

The Role of Pentecostal Theological Institutions in Poverty Alleviation in Tanzania

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Abstract

This study examines the role of Pentecostal theological education in poverty alleviation in Tanzania. Theological colleges and schools still use curriculums brought by the missionaries over seventy years ago, thus lacking proper contextualization. Scholars have argued that Pentecostal missionaries had a narrower focus on training because they focused on the soul's salvation and neglected the body's needs. As a result, most church ministers were unprepared to serve the church and society holistically. In recent years, there has been a growing interest among the Pentecostals in revitalizing their missional mandate towards a holistic ministry based on sound biblical theology. This study employed mixed research methods whereby 21 respondents from 6 Pentecostal denominations participated by filling in a survey questionnaire electronically. The researcher used a purposive sampling technique to select research participants. The participants included principals, academic deans, students, and senior denominational leaders. The findings revealed that some Pentecostal leaders still have a dichotomized understanding of theology. However, there is a gradual shift towards holistic ministry. This paper proposes that Pentecostal theological institutions need to evaluate their curriculums to be true to the Bible and relevant in modern society. Pentecostal theological institutions can consider partnering with Christian development agencies to develop a holistic approach to education.

Keywords: Pentecostal Theological institutions; Holistic Ministry; Integral Mission; Poverty Alleviation; Tanzania.



Introduction

Pentecostal Theological Institutions (in this paper, PTIs refer to Pentecostal Bible schools and colleges) play a vital role in the growth and stability of the church in Tanzania.¹ PTIs² have existed for over seventy years and have been instrumental in training and equipping ministers for the church ministry. Pentecostal theological curriculums were imported into Africa for the ecclesiastical demands of the day. While the curriculums have served the church for several decades, in recent years, concerns have been raised that Pentecostal theological education is somewhat disconnected from the contextual challenges facing the contemporary church and society, such as poverty.³ Thus, there is a need to review the theological education approach in Africa to meet the needs of a "wounded continent."⁴

Pentecostal theological education should have a holistic approach to be contextually relevant. All human needs should be addressed, including spiritual, social, economic, cultural, religious, and even political. PTIs should intentionally be involved in the fight against poverty as part of their missional mandate to the suffering world. Since poverty is a social phenomenon, a holistic theological response is inevitable. PTIs are strategically positioned to produce graduates who can address Tanzanian communities' socio-economic and spiritual needs, contributing to poverty alleviation. This paper discusses the critical role of PTIs and the need to review the old missionary-driven curriculums to meet the present demands.

Methodology

Derek Jansen and Kerry Warren define research methodology as specific and practical ways or techniques that the researcher applies to help achieve the research objectives by ensuring

¹ Reuben E. Kabarata, "A History of Theological Education in the Free Pentecostal Church of Tanzania (FPCT)," A Dissertation, (Vision International University, 2021), v.

² This paper focuses primarily on the PTIs that belong to the following selected classical Pentecostal denominations: Tanzania Assemblies of God, Pentecostal Assemblies of God (Tanzania), and Free Pentecostal Church of Tanzania.

³ For example, Dennis A. Smith and B. F. Gutierrez, "Chapter 4: Pentecostalism and Confrontation with Poverty in Brazil, by Cecilia Loreto Mariz," *Religion Online*, n.d., accessed May 10, 2024, <https://www.religion-online.org/book-chapter/chapter-4-pentecostalism-and-confrontation-with-poverty-in-brazil-by-cecilia-loreto-mariz/> and Gabriella Van Gabriella Breda, "A Pentecostal Expression of Holistic Reflection in the Improvement of Pastoral Leadership Practices," 2019.

⁴ Johannes Knoetze, "A Social History of Mission and the Influences on Theological Education in Africa," in *A Critical Engagement with Theological Education in Africa: A South African Perspectives* (Durbanville: AOSIS Books, 2021), 3–16.



valid and reliable results.⁵ This study used a mixed methods approach. Questionnaires were used to collect both quantitative and qualitative data. Primary data was collected from selected PTI principals, lecturers, academic deans, graduates/students, and denominational leaders from six sampled Pentecostal denominations. The researcher used a purposive sampling technique. An online survey link was sent to the research participants; 21 participants responded, 19 of whom were males and 2 were females. The tables below illustrate the research participants and the denominations represented.

Participants	No	%
Principals	4	19
Academic Deans	1	4.8
Lecturers	2	9.5
General Superintends	3	14
General Secretaries	1	4.8
Students/students	2	9.5
Pastors	7	33
Director of Education	1	4.8
Total	21	100

Pentecostal Denomination	Participants	%
Pentecostal Assemblies of God (Tanzania)	10	48
Tanzania Assemblies of God	3	14
Free Pentecostal Church of Tanzania	3	14
Evangelistic Assemblies of God	3	14
Transformed Life Mission Church	1	4.8
God's Love Fellowship Church	1	4.8
	21	100

As noted earlier, the researcher prepared 15 survey questionnaires, uploaded them into Google Forms, and distributed them to the respondents, who filled them out electronically. Out of 15 questions, 10 sought to collect quantitative data, including demographic information, and five intended to collect qualitative data from the research participants.

⁵ Derek Jansen, and Keryn Warren., “What Is Research Methodology? Definition + Examples,” *Grad Coach*, last modified November 29, 2021, accessed March 25, 2024, <https://gradcoach.com/what-is-research-methodology/>.



