport was critical, especially since the newly procured buses are also not disability friendly (Global Accessibility

News, 2019).

In another instance showing that the public transportation woes of persons with disabilities are known to government, at an event in Bulawayo in July of 2019, where President Emmerson Mnangagwa was delivering some buses to add to the public transport fleet, he was quoted saying that his Government would source appropriate buses for people with disabilities. In the interim, he pledged that necessary modifications would be made to the current fleet to ensure that citizens with disabilities would conveniently board and alight from the buses (Madzimore and Ruzvidzo, 2019). These instances above, demonstrate that government is knowledgeable on the need for more accessible and inclusive public transportation services, and the plight of persons with disabilities. To the extent that this is true, the question then would be, why does the issue continue to be ignored? Is the Zimbabwean government deliberately discriminative of persons with disabilities, given that it is well-informed of the service gaps that affect them?

Discrimination starts at government levels: evidence from literature and the media

The glaring nature of the inaccessibility of public transport facilities for people with disabilities in Zimbabwe raises concerns as to why the situation has not been addressed. Evidence from literature and the media indicates what can be concluded to be deliberate discriminatory action by government itself, which has relegated persons with disabilities to a second-class citizen status. The government has taken persons with disabilities for granted. For instance, Zimbabwe has close to 1.4 million people living with a disability, and this equates to just over 8% of the population, and yet still the public transportation services in Zimbabwe are not accessible to people with disabilities (Watson, 2018) and this has denied them independence. Is it that government feels 8% of the population is not a large enough figure to act? Or is it perhaps the usual attitude of the Zimbabwean government, to continuously make promises and just never meet them?

In Zimbabwe, officials are in the habit of saying something, but never really implementing what they say. For instance, in January 2019, in a radio interview, the Zimbabwean Minister of Public Service, Labour and Social Welfare at the time, Dr Sekai Nzenza was speaking on her intentions for her ministry. The crux of her message was that persons with disabilities should not be treated like second class citizens, and that she personally takes disability issues very seriously. She hinted at a lack of disability awareness in the nation and spoke of a need to sensitize the nation on issues to do with disability, because persons with disabilities in Zimbabwe are stigmatised. Her conversation with the radio host inspired hope that perhaps she may in fact

help usher in a culture of respect and appreciation for persons with disabilities in the country. Following this interview, I went onto the Ministry's webpage, to get a sense of what else the ministry is doing, or will be doing regarding the affairs of persons with disabilities, and to my disappointment, the link to the department for persons with disabilities was the only one that did not lead to a page about the department. All other links to other departments led to the department pages. I followed up on this page a year later in May of 2020, and still, there was no page for disabled persons affairs, and still no information on what services are provided for persons with disabilities by the ministry. However, as of September 2020, there have been some developments, and there is now a Disabled Persons Affairs webpage. While this is a positive step, it can also be used to reinforce the assertion that issues relating to disabled persons are relegated to the sidelines, particularly because it has taken over a year for this government ministry to rectify this issue.

Another example showing discrimination at government levels is that of the consistent failure by government to get rid of the kombi system, which has been touted by academics and citizens alike, as being unsafe. Several politically motivated changes have been made in the public transport sector in Zimbabwe, such as the re-introduction of the buses by the Zimbabwe United Passenger Company (ZUPCO) in January of 2019, and yet even after public proclamations by the President and government officials to ensure modification of these buses, to make them disability accessible, the buses are still inaccessible, especially to the passenger with a physical disability. A lot of the hype has been about affordability and not accessibility. ZUPCO is a parastatal company in Zimbabwe, which operates urban and long-distance bus routes (Murenzvi, 2019), and by that characteristic alone, part of its mandate should be to ensure transport accessibility for all, but that is still yet to be seen, given that a year into the re-introduction of these buses, they are still not disability-accessible.

The issue with public transportation in Zimbabwe is that all measures that are introduced all seem to be politically inclined, never really taking cognisance of the requirements of the population, especially not those of persons with disabilities. For instance, even though buses were re-introduced, there is no indication that government will put an end to the kombis, which are unsafe, not only for passengers with disabilities, but also for their non-disabled counterparts. Kombis are reportedly involved in a majority of Zimbabwe's road accidents, that either leave passengers deceased or disabled (Muvuringi, 2012; Muzavazi, 2017), and yet because kombi drivers are a considerable voting bloc (Kett and Deluca, 2016), the kombis are still unfortunately the most dominant mode of public transportation in the country. The failure by government to decidedly phase out the kombis, which are not only dangerous, but also

inaccessible, is yet another example of the discriminatory attitude of government towards persons with disabilities.

In another incident demonstrating a blatant disregard for the rights of persons with disabilities to accessible public transportation, the President of Zimbabwe purchased buses that are not disability accessible. Upon delivery of these buses to ZUPCO, in April of 2019, he noted that his government would work to ensure that all the people of Zimbabwe would be able to access this public transportation facility (Machaya, 2019). However, in July of that same year, another consignment of buses was received, and those too, are inaccessible for persons with physical disabilities, and as of April 2020, they have yet to get the necessary modifications to make them accessible.

In 2015, the Vice-President of the country at that time, Phelekezela Mphoko was reported to have made a statement to the effect that, the jobs in the informal sector such as street vending, are meant to be for persons with disabilities (Daily News, 2015). This statement not only displayed the discriminatory nature of the government, but also reinforced negative stereotypes that persons with disabilities are 'unable' to perform other professional roles, on account of their disabilities. While the rights of Persons with disabilities should be protected by the Disability Act, of 1992, the government does not seem to act on gross and blatant disregard of their rights, case and point, no accessible public transport options. To add to it, Zimbabwe ratified the UNCRPD in 2013, a move which brought hope of a better life for persons with disabilities, but alas, the situation has remained unchanged, and kombis are still the order of the day.

On paper, Zimbabwe appears to have all the right policies in place to ensure that the rights of persons with disabilities are protected, so much so that the state of disability policy has been described as being almost close to an inclusive policy (Kett and Deluca, 2016). However, on the ground, the situation tells of a different story, one where the rights of persons with disabilities are in fact disregarded by the government itself, and where there has been no action towards materialising these policies. This near-miss situation not only perpetuates the exclusion of persons with disabilities, but also has other adverse effects that go beyond more than just limiting movement.

The impact of inaccessible public transport

While a limitation of movement is the most glaring consequence of inaccessible public transportation, there are other effects. Movement constraints exacerbate social isolation of persons with disabilities (The World Bank, 2015). Some of the other effects include social exclusion (Bezyak et al., 2017), stripping of dignity, fear (Coffey, 2018), physical harm (Chiwanga, 2017) and low self-esteem. Furthermore, movement restriction makes

accessing social amenities such as, health care, education, housing, and community life challenging, and yet disabled persons are reported to already experience high rates of poverty and poor health, low educational achievements and few employment opportunities (Meekosha and Soldatic, 2011). Thus, a movement restriction will also compound these issues.

In Zimbabwe in particular, one of the effects of inaccessible public transport is that of physical injury (Chiwanga, 2017). Because persons with disabilities must be lifted in and out of these kombis, some of them end up with injuries, whilst the process itself of being lifted and moved around, with other passengers watching on, also strips them of their dignity.

These traumatic experiences not only strip persons with disabilities of their dignity, but also instil a social anxiety, fear and low self-esteem (Tillman et al., 2013). There is also a growing misconception of disabled passengers as being 'difficult' because of the amount of time it takes for them to embark and disembark, and these negative perceptions about them, by both public transport operators and passengers alike, have sometimes resulted in them being denied access onto the public transit systems, or just being poorly treated by fellow passengers (Coffey, 2018).