The researcher analyzed the quantitative data after all the participants filled out the Google Forms. The qualitative data was analyzed using the coding process of converting the raw data into themes or categories.⁶ The researcher used QDA Miner Lite Software to analyze the qualitative data. QDA was useful in sieving and theming the data. Creswell's advice on data analysis was beneficial in the process as he suggests five steps of data analysis: 1) initially read the text, 2) divide the text into segments of information, 3) label the segments of information with codes, 4) reduce the overlap and redundancy of codes, and 5) collapse codes into themes.⁷

Literature Review

Poverty in Tanzania: An Overview

The United Republic of Tanzania is an Eastern African country with a population of 61,741,120, whereby 21,544,623 live in urban and 40,196,497 live in rural areas, according to the 2022 census. Tanzania is one of the world's poorest countries, and its economy depends primarily on agriculture. Statistics indicate that more than one-third of Tanzanians still live in abject poverty.⁸ Recently, the Vice President of Tanzania admitted that poverty is a serious problem in Tanzania. He revealed that more than 14 million Tanzanians live below the poverty line and cautioned that the figure was disturbing.⁹

Pentecostalism in Tanzania

According to Car-Erick Sahlberg, the Pentecostal Holiness Church (PHC) was the earliest Pentecostal denomination in Tanzania, founded in the 1920s. The first missionary was Paul Derr, who later faced discouragement, disease, and internal problems in the PHC work, causing him to join Assemblies of God (AoG) in 1938.¹⁰ Other early Pentecostal denominations include Pentecostal Assemblies of God (PAG) and Elim Pentecostal Church. PAG arrived in Tanzania in 1956 and was pioneered by Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada

⁶ Roberts and Hyatt, *Dissertation Journey*, Kindle, location 4903 of 7855.

⁷ Creswell, J. W. (2004). *Educational research: Planning, conducting, and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research* (2nd ed.). Pearson. quoted in, Roberts, Carol M., Hyatt, Laura. *The Dissertation Journey* (p. 207). SAGE Publications. Kindle Edition., in Hyatt, *Dissertation Journey*, Kindle, location 4903 of 7855.

⁸ "Tanzania Country Profile," *Ministry of Foreign Affairs and East African Cooperation*, accessed May 10, 2024, <https://www.foreign.go.tz/tanzania/category/country-profile>.

⁹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ntFrQFMmWVU>

¹⁰ Carl-Erik Sahlberg, *From Krapf to Rugambwa: A Church History of Tanzania*, (Nairobi, Evangel Publishing House, 1986), 144



(PAOC) by Gus and Dorce Wentland – who came to Tanzania from Kenya. Elim was a British Pentecostal mission that started in Tanzania in 1946 and became strong in the districts of central and northern Tanzania.¹¹

In addition, "Swedish Free Mission (SFM) was the Scandinavian Pentecostal mission to work in East Africa."¹² The earliest center of SFM in Tanzania was in Ntazengwa, Tabora region, where the newly married missionary couple arrived in 1932 for "a lifelong mission effort."¹³ SFM work expanded to the Nkinga district in the Tabora region and the Kigoma region. Svea Karlson, an unmarried female missionary, pioneered the Kigoma mission. Svea was later married to another SFM missionary, Bror Nordberg, in 1946. SFM work continued to spread to other locations in Tanzania, mainly in the central and western parts.¹⁴ In 2000, the SFM changed to the Free Pentecostal Church of Tanzania (FPCT). There are other New Pentecostal and Charismatic churches in Tanzania, but this paper focuses on the earliest Pentecostal denominations.

The above mission-founded Pentecostal denominations in Tanzania immediately established Bible schools at their inception. According to Reuben Kabarata, FPCT, for example, started theological training in 1932 and currently has over five training centers nationwide.¹⁵ Similarly, the Pentecostal Assemblies of God Tanzania (PAGT) established a theological and ministerial training center in 1967. PAGT has one main theological college and fifteen training centers spread across the regions of Tanzania.¹⁶ Tanzania Assemblies of God (TAG) founded its first Bible school in Mbeya in 1954. In 2024, TAG had ten Bible colleges and twenty church-planting schools spread across Tanzania.¹⁷ These institutions offer Pentecostal theological training from certificate to bachelor degree levels. TAG offers doctorate degrees in partnership with the US-based Global University.

¹¹ Ibid., 145.

¹² Ibid., 144.

¹³ Sahlberg, *Kraft to Rugambwa*, 144.

¹⁴ Ibid., 144.

¹⁵ Reuben Kabarata, "A History of Theological Education in the Free Pentecostal Church of Tanzania: A Case Study of FPCT Bible Schools and Colleges: From Swedish Free Mission (SFM) to The Free Pentecostal Church of Tanzania (FPCT)," A Dissertation, Vision International University (Grin Verlag, 2021).

¹⁶ Pentecostal Assemblies of God Strategic Plan (2021-2031).

¹⁷ See <https://tag.or.tz/site/education>



Pentecostalism and Poverty

Historically, classical Pentecostals¹⁸ have been criticized for putting "most of their energy into producing crusades, tent revivals, and healing meetings and have little time left for addressing the practical social needs of members of their local community."¹⁹ This statement may be exaggerated, but there is a grain of truth. According to Emma Tomalin and Dena Freeman, in the last four decades, the mainline churches have been intentionally involved in poverty alleviation projects to the extent that they established a development department in their organizational structure.²⁰ In contrast, Amos Mhina observes that Pentecostals have been struggling with nonspiritual matters; hence, their contribution to the education, health, and economic development sectors is unnoticed.²¹

However, Dena Freeman observes that Pentecostal's approach to poverty alleviation is indirect. She insists that the Pentecostals' involvement in poverty alleviation work,

... is not through the consciously defined 'development' activities, but rather through a very nature of Pentecostal beliefs and practices itself. ... [it is] the Pentecostal transformation of the person [that] indeed shift people's beliefs, values, and morality in such a way that, when other factors are favorable, very often leads these people to then make a quite radical social and economic change which then lead them in the direction of development.²²

Paivi Hasu concurs with Freeman, who states,

Pentecostal Christianity, with its prosperity gospel and deliverance practices, offers means to come to terms with changing social and economic circumstances. Conversion, salvation, and the creation of new

¹⁸ The use of the term "classical Pentecostalism" started in the 1970s, as a blanket term referring to the "traditional Western related denominations which identify themselves as exclusively Pentecostal; almost all of the White origin ...but now worldwide with adherents in all races, ..." See David B. Barret, "The Twentieth Century Pentecostal/Charismatic Renewal in the Holy Spirit, with Its Goal of World Evangelization," in *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*, (July 1988), 12. Azusa Street revival, in 1906, has been credited for the spread of such denominations.

¹⁹ Global Pentecostalism: An Emergent Force within World Christianity, (n.d.), 32. Accessed March 30, 2019, <https://content.ucpress.edu/chapters/10061.ch01.pdf>

²⁰ Emma Tomalin and Dena Freeman, "Pentecostalism and Economic Development in Sub-Saharan Africa," essay, in *Routledge Handbook of Religions and Global Development* (Abingdon, Oxon, UK: Routledge, 2015), 4.

²¹ Amos Mhina, *Faith and Development*, 67.

²² Emma Tomalin and Dena Freeman, "Pentecostalism and Economic Development in Sub-Saharan Africa," 2.



attitudes and personal morality transform the person, enabling them to make the best of the rapid social and economic change.²³

Similarly, Donald E. Miller and Tetsunao Yamamori observe the shift in the Pentecostal's theology and development. Unlike the previous generation of Pentecostals, who were confined to preaching personal salvation, the present generation of Pentecostals actively seeks to address the community's spiritual, physical, and social needs.²⁴ Building on Miller and Yamamori's work, Kyama Mugambi conducted his research in Kenya and found that the progressive Pentecostal churches²⁵ have "... refused to be content with a personal faith that avoided engagement in the public sphere. These churches are considered the faithful agents of God's kingdom, as they are keen to see justice enacted around them. The progressive Pentecostal church's mandate extends beyond personal salvation to an involved concern with the world around them."²⁶

Moreover, Bryant Myers has appraised the Pentecostals for their emphasis on personal transformation as opposed to development agencies who "... tend to think more of community level and structural change."²⁷ According to Myers, personal transformation is critically important because it restores the confidence of the poor by "recreating their identity in ways that lead them to no longer accept fatalistic beliefs or remain passive in terms of their future."²⁸ Myers advises his evangelical colleagues to "... take ... Pentecostal thinking and practice about empowering the poor more seriously."²⁹ In addition to focusing on personal transformation, Pentecostals should not be restrained from addressing social sin and structural injustices.

In the last decade, Pentecostal scholars and development practitioners have shown a growing interest in the role of Pentecostalism in social concerns. This desire is reflected in the

²³ Paivi Hasu, "Prosperity Gospels and Enchanted Worldviews: Two Responses to Socio-Economic Transformation in Tanzanian Pentecostal Christianity," essay, in *Pentecostalism and Development Churches, NGOs and Social Change in Africa* (Jerusalem: The Van Leer Jerusalem Institute, 2012), 67–86, 84.

²⁴ Donald E. Miller and Tetsunao Yamamori, *Global Pentecostalism: The New Face of Christian Social Engagement* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 3.

²⁵ Miller and Yamamori coined this term to refer to "Christians who claim to be inspired by the Holy Spirit and the life of Jesus and seek to holistically address the spiritual, physical, and social needs of their community."

²⁶ Kyama M. Mugambi, *A Spirit of Revitalization: Urban Pentecostalism in Kenya* (Waco, TX, TX: Baylor University Press, 2020), 132-34.

²⁷ Bryant L Myers, *Progressive Pentecostalism, Development, and Christian Development NGOs: A Challenge and an Opportunity*, PDF. n.d.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid.



World Alliance for Pentecostal Theological Education (WAPTE)³⁰ journal, *Social Engagement*, which affirms the global Pentecostal commitment to poverty, suffering, injustice, and development. The journal resulted from the World Pentecostal Conference in Calgary in 2018, where Pentecostal scholars and development practitioners presented papers and discussed their theological foundations of social engagement. In the introduction section, Ulrik Josefsson and Barry Saylor admit, "Within the field of theology, the interest in Pentecostalism as a social change agent has been weaker."³¹ Therefore, Pentecostal scholars and development practitioners call the Pentecostal community back to a balanced theology of the good news of the Kingdom of God. Kyama Mugambi concludes his article, *Pentecostal Social Engagement: Challenges and Possibilities for the Global South*, by affirming, "Social engagement is part and parcel of mission in a world in need of both the message and the power of Christ."³²

Pentecostal Theological Training in Africa

Several scholars have expressed concern that theological education in Africa "does not resonate well with the holistic worldview of Africa."³³ It is argued that African theological students get the training that is far removed from the realities of the context of their ministry. In other words, theological education in Africa is linked with the missionaries; hence, it is imported "with the curriculum of a 'powerful Western church' with a fixed and finalized dogma about God."³⁴ Alfred R. Brundson laments that theological education in Africa equips students with knowledge that is not ideally suited to address ministry in the unique African

³⁰ WAPTE is a theological training quality and assurance arm for the World Pentecostal Fellowship. The Pentecostal World Fellowship is a cooperative body of Pentecostal churches and groups worldwide of approved standing. For details visit <https://www.pwfellowship.org/>

³¹ Ulrik Josefsson and Barry Saylor, "Pentecostal Social Engagement: Introduction," *Pentecostal Education: A Journal of WAPTE - a World Alliance for Pentecostal Theological Education* Volume 6, no. Number 2 (2021): 1-120.