The scenarios above, are not only a travesty of justice, but also lag grossly behind the global sustainable development goals (SDGs), which have become the benchmark for development into the future, for all countries. They emphasize the need for the development of sustainable modes of transport if countries are to achieve these goals (United Nations General Assembly, 2017),

CONCLUSION

While the global sustainable development goals agenda has provided a vision of a future world that is inclusive, and guidelines on how to achieve that vision, there are governments such as that of Zimbabwe, that appear to have ignored that guidance, opting instead, to follow a path that perpetuates exclusion of other population demographics, such as persons with disabilities. In a country that has had no accessible public transport ever, and there is an acknowledgement of a need for disability-accessible buses, why would a purchase of new inaccessible buses be made? These transportation difficulties experienced by persons with disabilities in Zimbabwe are in fact symptomatic of a bigger problem, that of discrimination at government and national leadership levels, which appear to consistently relegate persons with disabilities and their needs. This deliberate neglect is inexcusable and is a violation of human rights. Transportation and mobility play an important part in facilitating societal participation for people with disabilities. Thus, travel should not be a barrier to

independence. There is a need to re-engage government, non-profits and the public transport associations on the issue of disability accessible transportation in Zimbabwe. There are clearly some local laws and policies in place, and even international conventions that are meant to guide the implementation of such an exercise, and yet, the country is still laden with a kombi system that excludes and often dehumanizes persons with disabilities, while stripping them of their dignity. In addition, societal attitudes remain a significant barrier for people with disabilities. Failure to provide this essential service for persons with disabilities perpetuates their exclusion from mainstream society, whilst also reinforcing discriminative practices. It is therefore imperative that this hazardous and restrictive public transportation system is discarded, and new, inclusive, safer alternatives are adopted, that will allow for enhanced quality of life for all citizens. After all, everyone is entitled to movement, and to a preservation of their dignity.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

The author has not declared any conflict of interests.

REFERENCES

- Bezyak JL, Sabella SA, Gattis RH (2017). Public Transportation: An Investigation of Barriers for People with Disabilities. *Journal of Disability Policy Studies*. *Journal of Disability Policy Studies* 28:1. doi:10.1177/1044207317702070
- Chiwanga S (2017). Zimbabwe public transport system not safe and accessible to people with disabilities. (The Chronicle) Retrieved April 25, 2020, from <https://www.chronicle.co.zw/zimbabwe-public-transport-system-not-safe-and-accessible-to-people-with-disabilit>
- Coffey H (2018). One in Four Disabled People Don't Use Public Transport Due to Negative Attitudes From Other Passengers, New Research Finds. (Independent) Retrieved April 25, 2020, from <https://www.independent.co.uk/travel/news-and-advice/uk-disabled-travel-accessibi>
- Daily News (2015). Govt Must Implement Disability Inclusive Actions. (Daily News) Retrieved February 28, 2020, from <https://dailynews.co.zw/articles-2015-02-21-govt-must-implement-disability-inclusive-actions/>
- Daily News (2020). Disabled Bemoan Lack of Access to Healthcare. (Daily News) Retrieved February 28, 2020, from <https://dailynews.co.zw/articles-2020-01-01-disabled-bemoan-lack-of-access-to-health-care/>
- Dube-Moyo Y (2019). Food vending now a public health issue. (Chronicle) Retrieved April 09, 2020, from <https://www.chronicle.co.zw/food-vending-now-a-public-health-issue/>
- Eide A, Ingstad B (2013). Disability and poverty – Reflections on research experiences in Africa and beyond. *African Journal of Disability* 2(1):31. doi:10.4102/ajod.v2i1.31
- Global Accessibility News (2019). Zimbabwe: People Living With Disability Call for an Inclusive Public Transport System. (Global Accessibility News) Retrieved March 20, 2020, from <http://globalaccessibilitynews.com/2019/11/20/zimbabwe-people-living-with-disability-call-for-an-inclusive-public-transport-system/>
- Government of Zimbabwe (2013). Constitution of Zimbabwe Amendment (No. 20) Act. Harare: Government Printer.
- Harare Live (2019). See Pictures President Mnangagwa Commissions 47 New ZUPCO Buses. (Harare Live) Retrieved April 20, 2020, from <https://hararelive.com/2019/07/31/see-pictures-president-mnangagwa-commissions-47-new-zupco-buses/>
- Jeffrey P (2014). Kairos Photos - Images by Paul Jeffrey. (Kairos Photos) Retrieved February 26, 2020, from https://kairosphotos.photoshelter.com/image/I0000B_GNd5vA7.g
- Kett M, Deluca M (2016). Transport and Access to Inclusive Education in Mashonaland West Province, Zimbabwe. *Social Inclusion* 4(3):61-71. doi:10.17645/si.v4i3.502
- Mabika C (2019). Zimbabwe: Don't Discriminate Against the Disabled, Says Malinga. (All Africa) Retrieved March 04, 2020, from <https://allafrica.com/stories/201902270249.html>
- Machaya P (2019). ZUPCO gets 28 new buses, Mnangagwa says life to be 'easier'. (ZimLive) Retrieved April 20, 2020, from <https://www.zimlive.com/2019/04/16/zupco-gets-28-new-buses-mnangagwa-says-life-to-be-easier/>
- Madzimore J, Ruzvidzo W (2019). Zupco grows . . .President commissions 47 new buses. (The Chronicle) Retrieved April 24, 2020, from <https://www.chronicle.co.zw/zupco-grows-president-commissions-47-new-buses/>
- Meekosha H, Soldatic K (2011). Human Rights and the Global South: the case of disability. *Third World Quarterly*, 32(8): 1383–1398. doi:10.1080/01436597.2011.614800
- Murenzvi M (2019). All aboard Zupco: Is this a rebirth or stillbirth? (NewsDay) Retrieved April 20, 2020, from <https://www.newsday.co.zw/2019/02/all-aboard-zupco-is-this-a-rebirth-or-stillbirth/>
- Muvuringi PM (2012). Road Traffic Accidents in Zimbabwe, Influencing Factors Impact and Strategies. University of Amsterdam, Department of Public Health. Amsterdam: Unpublished Dissertation.
- Muzavazi (2017). Efficient, safe transport system a necessity. (The Herald) Retrieved April 20, 2020, from <https://www.herald.co.zw/efficient-safe-transport-system-a-necessity/>
- The World Bank (2015). For Persons with Disabilities, Accessible Transport Provides Pathways to Opportunity. (World Bank Group) Retrieved April 24, 2020, from <http://www.worldbank.org/en/news/feature/2015/12/03/for-persons-with-disabilities-accessible-transport-provides-pathways>
- Tillman V, Haveman M, Stoppler R, Kvas S, Monninger D (2013). Public bus drivers and social inclusion: Evaluation of their knowledge and attitudes toward people with intellectual disabilities. *Journal of Policy and Practice in Intellectual Disabilities* 10(4):307-313. doi:10.1111/jppi.12057
- United Nations General Assembly (2017). Strengthening the links between all modes of transport to achieve. Geneva: United Nations. Retrieved from <https://undocs.org/en/A/RES/72/212>
- United Nations High Commission for Refugees (2013). People with Disabilities. Geneva: United Nations.
- Watson J (2018). Accessibility Rights of Disabled Children in Zimbabwe Schools. (New Zimbabwe) Retrieved March 03, 2020, from <https://www.newzimbabwe.com/accessibility-rights-of-disabled-children-in-zimbabwe-schools/>

Full Length Research Paper

Curriculum reform in Zimbabwe: An analysis of early childhood development centers' state of readiness to embrace the new curriculum

Thelma Dhlomo^{1*} and Phylis Mawere²

¹Department of Educational Foundations, Faculty of Education, Great Zimbabwe University, Zimbabwe.

²Early Childhood Department, Faculty of Education and Social Sciences, Reformed Church University, Zimbabwe.