³² Ibid., 111.

³³ Johannes Knoetze, "A Social History of Mission and the Influences on Theological Education in Africa," essay, in *A Critical Engagement with Theological Education in Africa: A South African Perspectives* (Durbanville: AOSIS Books, 2021), 3-16.

³⁴ Ibid.



environment. He asserts that Africans are still yearning for an authentic theology that can holistically address the needs of the church.³⁵

Kyama Mugambi observes that since the time of missionaries, "Theological training was denominational in character and intent."³⁶ Hence, missionaries had a narrower perspective in their orientation because they focused only on the training that addressed conversion and neglected other socio-economic and political matters. Thus, Pentecostal theological education was missionary-driven, emphasizing Western-oriented content and methods because they aimed at reproducing congregations of the kind they modeled in Europe.³⁷ Johannes J. Knoetze rightly suggests that theological training in Africa should revise its approach to bottom-up within the African church context.³⁸

The need to review theological education curriculums in Africa is of concern to several scholars. Gideon Nganyu, for example, in his article, *Decolonization Agenda at the Seminary Level*, rightly argues that "... there is a need to reconfigure the curriculum, content, pedagogy, and methodology in the theological curriculum [in Africa] for effective ministerial formation and contextual theology."³⁹ Among the reasons Nganyu gives for decolonizing African theological education is that "... Eurocentric curriculums often fail to address the pressing issues African societies face, such as poverty, inequality, and social justice. This lack of contextual relevance hinders the transformative potential of theological education in Africa."⁴⁰ Nganyu is correct. As an antidote to missionary-driven curriculums, Nganyu quotes Augustine Musopole, who advocates for the African worldview to be at the heart of African theological education.⁴¹ Whereas overhauling African theological education is a timely need, I argue that sound biblical theology should inform African worldview and not vice versa.

³⁵ Alfred R. Brundson, "Current Perspectives on Theological Education in Southern Africa: Achievements and Challenges," essay, in *A Critical Engagement with Theological Education in Africa: A South African Perspectives* (Durbanville: AOSIS Books, 2021), 17-36.

³⁶ Kyama M. Mugambi, *A Spirit of Revitalization: Urban Pentecostalism in Kenya* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2020), 205.

³⁷ Ibid., 204, 207, 209.

³⁸ Johannes Knoetze, "A Social History of Mission and the Influences on Theological Education in Africa."

³⁹ Gideon Ngi Nganyu, *Decolonization Agenda at the Seminary Level: Emancipating Theological Education in Africa*, 2023. *ShahidiHub International Journal of Theology & Religious Studies*, 3(1), 17-36. Retrieved from <https://shahidihub.org/shahidihub/index.php/ijtrs/article/view/123>

⁴⁰ Ibid., 20.

⁴¹ Ibid., 25.

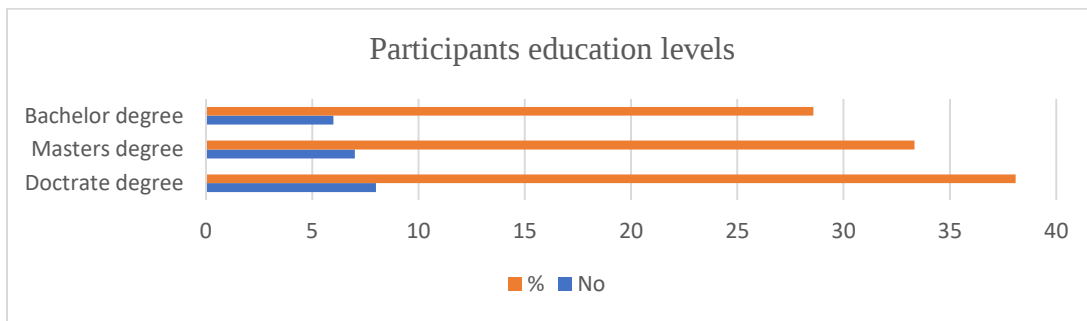


To sum up this section, the literature review survey indicates that the impact of theological education on poverty alleviation is limited as their curriculums are not holistic. The need to evaluate PTIs' curriculums is undeniable. On the other hand, a few academics, such as Paivi Hasu and Dena Freeman, contend that the Pentecostal approach to reducing poverty involves personal transformation. While this is true, an integrated approach to poverty alleviation is desirable.

Findings

Findings from Quantitative Data

The demographic data revealed that the participants' age was distributed as follows: 50–60 (n=11, 52.4%), 40-50 (n=5, 23.8%), above 60 (n=3, 14.3%), 30-40 (n=1, 4.8%), and below 30 (n=1, 4.8%). Regarding the education level of the participants, (n=8, 38.1%) had doctorate degrees, (n=7, 33.3%) had master's degrees, and (n=6, 28.6%) had bachelor degrees as shown in the chart below.

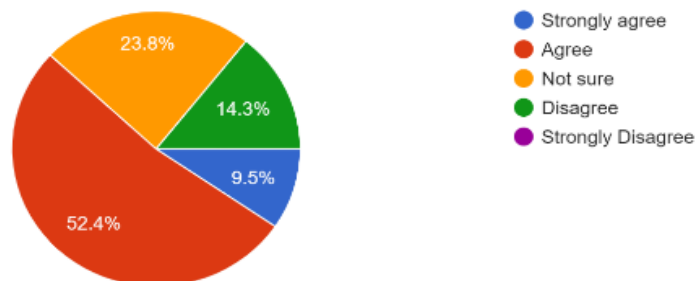


Question number six in the questionnaire sought to examine the participants' perceptions and whether PTIs have a biblical and missional mandate of addressing poverty and suffering. The responses indicated that 9.5% (n=2) strongly agreed and 52.4% (n=11) agreed. It implies that 61.9% (n=13) have a holistic understanding of biblical theology. Interestingly, 23.8% (n=5) said they were unsure, and 14.3% (n=3) strongly disagreed that PTIs have a missional and biblical mandate to address poverty. This makes those with a dichotomized understanding of theology 39.1% (n=8). It is worth noting that all the participants have bachelor's degrees and above. The chart below shows the responses.



6. Pentecostal Theological Institutions in Tanzania have a biblical and missional mandate of addressing poverty related issues

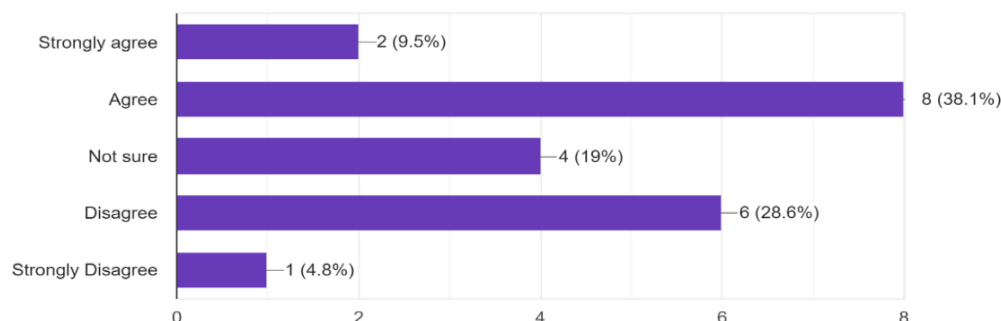
21 responses



Whether PTIs adequately equip their graduates to address socio-economic challenges facing the church and community members around them gave interesting results. The result indicated that 9.5% (n=2) strongly agreed and 38.1% (n=8) agreed, totaling 47.9% (n=10). This is below 50% of all the participants. It means that 52.1% (n=11) admit that PTIs have not adequately equipped their graduates to address socio-economic challenges in their congregations and communities. As shown in the graph below, 28.6% (n=6) disagreed, 19% (n=4) were unsure, and 4.8% (n=1) strongly disagreed.

7. Pentecostal Theological Institutions in Tanzania have been adequately equipping their graduates to address socio-economic challenges facing church and communities members around them.

21 responses

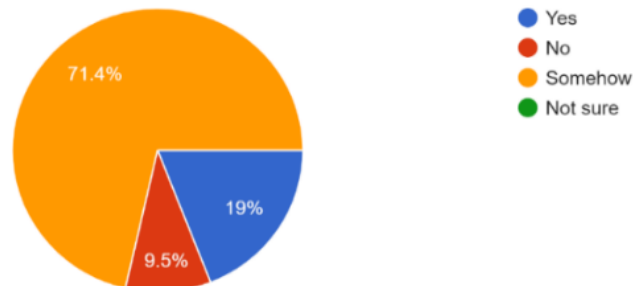


In responding to question 8, as shown below in the pie chart, 71.4% (n=15) scored somehow, 9.5% (n=2) said "No," and 19% (n=4) responded "Yes." This implies that 81% (n=17) feel they were not adequately prepared to address nonspiritual matters, including poverty issues.



8. Do you feel that the Bible school or college you graduated from prepared you adequately to address the so called "non spiritual" matters (i.....ated to poverty in your congregation and community?

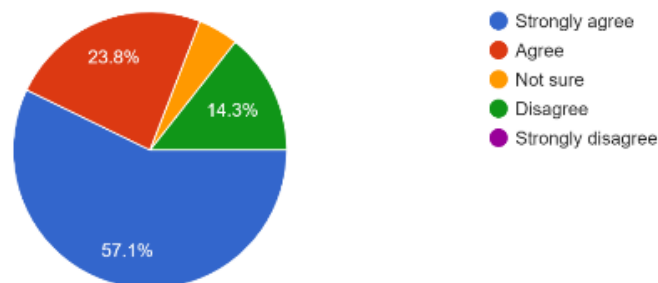
21 responses



Questions 9 and 10 were related. Question 9 sought to examine the understanding of holistic theology by asking whether the church's primary role is to win souls to Christ. Engaging in development projects is its secondary role." Responses indicated that 57.1% (n=12) strongly agreed, and 23.8% (n=5) agreed. This means that 80.9% (n=19) thought the church exists primarily to win souls to Christ. In contrast, 14.3% (n=3) disagreed, and 4.8% (n=1) were unsure.

9. The primary role of the church is to win souls to Christ. Engaging in development projects is its secondary role

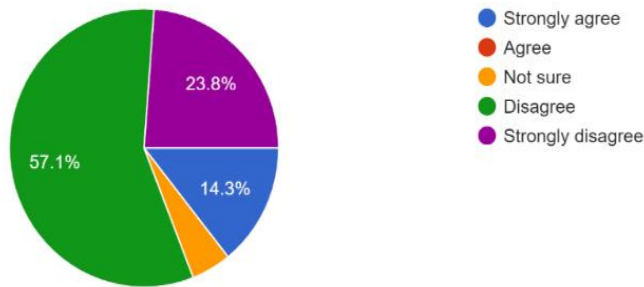
21 responses



Question 10 asked whether poverty alleviation is the work of the NGOs and the government, not the church. A total of 57.1% (n=12) disagreed, and 23.8% (n=8) strongly disagreed. Only 14.3% (n=3) and 4.8% (n=1) of the participants agreed that poverty alleviation is the work of the NGOs and the government.