Received 28 December, 2019; Accepted 5 February, 2020

The study sought to investigate the readiness of mainstream early childhood development centres to actualize the updated preschool curriculum in Zimbabwe. The curriculum is one of the basic and central components of powerful educating and learning. Curriculum change assumes a significant role in rebranding instructive practices to make them receptive to contemporary national and individual needs. Keeping that in mind, a curriculum review process in Zimbabwe that was initiated in November 2014 culminated in another curriculum whose implementation started in January 2017. In this examination, a subjective structure was utilized. School heads and early childhood development (ECD) teachers who were interviewed were purposively sampled from four centres in mainstream primary schools. Discoveries from the study uncovered that school heads and teachers were putting forth deliberate attempts to concentrate on the new dispensation. Notwithstanding, discoveries additionally uncovered that the ECD teachers and school heads needed satisfactory conceptualisation of the updated curriculum, and resources like textbooks and other fundamental materials explicit to the new curriculum which were not yet set up. The investigation prescribed increasingly decentralized and comprehensive dissemination workshops to explain the origin, segments, and substance of the updated curriculum; as well as progressively vigorous resources activation procedures to address the content of the updated curriculum.

Key words: Updated curriculum, dissemination, implementation, early childhood development, centres, resources.

INTRODUCTION

Curriculum change has become a global trend as a result of globalisation (Waks, 2003; Yin, 2013; Sparapani et al., 2014). A series of curriculum reforms have or are taking place worldwide, for example, in the United States of

America, Europe, East Asia and in all sub-Saharan African countries, particularly in the development of new curricula due to social, political and technological progression (Yeung and Lam, 2007; Altinyelken, 2010;

*Corresponding author. E-mail: thelmad6@gmail.com.

Author(s) agree that this article remain permanently open access under the terms of the [Creative Commons Attribution License 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)

Kolmos et al., 2016). Ongoing renewals of the school curriculum in most countries normally centre on focusing, deepening and sustaining, in response to changing contexts (Hong Kong Curriculum Development Council, 2015). In Israel, factors which influenced changes and developments in Chemistry curriculum included political, cultural socio-economic, and scientific, industrial and technological innovations. Similarly, Reis (2018) suggests that curriculum reform should follow a clear vision and mission, a selected educational paradigm, and pay attention to stakeholders, context, culture and politics.

Zimbabwe attained independence in 1980 and like most countries, embarked on a number of curriculum reforms in an effort to redress the imbalances of the colonial era as well as to address the demands of the contemporary Zimbabwe. Earlier efforts were mostly channelled towards opening up access to education for a number of categories of learners that had been left out or had limited access to education (Zvobgo, 1986; Gatawa, 1998; Nziramasanga, 1999; Shumba and Chireshe, 2013; Mpofo et al., 2018). The report of the Nziramasanga Commission which was tasked to look into education found that education in Zimbabwe was too academic and recommended a comprehensive review of the school curriculum to make it responsive to the needs of learners and the nation (Nziramasanga, 1999). It is against this background that early childhood education in Zimbabwe was moved to the education ministry and became part of the primary school system through Secretary's Circular Number 14 of 2004. An early childhood development curriculum was also introduced in 2012. However, whilst schools were still trying to conceptualise the 2012 early childhood curriculum another review was instituted in 2014 that culminated in the updated curriculum which schools began to implement in January 2017. This study explored the extent to which schools were ready to implement the updated curriculum in terms of conceptualisation, availability of resources, curriculum dissemination, and implementation.

Statement of purpose

The primary purpose of this study was to investigate mainstream preschool centres' readiness to implement the updated preschool curriculum introduced in Zimbabwe in January 2017. The study checked on teachers' conceptualisation of the new curriculum; the extent to which the curriculum was disseminated and resourced, and the teachers' experiences at the inception phase of the curriculum. The study sought to answer the following research questions:

- (i) To what extent did the teachers understand the new curriculum?
- (ii) How was the new curriculum disseminated to the

implementers?

(iii) To what extent was the curriculum resourced?

(iv) What were the teachers' experiences in the initial implementation phase?

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Education programmes are guided by policies. The degree to which policy expectations are clear will impact educators' translation of such arrangements (Raselimo and Wilmot, 2013). Spillane et al. (2002) contend that strategies that require central changes in executing specialists' information structures are bound to experience implementation issues than those which require gradual changes. In spite of the fact that they recognize that strategies are dependent upon various translations with regards to rehearse, Bowe et al. (1992) and Spillane et al. (2002) take a specialized perspective on arrangement investigation and propose that, since approach writings speak to thoughts regarding changing practice, there is need to assess whether a strategy was comprehended as expected. Subsequently, Obinna (2007) contends that no government policy on education can be acknowledged if it does not, as a matter of first importance, see the issues and openings before starting the decision-making process.

Smit (2001) is of the feeling that the truth of curriculum change and its impact is felt most at the essential levels, in the classroom. This infers educators at the school level are the most notable individuals in the change procedure. They should sufficiently conceptualize the new curriculum for them to have the option to viably actualize it. In this manner, teacher support, or purchase in, is vital to implementation (Bruns and Schneider, 2016). Prawat (1992) battles that while educators are from one perspective seen as significant change operators, then again, they can be snags to change in light of their adherence to antiquated types of instruction. This perception proposes that those presenting curriculum changes ought to permit educators sufficient opportunity to conceptualize change and consider its suggestions for their training and practice. Govender (2018) sees that in spite of their basic situation inside the instruction procedure, generally educators in South Africa and somewhere else have not had a voice in curriculum change, in this way their jobs, challenges; individual encounters and viewpoints are regularly overlooked. Correspondingly, examines by Avalos (2011), Carl (2002), and Park and Sung (2013) additionally uncovered that authorities will in general force change on educators as opposed to including them all the while.

Educators' earlier convictions and practices can present difficulties, not just in light of the fact that instructors are reluctant to alter in the direction of policy but in addition on the grounds that their present understandings may meddle with their capacity to

Table 1. Decision-making matrix for curriculum implementation.

| Intended change | Implementation methods |
|--|--|
| Awareness and basic knowledge about curriculum | In-service training of teachers and new modules in teacher pre-service training programmes. |
| Knowledge and understanding of theories and practices required in new curriculum | In-service training of teachers, printed or audiovisual materials for teachers and new modules in teacher pre-service training programmes. Demonstrations of expected new classroom practices and behaviours in school. |
| Skills development for discrete behaviors, patterns and strategies | In-service training of teachers, printed or audiovisual materials for teachers and new modules in teacher pre-service training programmes. Demonstrations of expected new classroom practices and behaviours in school. Workshops where teachers can practice new skills. |
| Changing beliefs about learning, children and academic content | In-service training of teachers, printed or audiovisual materials for teachers and new modules in teacher pre-service training programmes. Demonstrations of expected new classroom practices and behaviors in school. Workshops where teachers can practice new skills. Extended school-based or locally managed teacher development programmes. |
| Consistent use of new practices | In-service training of teachers, printed or audiovisual materials for teachers and new modules in teacher pre-service training programmes. Demonstrations of expected new classroom practices and behaviors in school. Workshops where teachers can practice new skills. Extended school-based or locally managed teacher development programmes. Supporting professional learning communities in schools. |

Adapted from Sahlberg (2009).

decipher and execute the change in manners consistent with the planners' expectation (Spillane et al., 2002; Prensky, 2014). The development of new information happens through existing structures, for example, educators' earlier information and convictions about educating and learning (Mohaeka and Wilmot, 2013). In the event that those structures are not strong, little might be accomplished regarding acknowledging change. The contention fortifies the one by Zimmerman (2006) that a few educators' change obstruction qualities may be a consequence of their past encounters. In this way, already ineffective endeavors at change can leave educators incredibly wary about tolerating further endeavors at change. Accordingly, it is not surprising that Mutch (2017) contends that instructors don't simply indiscriminately and adamantly oppose change.