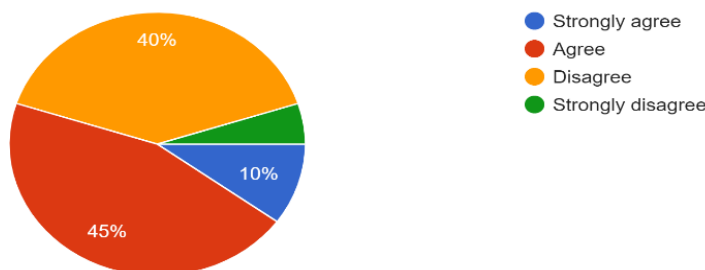


10. Poverty alleviation is the work of the NGOs and the government and not of the church
21 responses



The responses to question 13 revealed that most of the curriculums for the PTIs are not holistic, meaning that they do not address both the physical and spiritual needs of the church and society. A total of 20 participants responded to this question, 40% (n=8) saying that the curriculum in the Bible School or college where they teach or graduated from is not holistic, and 5% (n=1) strongly disagreed that the curriculum is holistic. Similarly, 45% (n=9) said that the curriculum in the Bible school or college where they teach or graduated from is holistic, and 10% (n=2) strongly agreed that the curriculum is holistic. The pie chart below illustrates.

13. Based on your answer above, the curriculum of your theological institution (Bible school, college), where you teach or where you graduated from is holistic
20 responses



Findings from Qualitative Data

As noted earlier, QDA Miner Lite Software was useful in sieving and theming qualitative data in three sub-topics – the impact of PTIs on poverty alleviation and the Pentecostal perspectives on holistic ministry.



Impact of PTIs on Poverty Alleviation in Tanzania

Most of the research participants expressed their discontent with the impact of PTIs on poverty alleviation in Tanzania. The responses revealed that PTIs in Tanzania in the last twenty years have not significantly impacted poverty alleviation efforts in Tanzanian communities. Their priority has been to preach the gospel such that poverty alleviation was left to be the duty of the NGOs and the government. One respondent said, "This is wrong." Another participant stated, "I do not see the significant impact made so far. The emphasis has been on winning souls and growing the church numerically and spiritually, not economically. As a result, many church members are economically poor and dependent." Still, another respondent said, "Most theological colleges dealt with spiritual matters only - development projects were not our church business." Also, one respondent commented, "I have never seen my church address this issue of poverty rather than pray for blessings from God." Most PTIs use too old curriculums that do not adequately address the demands of contemporary society, which could be the cause for such feelings.

In his dissertation, *A History of Theological Education in the Free Pentecostal Church of Tanzania*, Reuben Kabarata discusses the impact of theological education. According to him, theological education has contributed to the great revivals and church growth, protection of the Pentecostal doctrine, and sustainability of church growth through the theology of social development.⁴² It appears that what Kabarata means by social development is "social activities such as Easter picnicking, Christmas carol singing."⁴³ Although Kabarata acknowledges that poverty is one of Tanzanians' biggest problems,⁴⁴ he does not articulate how theological education contributes to poverty alleviation in the church and society.

In our research, not all responses were negative about the role of PTIs in poverty alleviation in Tanzania. One participant pointed out that the Pentecostal experience has helped bring hope and internal peace, which are core factors in eradicating poverty. Similarly, the following comment is worth noting. It states, "In some small percentage, there has been some improvement in social welfare, especially on poverty and other related issues." A few Pentecostal denominations have started incorporating social services into their programs. It

⁴² Reuben E. Kabarata, "A History of Theological Education in the Free Pentecostal Church of Tanzania (FPCT)," A Dissertation, (Vision International University, 2021), 138-140.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 144, 152.



was discovered that some pastors and leaders have been teaching their members to work hard and be responsible Christians by engaging themselves in business and entrepreneurial activities. One participant made the following comment, "A significant awareness has begun to penetrate the worldviews of the Pentecostal education. However, there is no significant impact on poverty alleviation. We still have a long journey to go in the Pentecostal theological institutions."

Pentecostal Perspectives on Holistic Ministry

One of the research questions that interrogated the understanding of Pentecostal theologians on holistic mission read: "In your own words, how do you define the term holistic ministry?" Most participants demonstrated a theoretical knowledge of holistic mission. One participant, for example, stated, "Holistic ministry addresses the whole human being: spirit, body, and mind. The ministry ministers to the whole person spiritually, economically, socially, and educationally." Another respondent commented that holistic ministry is the ministry that provides for human needs and seeks wholeness at every level – from the individual up to the national level, with everyone enjoying and satisfied with full peace of mind. Further, a respondent defined holistic ministry as "viewing a person through God's eyes, as body-soul wholes created to live in a wholesome community," and as "preaching the gospel that saves the whole person."

The concept of holistic/ integral mission has its roots in the Lausanne Movement conference held in 1974 in Switzerland. At this conference, the theology of social action and development was redefined in light of the issues of social justice, poverty, and development. The leading theologians from the Global South who are credited for challenging the evangelical fraternity to consider their obligation to the poor were Samuel Escobar (a Peruvian) and Rene Padilla (an Ecuadorian).⁴⁵ Rene Padilla is known as the father of the term *Integral Mission*, meaning "a theological framework that has been adopted by over 500 Christian missions and relief organizations, including Compassion International and World Vision."⁴⁶ Padilla coined the phrase *integral mission*, arguing that social action and

⁴⁵ Bryant L. Myers, *Walking With the Poor: Principles and Practices of Transformational Development, Revised and Expanded Edition*, (New York: Orbis Books, 1999), 48.

⁴⁶ David C. Kirkpatrick, "Died: C. René Padilla, Father of Integral Mission," *News & Reporting* (Christianity Today, April 27, 2021), last modified April 27, 2021, accessed August 26, 2022,



evangelism [are] essential and indivisible components."⁴⁷ In other words, "the adjective *holistic* only intends to correct a one-sided understanding of mission that majors on either the vertical or the horizontal dimension of mission."⁴⁸ The terms vertical and horizontal in the preceding sentence imply *spiritual* and *social*. The PTIs need to articulate their theology in a way that brings "both dimensions together in a biblical synthesis."⁴⁹

One participant stated that the church must serve human beings like Jesus did to the congregation in Matthew 14:14–21. He argued that the apostles also provided community services Acts 6:1–6. This participant described those two passages as vital because they challenge the church to engage in community needs such as health, education, and food security. By so doing, the church can reach people in their totality – physically, spiritually, socially, mentally, emotionally, and psychologically. This ministry approach helps people fully understand the essence of the gospel's transforming power.

Discussions

Dichotomized Understanding of Biblical Theology

The findings section clarifies that respondents' understanding of holistic ministry was generally inadequate. Some seemed to have a dichotomized view of biblical theology. It is assumed that the Pentecostals tend to spiritualize the gospel and deny its social implications, whereas the liberals emphasize social and political action and ignore God's offer of salvation to sinners.⁵⁰ These two extremes hinder the church from fulfilling its holistic missional mandate. Pentecostals have hesitated to take an active role in "nonspiritual matters" because they are considered a secular business. Most respondents believe bringing people to Christ is the church's primary responsibility. PTIs have been influenced by such worldviews.

The above viewpoints are consistent with scholars such as Douglas Lowenberg and Byang Kato, who contend that the church's primary function is to save people's souls. These

<https://www.christianitytoday.com/news/2021/april/rene-padilla-died-integral-mission-latin-american-theology.html>.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ René C. Padilla, "Holistic Mission," *Lausanne Movement*, April 4, 2024, accessed May 11, 2024, <https://lausanne.org/occasional-paper/holistic-mission-lop-33#:~:text=Holistic%20mission%20is%20the%20task,means%20and%20in%20its%20impact>.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ John Stott, *The Contemporary Christian: An Urgent Plea for Double Listening*, (Leicester: InterVarsity Press, 1992), 337-8.



theologians make a compelling argument for the idea that the church's primary mission is to preach salvation because that is the purpose for which Christ came.⁵¹ Undoubtedly, Prophets in the Old Testament played a pivotal role in addressing spiritual nominalism and social injustice among God's people. In different instances, the incarnate Christ demonstrated compassion to his audience in practical ways that did not separate spiritual and physical needs. God's servants, in my opinion, should respond to the things that grieve God, such as poverty and suffering. I believe an evangelist who proclaims the good news of salvation and a committed Christian development worker who empowers the poor to overcome their socio-economic plights in an integrated manner serve God's purpose. According to Rowanne Sarojini Marie, development and mission have a symbiotic relationship. The mission's mandate is development, and development interventions are missional.⁵² Transformational development aims at changing "humans into what God intended them to be. ... Not only the church's concern is linked with conversion, church growth, and the reign of God, but it is also intrinsically involved in economy, society, and politics."⁵³

Soul-winning and poverty alleviation are both part of *Missio Dei*, the mission of God,⁵⁴ because the God of the biblical revelation is the Creator and Redeemer who cares about the total well-being of all human beings he created.⁵⁵ I concur with Philip M. Steyne, "A thoughtful journey through the Bible will soon reveal that God's purposes go far beyond personal salvation."⁵⁶ Indeed, mission, evangelism, and poverty alleviation activities carried out in the name of the Lord intend to deliver God's people from the bondage of sin and its consequences.

⁵¹ See Denzil R. Miller et al., "Response to the Paper by William Kirsch," essay, in *Globalizing Pentecostal Missions in Africa: The Emerging Missionary Movement in the Africa Assemblies of God: Papers from the Pentecostal Missions Consultation Organized by the Africa Assemblies of God Alliance, World Missions Commission in Cooperation with the Acts in Africa Initiative, Limuru, Kenya April 28-29, 2011* (Springfield, MO: AIA Publications, 2011), 159–174, and Byang H. Kato, *Theological Pitfalls in Africa*, (Nairobi: Evangelical Publishing House, 1987), 179.

⁵² Harvey C. Kwiyani and Rowanne Sarojini Marie, "Mission and Development," essay, in *Africa Bears Witness: Mission Theology and Praxis in the 21st Century* (Nairobi, Kenya: African Theological Network Press, 2021), 87–99.

⁵³ Ibid., 88.

⁵⁴ John Stott, *The Contemporary Christian: An Urgent Plea for Double Listening*, (Leicester: InterVarsity Press, 1992), 341.

⁵⁵ John Stott, *The Contemporary Christian*, 343.

⁵⁶ Philip M. Steyne, *In Steps With the God of the Nations: A Biblical Theology of Missions*, (Columbia: Impact International Foundation, 1999), 19.