As indicated by Noblit and Pink (2007), in Uruguay teachers were not ready to accept the new curriculum since they knew about the difficulties that they would confront; they were not given adequate help and data on the new curriculum. Adequate help is an issue that was likewise raised by Molapo and Pillay (2018) who reason that when educators are not bolstered by government and different offices or resources they build up a demeanor of reliable protection from change implementation. For implementation to happen or sanctioning to rise, authorities' need to address the practices of all players in the curriculum change (Magongoa, 2011; Pont, 2018). Curriculum makers, administrators, and educators must be clear about the reason or goal, the nature, the genuine and potential advantages of the advancement. As indicated by Mashele (2005) implementation requires some serious energy; it needs the consideration of the individuals to be won so as to impact their frames of mind

adequately with the goal that they modify their present ways. In the event that people feel included and their perspectives esteemed, they will contribute their best to the curriculum implementation. Magongoa (2011) contends that fitting implementation plans ought to be illuminated clearly. The implementation plans also need to describe the specific programmes, activities, tasks, resources, time schedules, responsible persons, inside collaborating structures, and outside collaborating structures. An example of an implementation plan adapted from Sahlberg (2009) is shown in Table 1.

The specific contexts in which teachers interpret and enact the new curriculum impact on how teachers conceptualise the new curriculum. Spillane et al. (2002) identify school contexts such as organisational structures, the social environment and the historical context as important factors in shaping teachers' sense-making of new curriculum policy. If curriculum reforms are not clear to teachers, they may not have enough faith and trust in the new curriculum (Chisholm and Leyendecker, 2008).

Teachers may feel they are not fully equipped to implement the curriculum (Knight, 2005; Prensky, 2014). Chaturgoon (2008) confirms that teachers may struggle to find their way with the curriculum changes and yet they are expected to change the manner by which they teach. Thus, acceptance of change could be affected by perceived threats to their expertise and proven abilities, and their belief that they lack the knowledge or skills to implement the change successfully (Fullan, 2001; Pont, 2018).

Educational change involves changing teachers' beliefs and understanding as prerequisite to improving teaching practices. Research indicates that teachers require a thorough understanding of the meaning of educational

change before there is an acceptance and adoption of new programmes (Cheung and Wong, 2012). Teachers who do not have sufficient information about the curriculum cannot implement it properly (Uiseb, 2007). For example, Molapo and Pillay (2018) found that teachers who did not have proper training seemed to be overwhelmed by the curriculum changes resulting in low teachers' confidence and commitment. It was reiterated that whoever is responsible for the curriculum change or innovation should consider teachers' attitudes and beliefs as major predictors of the success of a transformation. In other words, curriculum implementation must not be in haste. Vandeyar and Killen (2003) suggest that the implementation of a curriculum can be postponed until teachers have been taught to implement the curriculum correctly. Motseke (2005) and Naong (2008) concur that without proper training for teachers the new curriculum cannot be executed or implemented correctly because the teachers' knowledge base would be limited. Teachers require sufficient knowledge and skills for them to be able to expand on teaching and learning activities. Thus, training of teachers is a critical step for successful implementation, so that teachers understand what the changes are and how they can put them into practice (Rogan and Anderson, 2011). Dada et al. (2009) found that when there was inadequate information, teachers were expected to collate their own information for teaching in the classroom.

In South Africa, educators went to a short five-day workshop, where they were given information about the curriculum but were not taken through functional exercises, with regards to the way in which the activities could be actualized in the classroom circumstance (Harricharan, 2011). Not every one of the educators went to these workshops and the individuals who did were expected to transmit the data to their associates when they came back to their separate schools. This brought about the watering down of information since a portion of the information was not handed-off; teachers held their own conclusions and information on the curriculum and passed on their personal inclinations and translations (Harricharan, 2011). Namibia likewise experienced issues in regards to curriculum change whereby teachers were unfamiliar with the content and in a state of confusion (Chisholm and Leyendecker, 2008). So also, Singaram (2007) states that educators in New Zealand were besieged with the content that they were expected to instruct and thought of it as befuddling, hard to comprehend and decipher. The instructors were irate, baffled and they felt there was no requirement for a curriculum change. In Australia, teachers' constrained syllabus interpretation and content knowledge brought forth the fruitless implementation of their new curriculum (Bahr, 2016). A comparative situation was as of late observed by Govender (2018) in South Africa whereby foundation stage teachers whined about too many new curriculum workshops that were not applicable to

classroom practice. Educators in the investigation conducted by Govender contended that they had not created adequate educational content for teaching some subjects (Govender, 2018).

Magongoa (2011) noted that most instructive changes fail on the grounds that those accountable for the endeavors might be having pretty much nothing or twisted comprehension of the way of life of schools. Most change projects are planned by specialists outside the school condition without adequately including school heads and educators, bringing about a hindered new curriculum implementation process (Magongoa, 2011). Mkpa (1987) views the teacher as the most notable individual in the program of curriculum implementation, and thusly underscored that the educator must be associated with all phases of the curriculum procedure. It is in this way imperative to incorporate staff development procedures, as teachers should be prepared to modify their training to the prerequisites of the new curriculum. This recommends the requirement for strong curriculum dissemination systems.

Curriculum dissemination comprises of the presentation of curriculum through the distribution of thoughts and concepts in order to make relevant people aware of the envisaged curriculum; ensuring that a curriculum reaches the target population, that is, the deliberate intention to inform clients of an innovation (McBeath, 1999; Carl, 2002). The process includes such aspects as training those who will present the material, sensitizing those who will monitor it, and other goal-oriented activities to facilitate the adoption of the innovation (Magongoa, 2011; Nasser, 2017). According to Mawila (2007) there are certain curriculum dissemination strategies and tactics that are critical and should be considered if dissemination is to bear the required fruits. Strategies include distribution of curriculum materials, meetings, newsletters, flyers, networking, questionnaires, material development and face-to-face contact. Cheung and Wong (2012) found out that teachers needed support in training courses, seminars or workshops for them to implement the curriculum reform effectively. Uiseb (2007) emphasises that teachers must be developed professionally, for them to take possession of the reform process. There is necessity to reinforce teacher training, to help and organise teachers to implement the changes to the curriculum effectively (Bantwini, 2010).

Some resources are fundamental for the implementation of another curriculum: human; infrastructure; hardware, material, and monetary resources. Instructional materials are a fundamental learning asset. For instance, if there is anything lacking in the common environment, the curriculum can't be appropriately executed (Erden, 2010; Lelliot et al., 2009). Ehiamentalor (2001) sees school facilities as the operational inputs of each instructional program and viewed the school as a manufacturing organisation where all inputs must be in top operational shape to create results. Ivowi (2004) in Odey and Oph

(2015) underlines that infrastructural facilities, equipment, and materials must be given in sufficient amounts to guarantee that the curriculum is viably executed.

Vandeyar and Killen (2003) propose that the implementation of a curriculum can be delayed until schools get the essential resources to guarantee achievement. It is extremely baffling for educators, just as students to proceed with teaching and learning when there is an absence of vital and proper resources (De Waal, 2004). In a similar vein, Naong (2008) repeats that if facilities are not redesigned at specific schools, students won't accomplish the necessary outcomes. Comparable perceptions were accounted for by Motseke (2005); and Molapo and Pillay (2018) who discovered that because of the absence of the necessary resources, instructors could not convey great quality lessons. The inaccessible resources included reading material; apparatus for experiments; computer lab; library; proper sports facilities; and educating media. The most significant asset for students is the educators and reading material, and for the teachers, the teacher's guide. The absence of fitting conditions and resources can bring about a building up of teachers negative demeanor towards students' learning. Alcardo et al. (2019) see that numerous organizations in Africa direct instructing and learning with constrained ICT facilities which incorporate not many or hardly any PCs and restricted power supply. Different resources, for example, physical facilities including classrooms and research centers intended to make an empowering domain in which implementation can happen must be given by the local government.

Odey and Opoh (2015) additionally take note of an issue related to over-burdening of the effectively far-reaching curriculum content in Nigeria, which was combined with packed classes, in spite of the prescribed and adjusted teacher-pupil proportion of 1:40. Govender (2018) additionally notes huge classes and congestion as a test which militates against curriculum change. In such conditions, educators will in general return to the customary technique for instructing in light of the fact that they come up short on the vital resources required for the implementation of a student-focused methodology. Therefore, educators utilize the inquiry and answer technique which is reading material based and "entire class-situated" (Mbeshu, 2010).