Our secondary data showed that FPCT's involvement in social transformation started in the 1930s when the church was pioneered. The missionaries arrived in Tanzania to "plant local churches and perform social work."⁵⁷ During this phase, FPCT "laid important stress on medical work. The soteriological orientation [had] not excluded protection of the bodily needs of man ..." ⁵⁸ This was evidenced by the ratio of missionaries who were commissioned to Tanzania in the early 1980s. The statistics show that "out of 199 missionaries in 1982, only 31 were pastors and evangelists, 22 were technical personnel, 29 were social workers, and as many as 92 (46%) were medical personnel."⁵⁹ As noted earlier, Kabarata's research did not capture this data in his study.

In contrast, PAG and AoG did not lay a strong foundation of social work as their attitude was that this was the work of the government.⁶⁰ However, FPCT's philosophy of mission was not embedded in its theological training institutions. Instead, the curriculum of its Bible schools was not different from its counterparts. As a result, church ministers have been inadequately prepared to address nonspiritual matters.

This study has revealed that PTIs contributions to poverty reduction in Tanzania are minimal because their curriculums are disconnected from the contextual realities of the church and society. Moreover, it suggests that the curriculums of PTIs should be reviewed to address the missing links and meet the needs of the generation of today's world. Academic programs should teach students about poverty alleviation and introduce tailored courses in all Pentecostal theological institutions. Curriculum designers should incorporate entrepreneurial and community transformation programs to help people discover and utilize the resources surrounding them. This will help people to become creative and innovative. The subject of church and society is required to enable the students to know the missional role of the church in the world. PTIs must provide both theoretical and practical education. Therefore, a radical change in curriculum is paramount for the future of the PTIs.

⁵⁷ "Kuhusu Kanisa," Free Pentecostal Church of Tanzania, accessed April 2, 2023, <http://fpct.or.tz/the-church/>

⁵⁸ Carl-Erik Sahlberg, *The Pentecostal Movement*, (Nairobi, Evangel Publishing House, 1985), 60.

⁵⁹ Sahlberg, *The Pentecostal Movement*, 60.

⁶⁰ Ibid. 60.



A Shift in Pentecostal Social Engagement

Questions 13 and 14 challenged the respondents to envision the PTIs' future. Question 14 asked, "In your view, what should be done to ensure that Pentecostal Theological Institutions in Tanzania improve the delivery of their academic and non-academic programs to effectively contribute to poverty alleviation efforts among the congregations, communities, and nation at large?" One participant responded, "The curriculums of PTIs should address all human needs – spiritual, physical, and mindset. Their education needs to be holistic. This same participant argued that theological education curriculums should incorporate economic empowerment studies and lecturers should be role models. The theological training should challenge people's mindset according to Romans 12:2. Short courses are required to empower Pentecostal leaders on income-generating skills to ensure that the graduates effectively equip the churches they lead.

Furthermore, participants mentioned the theology of work⁶¹ and community development programs as critically important to incorporate into the curriculum of PTIs. It was advised that senior Pentecostal leaders need to meet urgently and discuss this matter because where we came from, we were taught that the church should be involved only in the spiritual needs of people. For this reason, there is a need to advocate for a holistic theology so that leaders can transform their mindset. PTIs' curriculums should be reframed to tackle people's spiritual, social, and physical needs. In addition, the respondents insisted that PTIs should not ignore working with the government and Christian development agencies to fight against poverty in congregations, communities, and the nation at large. It was suggested that Pentecostal theologians and lecturers integrate their theoretical knowledge with practical application and connect their graduates with economic support or financial capital; otherwise, their theological training will be irrelevant. Indeed, as one respondent said, "There is a great need to balance theory and praxis. Otherwise, adding new programs with fewer practical opportunities will offer limited results."

One research participant stated that the church should follow in the footsteps of Jesus Christ, who touched every dimension of human needs. Jesus preached the gospel but fed the poor and healed people to alleviate physical suffering and transform their lives. He

⁶¹ See <https://www.theologyofwork.org/> for detailed information about the theology of work.



further added, "We should get out of our comfort zones. We must prepare our graduates to serve people holistically. Establishing church-based economic development projects would be a good idea because it creates jobs and helps people improve the quality of their lives. This research affirms that Pentecostal theologians and leaders desire to see PTIs integrate biblical theology of poverty into their curriculums.

Conclusion and Recommendation

In conclusion, this study affirms that Pentecostal theological institutions have had minimal impact on poverty alleviation efforts in Tanzania because their curriculums are not holistic. While missionaries should be commended for laying strong ecclesiastical foundations by designing curriculums that focused on the soul's salvation, they, in the process, ignored the physical needs of their constituencies. For this reason, some Pentecostal theologians and leaders still hold on to a theological framework that separates the spiritual and the physical dimensions of human needs. This reality calls for a review of the PTIs' curriculums to encompass the spiritual, social, and economic needs of the church and society. This is an urgent need that requires urgent attention and response. Although some scholars argue that Pentecostals contribute to poverty alleviation by focusing on personal transformation, a more holistic approach to transformation is desirable. Courses such as theology of work, Pentecostal theology of social action, biblical theology of poverty, and church and society, to mention a few, should be incorporated into the Pentecostal theological training model and curriculums. Also, theological programs with a focus on community transformation or transformational development should be introduced in the Pentecostal Bible schools and colleges to equip God's people to address the church and societal concerns in Africa. It is crucial to integrate African perspectives into Pentecostal theological education. We, however, insist that sound biblical theology should be at the heart of the contextualization process. We recommend that Pentecostal theological institutions seek partnerships with and engage Christian development agencies to support their efforts toward having a holistic ministry approach.



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