Educational reform requires financial support. Implementation of curriculum reforms often means increased costs of education in putting up classrooms, workshops, special rooms and laboratories (Syomwene, 2013). Various strategies can be used to generate financial resources to fund reforms in education. Most countries adopt the cost sharing strategy whereby the government pays teachers' salaries and the parents meet tuition fees and textbooks costs (Lungu, 2016; Ndulu and Moronge, 2015). World Bank Studies have shown countries like China, El Salvador, Malaysia and Indonesia as having communities that engaged in school financing

as a result of demand for alternative forms of education that related to cultural and religious needs of the groups (Bray,1996; Zhu,2010). Similar systems exist in parts of Asia, for instance, in Laos People's Republic, Chairmen of village community associations usually oversaw construction of rural schools where levies were imposed with allowances for substitution with labour; recurrent needs of community schools in Singapore were raised through central provident deductions for racial based associations, while levies on purchases made at village shops were used to raise funds for local schools in parts of India (Bray, 1996). Cost-sharing is an international practice which has taken place in most countries, be it rich or poor (Lungu, 2016).

A study to assess the influence of hidden costs on students' academic performance in Kitui County secondary schools in Kenya by Ndulu and Moronge, found out that the Kenyan government had also introduced cost sharing at secondary school level to mitigate financial shortages, whereby the government, through free secondary education catered for the tuition fees while the parents and other stakeholders took care of the other costs including provision of infrastructure and other services for the boarding schools (Ndulu and Moronge, 2015).

A study on the effectiveness and sustainability of cost sharing in Kabwe District of Zambia, which was carried out by Lungu (2016) concluded that the perception of seeing government as the biggest sponsor of education had caused many not to be willing to respond positively as attitudes towards payment of school fees by parents were found to be negative. The study noted that cost sharing was sustainable through lobbying support from well-wishers, levying pupils, reintroduction of school boards, record keeping as well as income generating projects. The study recommended the following; government to ensure that funds were realized in good time; increase allocation of funds; put up strong and strict monitoring mechanism of funds (Lungu, 2016). Based on the findings from the above cited studies, it is apparent that the cost transfer concept may not work out well in a depressed economic environment where disposable income is generally low. The transfer of costs to parents may not be the best option since parents are usually overwhelmed by other financial responsibilities. In order for change and innovation to succeed, the strategies and models for implementing the curriculum must be considered carefully.

Strategies and models for curriculum change and innovation

Beckhard and Harris (1978), developed some strategies and models that are often applied. A strategy of innovation refers to the planned procedures and techniques to be employed. The strategies include: the participative problem-solving, planned linkage strategy, Coercive strategies and open input strategies.

The participative problem-solving procedure attracts its capacity from including the clients in recognizing their needs and how to fulfill these requirements, distinguishing and diagnosing their needs, discovering arrangements, giving it a shot and assessing the arrangement and executing the arrangement in the event that it is palatable. In the planned linkage technique, middle offices, for example, schools, unite the clients of the innovation. The coercive systems work based on force and pressure by those in power who utilize such instruments as laws, registries, and booklets to constrain and uphold consistency by those with less force (Obilo and Sangoleye, 2015). There is a detached dispersion of a centrally arranged development considered important to the beneficiaries. Open Input Strategies are open, adaptable, practical methodologies that utilize outside thoughts and resources.

Tanner and Tanner (1980), underscore three chief models that represent how change can happen. These are the Research, Development and Diffusion Model, the Problem-Solving Model and the Social Interaction Model. In The Research, Development and Diffusion Model, an advancement is imagined at the head or focus and afterward encouraged into the framework. Hence, the model perspectives the procedures of progress as a sane grouping of stages wherein an advancement is created or found, developed, delivered, and spread to the client, teacher inclusion is low. The Problem-Solving Model is worked around the client of the advancement, who decides the issue, looks for an innovation, assesses the preliminaries and actualizes the advancement. In Social Interaction Model, change continues or diffuses through formal or casual contacts between communicating social gatherings and depends on the attention to development, enthusiasm for the advancement, preliminary and appropriation for perpetual use. The social association model burdens the significance of relational systems of data, assessment, authority and individual contact.

With respect to both, models and systems, writing has uncovered that top-down structures do not function admirably in the scholarly world (Dalrymple et al., 2017). The fruitful implementation relies upon how the curriculum is presented and politically confined at the arrangement level (top-down) and how it is seen and energized at school level (base up) (Kuiper and Berkvens, 2013) in Molapo and Pillay (2018). Nonetheless, Molapo and Pillay discovered that when the curriculum is 'passed on from the top' it is not energetically executed by teachers. What seems to work are long haul procedures arranged inside and regarding the setting of the scholastic framework (Henderson et al., 2011).

METHODOLOGY

This study fell within the qualitative research approach in the form of a phenomenological study (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005; Merriam, 2009; Tubey et al., 2015). The phenomenological was chosen

because it focuses on the lived experiences of the participants in terms of conditions, practices, beliefs, processes, relationships or trends, since it is devoted to gathering information about prevailing conditions or situations for the purpose of description and interpretation (Salaria, 2012: 1; Chopra, 2016: 138; Korstjens and Moser, 2017: 277; Paley, 2017: 4; Mohajan, 2018: 8). The population of the study included early childhood development teachers and school heads/ administrators in mainstream primary school centres in Masvingo District. The sample included four school administrators and sixteen teachers purposively sampled from four centres. Purposive sampling enabled the researchers to 'handpick' participants on the basis of some defining characteristics which made them the holders of the data needed for the study. The teachers were trained to teach early childhood learners and were pursuing a bachelor's degree. The heads of schools from which the teachers were drawn from were then picked as participants as well. Participants were interviewed using an interview schedule which explored participants' understanding of the new curriculum, the extent to which the curriculum was resourced and participants' general experiences during the inception phase of the new curriculum. Data were analysed and presented in the form of narratives.

RESULTS

Conceptualisation of the new curriculum

Results indicate that administrators and teachers appreciated more those curriculum areas whose titles did not present a major departure from what was in the previous early childhood development syllabus which they were beginning to master, such as Mathematics and Science, English, and Physical Education. However, some did not quite appreciate some concepts falling under some curriculum areas and they thought there was unnecessary difference between Physical Education and Mass Displays. On the whole, indications were that some teachers felt that they had not yet grasped issues on subjects such as Mass Displays, Visual and Performing Arts, ICT, Physical Education, and Mathematics and Science. Overall, participants still required an in-depth understanding of all the ECD curriculum areas and skills in ICT. The following excerpts demonstrate the data:

I still don't have adequate knowledge to teach these subjects.

I attended a district workshop. I have failed to get how Mass Displays differ from P.E. and I have to be cautious not to confuse the two as I try to explain it to the other teachers.

I still need more guidance on curriculum areas such as mass displays, ICT, visual and performing arts, and heritage and social studies. More workshops still necessary.

Workshops we attended as teachers were done in a hurry because time was limited.

Dissemination of the new curriculum

Data from interviews with school heads showed that the

new curriculum was explained at national, district, and cluster training workshops. The national one was the most important because that is where cascading of the new curriculum to grassroots started. All the school heads and ECD teachers sampled did not attend the national workshop. Participants at national level then trained those at district and the same pattern was followed down to the school level. However, some of the school administrators and teachers complained that those who attended the national workshop seem not to have grasped key issues; as a result information that was reaching the schools had a lot of inconsistencies. Data revealed that at most instances the majority of teachers and school heads were left out and most of the workshops concentrated on out of school administrators who wanted an opportunity to claim travel and subsistence allowance. Data further revealed that only those teachers whose classes had been identified to participate in the initial run attended workshops, the other teachers were not even aware of what was happening. The initial ECD implementing classes were ECD A and Grade 1. Schools continued with workshops on syllabus interpretation, scheming and planning as clusters, as well as through school-based meetings. The data shows that teachers were not satisfied with the way the updated curriculum was disseminated. ECD specialist teachers did not participate at the national level training. As a result, those who cascaded the curriculum to the school teachers seemed not to be knowledgeable of ECD curriculum issues. The following data excerpts are an illustration of the teachers' sentiments:

The person who was training us seemed not to understand.

As ECD we were not represented well at national and district level. Those who later trained us were not familiar with ECD teaching and learning.

At times we fail to get assistance from colleagues because they are not yet part of the new curriculum group.

Availability of resources

Data from the interviews with school heads and ECD teachers revealed that all schools now had syllabuses for the updated curriculum areas but they were not enough, teachers were sharing. Schools were given soft copies and then printed hard copies for the school. The school heads indicated that at the moment they could not afford to print syllabus copies for individual teachers. Of the four schools, only one had bought one set of textbooks to be shared by all the ECD A class teachers. The other schools were still trying to harness funds and others were waiting to be guided by their respective school development committees. It was noted that textbooks and teachers resource books were still limited or unavailable

in schools.

Data showed that ECD centres had some play materials relevant to the new curriculum like balls, ropes, and blocks. In addition to textbooks, the data also revealed that the schools still needed to procure age appropriate computers, PE equipment, musical instruments, cell phones, and calculators, as well as television sets and more syllabus copies for each teacher. The following quotes illustrate the participants' responses:

The materials are not age appropriate and are inadequate. We do not have adequate material resources to implement the new curriculum as this innovation was rushed and we do not have proper equipment and infrastructure for ICT, for example.

At the moment there are no swimming pools, libraries and computer rooms to implement the new curriculum.

Implementation of the new curriculum

Data from interviews with the school heads and teachers revealed that all schools had started implementing the updated curriculum. Data revealed that in addition to acquiring the relevant syllabuses as updated curriculum implementation strategies, schools had also lined up school-based workshops, and engaged parents and other stakeholders to sensitise them on resources required for the updated curriculum. This showed that the school administrators were making efforts to ensure that implementation of the updated curriculum would be successful.

However, the data also revealed that the administrators and teachers had experienced and perceived challenges and concerns which included lack of adequate preparation, inopportune resources mobilisation, and administrators' and teachers' lack of adequate knowledge and skills required in syllabus interpretation, scheming and teaching of some curriculum areas like Physical Education, Mass Display and ICT. Data also revealed that teachers complained about too much content and content that is beyond the ECD children's zones of proximal development.

Teachers are grappling with syllabus interpretation

We are struggling with scheming using the new curriculum syllabi.

There is too much content to be taught to young and some of the content is too difficult for them to understand.

We are facing challenges in teaching subjects like, Physical Education, Mass Display and ICT.

DISCUSSION

One significant discovering was that administrators and

teachers immediately related to curriculum components whose portrayal had a ton like past subject portrayals demonstrating that change is progressively acceptable on the off chance that it is gradual in nature. Be that as it may, curriculum zones like 'Mass Displays' were too new and badly received. The underlying unnerving signs sent by the new subject portrayals came about because of various translations by teachers and administrators who had not had satisfactory data on the new curriculum and its core interest. The absence of sufficient information is a test liable to influence their implementation (Molapo and Pillay, 2018). This irregularity must be tended to as quickly as time permits, in case, numerous lucky minutes for learning would be missed. The educators who are generally significant in the entire procedure must not be given a fly-past assistance; they should be initiated enough with respect to curriculum understanding and conceptualisation or else the expected objectives will be missed (Mkpa, 1987; Prawat, 1992; Smit, 2001; Spillane et al., 2002; Magongoa, 2011; Govender, 2018). Absence of comprehension of curriculum changes noted in the present examination affirms what was seen by Bowe et al. (1992), Spillane et al. (2002), Bantwini (2010) and Bruns and Schneider (2016) that it was a block to positive change and implementation. Be that as it may, in accordance with the perceptions by Mohamed (2004), for a portion of the school directors and early childhood development instructors, the underlying period of tension and frenzy among educators had advanced to expanding certainty to execute the curriculum as they valued the requirement for subjects like ICT. Tolerating such advancements guarantees consistency with a contemporary social, political and mechanical movement (Yeung and Lam, 2007). However, when the instructors, in the end, started to value a portion of the advancements, some educating and learning time had just been lost. The discoveries agree with prior discoveries that instructor support or buy in is essential for smooth implementation of another curriculum (Bruns and Schneider, 2016).

Absence of clearness on certain parts of the updated curriculum was in accordance with Oztek's (2012) finding that the course or pyramid curriculum dissemination methodology gives preparing to more individuals inside a short space of time and is cost effective, however weakening happens as the preparation gets down to the grassroots but then the inverse ought to happen. This can prompt disabled implementation (Mawila, 2007; Chaturgoon, 2008). The teachers, as the most notable individuals in the curriculum development cycle, must be completely made mindful of the visualized curriculum and its objectives. Individuals who go to the key dissemination workshops or meetings additionally should have been educated on the substance and attributes of the learners. Forgetting about educators who were not yet actualizing the updated curriculum by restricting talk of the updated curriculum to a little inner circle in the school was a

financially savvy but then instructors could have shared thoughts if all were engaged with the preparation regardless of whether they were not yet teaching the new curriculum classes. Those actualizing the advancement ought not to be overpowered by the development (Molapo and Pillay, 2018). The preparation should incorporate all educators and it should have been allocated sufficient time. In this manner, there was a need to consider and utilize the best of every one of the curriculum change models or methodologies so as to think of the most reasonable.

The shortage of resources emerged as a major obstacle to the implementation of the updated curriculum. The observed shortages validated the argument that the required resources for a new curriculum must be availed in adequate quantities (Ivowi, 2004; Lelliot et al., 2009; Ehiamentor, 2001). Some of the equipment was not in a usable state to serve the purpose. Most of the computers in early childhood classrooms were old and dysfunctional. Having only dysfunctional computers for teaching ICT is not proper because it promotes traditional ways of teaching.

Legitimate arranging and timing are required to guarantee that enough resources are set up when another curriculum is propelled with the goal that learning openings are sufficiently used (Mbeshu, 2010). The government must be prepared to back development (Syomwene, 2013). The discoveries indicated that rushed curriculum choices were made without considering the monetary help expected to obtain resources. Obinna (2007) stressed that the administration must acknowledge difficulties and openings first. In any case, it might be uncalled for to put all the fault on government since educators could draw significant pieces of data from the books they were utilizing already, however, Cheung and Wong (2012) raise the issue of overwhelming outstanding burdens which may not give the instructors much time to do that. It was likewise noticed that rural schools were increasingly burdened as far as resources. Most didn't have the greatest budgetary help and furthermore a few schools didn't have power and PCs. The discoveries of the present study resounded Naidoo and Muthukrishna's (2014) and Govender's (2018) discoveries that because of the absence of assets, schools couldn't get a significant number of the stipulated resources. Guardians were required to meet the costs (Secretary's Circular 14 of 2004) yet cost-sharing techniques may not work with ruined networks.

The investigation set up that absence of clarification to guardians on expenses to be met by the legislature and that to be canvassed by guardians acquired a part of hesitance by guardians in paying concealed costs. These discoveries are like those by Njeru and Orodho (2003) who discovered that additional school imposes, for example, Parents Teachers Association finance, persuasive expenses, transportation charges, and development charges lead to troubles in financing

auxiliary instruction since the guardians need to bear the expanded costs which make a negative effect on the scholastic execution.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study explored the condition of preparation of ECD centres to implement the updated curriculum. Literature has it that presenting change in a curriculum ought to permit teachers sufficient opportunity to conceptualize and consider its suggestions for their practice. For the most part, writing uncovered that if changes in curriculum were forced on educators as opposed to including them and that if curriculum changes were not clear teachers lose certainty and trust in the curriculum bringing about them feeling that there is no requirement for change. The investigation indicated that absence of lucidity by certain educators regarding certain matters of the updated curriculum existed despite the fact that they gave a few indications of valuation for the subjects. Most teachers were not included in the arranging or planning phase of the updated curriculum. Dissemination of the updated curriculum was done through workshops beginning at the national level to singular schools at the grassroots level. Notwithstanding, the study indicated that educators could have been happy with the dissemination of the updated curriculum if less of the executives and a greater amount of ECD pros had gone to the national workshops. The individuals who fell the curriculum to the teachers appeared not proficient in ECD curriculum issues. As asserted by the early childhood instructors, the individuals who went to the key dissemination workshops or gatherings were not clearly clarifying the substance corresponding to the qualities of the early childhood learners since they were not early childhood educators. Difficulties were knowledgeable about endeavouring to execute the updated curriculum at the starting phases of implementation. These were fixated on the absence of satisfactory planning, resources, information and aptitudes required for schedule translation, conspiring and instructing of some curriculum territories like Physical Education, Mass Display, Visual and Performing Arts, and ICT. Teachers required a top to bottom comprehension of the ECD curriculum zones and abilities in ICT. It turned out that rustic schools were progressively impeded regarding resources as some didn't have textbooks, power and PCs. The curriculum content was additionally seen to be excessively and past the extent of ECD learners. The difficulties of course readings could have been eased if educators could have drawn some significant data from books that were being utilized already. The content could then be surveyed in an offer to choose that which is satisfactory and more age-proper. In-administration preparation should be possible to outfit teachers with the fundamental ICT skills.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

The authors have not declared any conflict of interests.

REFERENCES

- Alcardo AB, Anangisye WAL, Neterindwa A, Mkwizu MH, Maziku H, Matofali AX, Iddi A, Sanga C (2019). Transforming African education systems in Science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) using ICTs: Challenges and opportunities. *Education Research International* pp. 1-29. <https://doi.org/10.1155/2019/6946809>
- Altinyelken HK (2010). Curriculum change in Uganda: Teacher perspectives on the new thematic curriculum. *International Journal of Educational Development* 30:151-161.
- Avalos B (2011). Teacher professional development in teaching and teacher education over ten years. *Teaching and Teacher Education* 27(1):10-20.
- Bahr NM (2016). Building quality in teaching and teacher education. *Australian Education Review* 61 p.
- Bantwini BD (2010). How Teachers Perceive the New Curriculum Reform: Lessons from a School District in the Eastern Cape Province. *International Journal of Educational Development* 30(1):83-90.
- Beckhard R, Harris RT (1987). *Organizational transitions: Managing complex change*, 2nd ed., Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.
- Bowe R, Ball SJ, Gold A (1992). *Reforming education and changing schools*. London: Routledge.
- Bray M (1996). *Decentralisation of education*. The World Bank: Washington, D.C.
- Bruns B, Schneider BR (2016). *Managing the politics of quality reforms in education: Policy lessons from global experience*. Background Paper: The Learning Generation. The Education Commission.
- Carl AE (2002). *Teacher Empowerment through Curriculum Development; Theory into Practice*. Cape Town: Juda and Company Limited.
- Carl AE (2002). *Teacher Empowerment through Curriculum Development; Theory into Practice*. Cape Town: Juda and Company Limited.
- Chatturgoon S (2008). *An Exploration into Teachers' Perception on Teacher Leadership and their Motivational Levels to Engage in Leadership Roles at School*. Unpublished Masters Thesis, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg.
- Cheung ACK, Wong PM (2012). Factors affecting the implementation of curriculum reform in Hong Kong: Key findings from a large-scale survey study. *International journal of Educational Management* 26(1):39-54.
- Chisholm L, Leyendecker R (2008). Curriculum Reform in Post 1990s Sub-Saharan Africa. *International Journal of Educational Development* 28:195-205.
- Chopra V (2016). *A study of the awareness, interest and practices of teachers towards continuous and comprehensive evaluation*. Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis. Delhi, Guru Gobind Singh Indraprastha University.
- Dada F, Diphoto T, Hoadley U, Khembo E, Muller S, Volmink L (2009). *Report of the Task Team for the Review of Implementation of the National Curriculum Statement (Final report)*. Pretoria, South Africa: Government Printer.
- Dalrymple SE, Auerbach AJ, Schussler EE (2017). Taking a Community Approach to Curriculum Change. *International Journal for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning* 11(2):5.
- Denzin N, Lincoln Y (Eds.) (2005). *Handbook of qualitative research*. (3rd Ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- de Waal TG (2004). *Curriculum 2005: Challenges facing teachers in historically disadvantaged schools in the Western Cape*. Unpublished Masters Thesis, University of the Western Cape, South Africa.
- Ehiometalor ET (2001). *School facilities management practice in Nigeria*. In: Nwagwu, N. A., Ehiometalor, E.T, Ogunu, M. and Nisadiani, M. (eds) *Current issues in educational management in*

- Nigeria. Benin: Nigerian Association for Educational Administration and Planning (NAEAP).
- Erden E (2010). Problems that Preschool teachers face in the curriculum implementation. Unpublished Masters Thesis, Middle East Technical University.
- Fullan M (2001). *Leading in a culture of change*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Gatawa BSM (1998). *Quality-quantity dilemma in Education: the Zimbabwean experience*. Harare: College Press.
- Govender S (2018). South African teachers' perspectives on support received in implementing curriculum changes. *South African Journal of Education* 38(2):1-12.
- Harricharan R (2011). Narratives of curriculum adaptation: Teachers challenges in the face of Curriculum reform. A thesis submitted to the school of graduate studies in the Department of Curriculum Studies at Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University.
- Henderson C, Beach A, Finkelstein N (2011). Facilitating change in undergraduate STEM instructional practices: An analytic review of the literature. *Journal of Research in Science Teaching* 48(8):952-984.
- Ivowi UMO (2004). Curriculum implementation for school administration. In: Noah, A.O. K, Shonibare, D. O, Ojo, A. A. and Olujuwon, T. (eds) *Curriculum implementation and professionalization teaching in Nigeria*. Lagos: Untral Educational Services.
- Knight JA (2005). Grades 8 and 9 educators preference for, and expectations of, Curriculum 2005 (C2005). *New Voices in Psychology* 1:19-32.
- Kolmos A, Hadgraft RG, Holgaard JE (2016). Response strategies for curriculum change in engineering. *International Journal of Technology Des Education* 26:391-411.
- Korstjens I, Moser A (2017). Series: Practical guidance to qualitative research. Part 2: context, research questions and designs. *European Journal of General Practice* 23(1):274-279.
- Kuiper W, Berkvens J (eds) (2013). *Balancing curriculum regulation and freedom across Europe*. CIDREE Yearbook 2013. Enschede, The Netherlands: SLO Netherlands Institute for Curriculum Development.
- Lelliot A, Murakapenda W, Doidge M, du Plessis J, Mhlolo M, Msimanga A, Mundalamo F, Naledi M, Bowie L (2009). Issues of teaching and learning in South Africa; A disjunction between curriculum policy and implementation. *African Journal of Research in MST Education, Special Issue*, pp. 47-64.
- Lungu J (2016). Cost Sharing Policy on Delivery of Quality Education in Kabwe District of Zambia: Exploring its Effectiveness and Sustainability. <https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/f0e1/a54aeb260b9608c56f60a3e46af86ac0393b.pdf> Accessed on 4-10-2019
- Magongo MC (2011). Challenges facing secondary school principals in the implementation of the national curriculum statement in Capricorn District of the Limpopo Province. Master of Education Thesis submitted to University of Limpopo.
- Mamlock-Naaman R, Taitelbaum D (2019). The influences of global trends in teaching and learning Chemistry on the Chemistry curriculum in Israel. *Israel Journal of Chemistry* 59(6-7):618-624.
- Mashele KZ (2005). Teacher's Participation in Staff Development. A paper delivered at Principals' Regional Conference. Grasskop, 7-9 August 2005.
- Mawila JJ (2007). Management of New Curriculum in Schools. A paper delivered at PEU Regional Conference, Grasskop Resort, 12-15 September 2007.
- Mbeshu NC (2010). An Evaluation into the Implementation of Arts and Culture Learning Area in Bizana Schools of the Eastern Cape Province. Unpublished Master's thesis, Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University, Port Elizabeth.
- McBeath, C. (1999). Research into Curriculum Dissemination in TAFE. *Issues in Education Research* 1(1):23-30. <http://www.education.curtin.edu.au/iierl/mcbeath.html>
- Merriam SB (2009). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Mkpa MA (1987). *Curriculum development*. Owerri: Totan Publishing Limited.
- Mohajan H (2018). Qualitative research methodology in Social Sciences and related subjects. *Personal RePEc Archive* pp. 1-29.
- Mpofu E, Chireshe R, Mpofu I (2018). Inclusive education in Zimbabwe. In: P. Engelbretch and L. Green, *Responding to the challenges of inclusive education in Africa*. Pretoria: Van Schaik Publishers.
- Mohaeka R, Wilmot D (2013). Geography teachers' interpretation of a curriculum reform initiative; the case of the Lesotho Environmental Education Support Project (LEESP). *South African Journal of Education* 33(1):1.
- Mohamed H (2004). *Challenges in curriculum transformation*. Dar es Salaam: Dar es Salaam University Press.
- Molapo MR, Pillay V (2018). Politicising curriculum implementation: The case of primary schools. *South African Journal of Education* 38(1):1-9.
- Motseke MJ (2005). OBE: Implementation Problems in the Black Township of South Africa. *Interdisciplinary Journal* 4(2):113-121.
- Mutch C (2017). Editorial: Curriculum change and teacher resistance. *Curriculum Matters* 8.
- Naidoo DG, Muthukrishna N (2014). Teachers' 'Small Stories' about curriculum reform in South Africa: 'Square peg in a round hole'. *Journal of Social Science* 38(3):271-282.
- Naong MN (2008). Overcoming challenges of the new curriculum statement – a progress report. *Interim: Interdisciplinary Journal* 7(2):164-176.
- Nasser R (2017). Qatar's educational reform past and future: Challenges in teacher development. *Open Review of Educational Research* 4(1):1-19.
- Ndulu A, Moronge M (2015). Influence of Cost Sharing on Students' Academic Performance in Secondary Schools in Kenya: A Case of Kitui County. *The Strategic Journal of Business and Change Management* 2(24):465-484.
- Njeru E, Orodho O (2003). Education financing in Kenya: Secondary school bursary scheme implementation and challenges. IPAR DP/035/2003, Nairobi: Institute of policy Analysis and Research.
- Noblit GW, Pink WT (2007). CODA: AN Urban Education Dystopia. *International Handbook of Urban Education* pp. 1175-1176.
- Nziramasanga D (1999). *The Commission Report 1999*. Harare: Government Printers.
- Obilo IP, Sangoleye SA (2010). Universal basic education policy: challenges of a successful implementation and way forward. A paper presented at the 9th National Conference of the School of Social Sciences, A.I.F.C.E., Owerri.
- Obinna IP (2007). The role of effective teaching in curriculum implementation in Nigeria. *Journal of Curriculum Studies* 14(2):65-71.
- Odey EO, Oboh FA (2015). Teachers perceived problems of curriculum implementation in tertiary institutions in Cross River State of Nigeria. *Journal of Education and Practice* 6(19):145-151.
- Oztek Z (2012). Evaluation of 'Cascade Strategy' for training of health care workers for immunization programmes: An analytical literature review. WHO International Children's Centre.
- Paley J (2017). *Phenomenology as a qualitative research: A critical analysis of meaning attribution*. New York: Routledge.
- Park M, Sung YK (2013). Teachers' perceptions of the recent curriculum reforms and their implementation: What can we learn from the case of Korean elementary teachers? *Asia Pacific Journal of Education* 33(1):15-33.
- Pont B (2018). *Curriculum reform: An education change perspective*. Dublin: Policy Advice and Implementation Division Directorate for Education and Skills. OECD.
- Prawat R (1992). Teachers' Beliefs about teaching and learning: A constructivist perspective. *American Journal of Education* 100:354-395.
- Prensky M (2014). The world needs a new curriculum: It's time to lose the 'proxies', and go beyond '21st century skills' and get all students in the world to the real core of education. Global Future Education Foundation and Institute. globalfuture-education.org.
- Raselimo M, Wilmot D (2013) Geography teachers' interpretation of a curriculum reform initiative: the case of the Lesotho Environmental Education Support project (LEESP). *South African Journal of Education* 33(1):1-7.
- Reis S (2018). Curriculum reform: Why? When? What? How? And how will we know it works? *Journal of Health Policy Research* 7(30):2-4.
- Rogan JM, Anderson TR (2011). Bridging the educational research-teaching practice gap: Curriculum Development, Part 2: Becoming an agent of change. *Biochemistry Molecular Biology Education*

- 39(3):233-241.
- Sahlberg P (2009). A short history of educational reform in Finland. White Paper, April 90(30).
- Salaria N (2012). Meaning of the term- Descriptive survey research method 1:6.
- Shumba A, Chireshe R (2013). The triumph and prosperity of education in Zimbabwe. In T Mwamwenda P, P Lukhele-Olorunju [Eds], *The Triumph and Prosperity of Education in Africa* 608-637. Pretoria: Africa Institute of South Africa.
- Singaram DT (2007). Outcomes-based Assessment as a Non-Reflection of Learner Performance. Unpublished Masters Thesis, University of Johannesburg, Johannesburg.
- Sparapani EF, Perez DC, Gould J, Hillman S, Clark L (2014). A global curriculum? Understanding teaching and learning in the United States, Taiwan, India and Mexico. *SAGE Open* pp.1-15.
- Syomwene A (2013). Factors Affecting Teachers' Implementation of Curriculum Reforms and Educational Policies in Schools: The Kenyan Experience. *Journal of Education and Practice* 4(22):80-85.
- Smit B (2001). How primary teachers' experience education policy change in South Africa. *Perspective in Education* 19(3):67-83.
- Spillane JP, Reiser BJ, Reimer T (2002). Policy implementation and cognition: Reframing and refocusing implementation research. *Review of Educational Research* 72(3):387-431.
- Tanner D, Tanner LN (1980). *Curriculum development: Theory into practice*. New York: Macmillan.
- Tubey RJ, Rotich JK, Bengat JK (2015). Research paradigms: Theory and practice. *Research on Humanities and Social Sciences* 5(5):224-228.
- Uiseb I (2007). Strengths and weaknesses of the previous century influencing the curriculum reforms of the 21st century. *Progressio*, 29(1-2):69-82.
- Vandeyar S, Killen R (2003). Has curriculum reform in South Africa really changed assessment practices, and what promise does the revised National Curriculum Statement hold? *Perspectives in Education* 21(1):119-134.
- Waks LJ (2003). How globalisation can cause fundamental curriculum change: An American perspective. *Israel Journal of educational Change* 4:383-418.
- Yeung SSY, Lam CC (2007). Teachers' conception of curriculum integration: A problem hindering its implementation in Hong Kong. *Education Journal* 35(2):109-144.
- Yin H (2013). Implementing the national curriculum reform in China: A review of the debate. *Front Education China* 8(3):331-359.
- Zhu J (2010). *Curriculum Implementation Challenges and Strategies in China*. East China Normal University, PRC. EDU/EDPC/ECEC/RD 47.
- Zimmerman J (2006). Why some teachers resist change and what principals can do about it. *National Association of Secondary School Principals* 90(3):238-249.
- Zvobgo RJ (1986). *Transforming education: The Zimbabwean experience*. Harare: College Press.

Related Journals:

