



TUDARCo

JOURNAL OF HUMANITIES AND EDUCATION

A JOURNAL OF TUMAINI UNIVERSITY DAR ES SALAAM COLLEGE

ISSN 2820 - 266X Volume 2 No. 2 December 2023



TUDARCo JOURNAL OF HUMANITIES AND EDUCATION

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VOLUME 2

NUMBER 2

DECEMBER 2023

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EDITORIAL

Recently, the Government of Tanzania through the Commission for Science and Technology (COSTECH) published the National Research Priorities (2021/22 – 2025/26). The booklet with all details can be obtained from the COSTECH Headquarters or their website. The National Research Priorities (NRPs) are guidelines to direct Tanzania's effort towards such priorities aligned to opportunities and challenges that have been identified by the government. It is the duty of all stakeholders especially researchers and their institutions to understand these NRPs and position themselves accordingly for implementation. It should be noted that the NRPs are for Tanzania Mainland because Zanzibar publishes a similar set for the islanders. The Zanzibar Research Agenda (2015-2020) expired a few years ago, hence are not discussed here. This Editorial therefore highlights the salient features of the NRPs as a way of disseminating the same to our readers.

The themes cover areas that researchers and their institutions are expected to focus on during the period of five years mentioned. In other words, researchers and their institutions are expected to spend their time and energy identifying solutions to problems and challenges that are related to these themes. The NRPs are categorized into four broad themes: Human Capital Development and Quality Livelihood; Building a Strong and Competitive Industrial Economy; National Tourism and Heritage; and Sustainable Natural Resources and the Environment. **Human Capital Development and Quality Livelihood** has five sub-themes: education; health; food quality, safety and nutrition; water, sanitation and hygiene; and land management, human settlement and demographics. **Building a Strong and Competitive Industrial Economy** has seven sub-themes: bio-economy; energy; industry and manufacturing; transportation; extractives; agriculture; and domestic, regional and global trade. **National Tourism and Heritage** has two sub-themes: tourism and national heritage. **Sustainable Natural Resources and the Environment** has two sub-themes: forestry and beekeeping, and wildlife.

The NRPs have identified nine cross-cutting areas that need to be taken into account by all researchers dealing with the four broad themes mentioned above. These areas include: Governance and Accountability; Climate Change; Disaster and Risk Management; Leveraging Technologies for Development; Information and Communication Technology (ICT); Local Content; Entrepreneurship; Gender; and Policies and Legislation. It is also possible for one research project to deal with multiple cross-cutting areas. Furthermore, every researcher needs to put on a gender lens when

implementing any research project. The same applies to climate change, ICT, and all other cross-cutting areas.

COSTECH, on behalf of the national government, is the overall national coordinator of the National Research Priorities. The Regional Secretaries and Local Government Authorities (LGAs) are responsible for facilitating the sectoral implementation of the NRPs in their programmed activities. The role of all universities and other Higher Learning Institutions is to develop and implement research priorities that align with the NRPs. The same applies to the private sector in general and especially NGOs, FBOs and CSOs.

Professor Akim J. Mturi

Editor-in-Chief

Diakonia in the African Perspective: A Case Study of Tanzania

Ipyana A. Mwamugobole¹

Abstract

Diakonia, which means to serve, especially the needy, describes one of the oldest common practices among Africans, namely Communal Life Style or Extended Family. In African settings, Communal Life Style was practiced by all members of the community except those who were unable to do what other members of the community could do. Although such life-style was practised by all members of the community, the practice started within families; each family member was responsible for a needy member within his/her own family. The community had to be assured that the family was providing care of the needy one before the community became involved as a whole. This practice changed the life of many needy people who are now a living testimony. Therefore, upholding good cultural practices, such as the Communal Life Style as experienced in Tanzania, is to do justice to Tanzanian heritage. Since this vital traditional cultural practice has not been effectively studied and described in African literature, it has become imperative to investigate the African perspective on Diakonia and unveil how diaconal services were managed before and during the time of the missionaries. This vital information portrays the other side of African history - the untold history. The study involved 72 purposefully selected respondents in Kilimanjaro, Njombe and Mbeya regions. A qualitative study in a cross-sectional design was conducted through observation and interviews with leaders of relevant church institutions and lay Christians. Data was analysed by summarizing and organizing it according to the objectives of the research and then content analysis was applied. Thereafter, the data was interpreted to give the results of the research. Lastly, secondary data was used to corroborate the results. Findings prove that missionaries were not the author of the cultural practice of helping and sharing with the needy in Tanzania as some would like to put. Instead, this practice known as Communal Life Style, was as old as the history of the continent and became an instrument for service to all people, particularly the needy, who could not attain even the minimum standard of living due to disability from sickness and disease, old age, or death of relatives who could have helped to attain basic needs, orphans and isolated members of communities.

Keywords: Diakonia, African perspective, Communal Life Style, missionaries

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Introduction

*Diakonia*² is a very common phenomenon in Africa, Tanzania included. Although the word did not originate in Africa, it is as old as the history of the African continent. Kanu (2010) argues that Africans were taught to give to the needy whatever they had; this included food, shelter, quality time, clothes and any kind of affection/compassion. However, there were some challenges which could not be tolerated by many Africans, e.g. living together and helping people with leprosy, epilepsy and people accused of witchcraft. The tendency was to isolate them as a means of avoiding contamination and danger of any kind. When the missionaries arrived in Tanzania, they came with the word *Diakonia*, but the practice had been there, even before their arrival. However, the missionaries increased the motivation by insisting that giving to the needy was based on the Word of God (the Bible); hence, it became one of the criteria for a good Christian. This compelled people, especially converts, to involve themselves fully in this new endeavour. However, Foster (2000) affirms that followers of African religions too understood that giving or sharing, is in accordance with god's will, hence a sign of respect for human life and personal dignity. Any practice, combined with faith, was and is still considered seriously by Africans. This understanding strengthened the practice of sharing among Tanzanians before and during the time of the missionaries.

Different diaconal services provided by the missionaries, or churches of the time, reached the needy. However, this knowledge - *Diakonia in the African perspective* - is not known or shared with people. This hinders people, especially new generation Tanzanians and the world in general, from knowing this important cultural practice found among Tanzanians and experiencing it.

The world is full of the needy, but few people are ready to listen to their cry and even fewer are ready to respond to their needs. On the one side, many well-to-do people put their trust on organizations working for the needy; however, they put no effort to evaluate the efficiency of such bodies they trust. Some of these bodies pay more attention to expansion of homes for homeless kids, homes for street children, and education for exploited kids without thinking of shutting down the 'industries' which produce such homeless or street kids. In other words, such organizations do not put in enough effort to stop the perpetrators of exploitation that lead to producing homeless and street kids. On the other side, there are the needy who believe that there is nothing they can do to make their life better; they believe that being homeless, a street kid or living with disability means that they cannot do anything. Therefore, the needy continue

²Diakonia as "responsible service of the Gospel by deeds and by words performed by Christians in response to the needs of people (World Council of Churches, 2002:305). Cf: "Diakonia refers to the call to respond to human suffering and injustice. It is a central pillar of the holistic mission of churches in the world." (Lutheran World Federation, no date).

to cry for help because they believe that people do not hear their voices, while well-to-do people continue to blame the needy for being lazy, and causing.

The cultural practice of helping and sharing with the needy, known as a *Communal Life Style*, is as old as the history of the continent, and it is an integral part of African custom. The central part of this life style is service to all people, particularly the needy, who cannot attain even the minimum standard of living due to disability from sickness and disease, old age, or death of relatives who could have helped to attain basic needs. Orphans and isolated members of communities are also included in the scheme.

In Tanzania, believers of African religions in the past practised this culture of responding to the challenges facing the needy before the coming of missionaries. To keep this culture alive, parents taught their children to do likewise. Over time, rendering services to the needy became a culture and one of the vital norms of many societies in Tanzania. Later, when the missionaries arrived and started preaching about the love of God for all people, including the needy, the indigenous people listened and the practice motivated many Tanzanians to do the same and it was also a motivation to join Christianity.

Nowadays, diaconal institutions have been established in Africa, Tanzania included. However, it is frustrating to note that we do not yet have a topic on the *African perspective on Diakonia* in diaconal programmes. Having no such topic is like telling the world that Africans had/ have no idea of *Diakonia* and how it works, which is not the case. A lot of people might think that the word *Diakonia* is foreign but the phenomenon is not, because cheerfully giving and sharing with the needy is as old as the history of the continent itself and that people living today have something to learn from how Tanzanians responded in the past to the challenges faced by the needy. And this is the gap the researcher set out to address through this research.

Objectives of the Study

The general objective is to investigate the African perspective on *Diakonia* by examining diaconal services and their management before and during the time of the Missionaries. The specific objectives of the study are to:

- i) Study the African perception of the challenges facing the needy and the importance of helping them;
- ii) Critically assess the Communal Life Style among Tanzanians and the strategies adopted by the Missionaries in responding to the needy of the time;
- iii) Evaluate the impact of *Diakonia* on the community as a whole; and
- iv) Assess lessons to be learned by the Tanzanian church and her institutions in effectively responding to the needy.

Literature Review

i) Similarities and Differences between the Communal Life Style and *Diakonia*

The World Council of Churches (WCC) defines *Diakonia* as “responsible service of the Gospel by deeds and by words performed by Christians in response to the needs of people” (WCC, 2002:305). The same emphasis is found in a definition of *Diakonia* by the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) who define *Diakonia* as “the call to respond to human suffering and injustice; and a central pillar of the holistic mission of churches in the world” (Lutheran World Federation, no date). Similarly, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania (ELCT) defines *Diakonia* as “service to all, especially those in need and who are unable to meet these needs due to a particular disablement” (ELCT, 2016). This is to say the term *Diakonia* denotes the actual life and ministry of Jesus Christ because all His attributes are what *Diakonia* is all about. The word *Diakonia* is brought to Africa by the Missionaries and its foundation is the Word of God - the Bible (ibid.).

A number of African theologians would like to point out how some missionaries wished not only to bring Christianity to Africa but also their western culture as a package. This is because some missionaries perceived African culture as inferior to their western culture (Bediako, 1999). They failed to understand that, “no religion can be relevant to a people if it neglects any area of their total experience as perceived by them” (Imasogie, 1993:72). However, with regard to *Diakonia*, neither African theologians nor members of the Communal Life Style criticize the phenomenon. The reason for such harmony is that Africans through the Communal Life Style scheme, like the Missionaries through *Diakonia*, had a similar goal – that of responding accordingly, effectively and when possible timely towards challenges faced by the needy of the time.

Although European traders perceived Africans as people without civilization, religion and moral values (Magesa, 2006), the Communal Life Style, a practice of responding accordingly towards the needy is native and was a phenomenon lived by Africans even before the coming of the Missionaries (Mwamwenda, 1995:54). Samkange (1980:44) insists that challenges facing Tanzanian societies of the time necessitated this cultural practice, since this was the only means to enable the needy to meet their needs. Hence, they considered the act of helping others as one of the vital criteria for humanity. Communal Life Style was managed and administered under the supervision of the heads of family, leaders of African religions and chiefs (Nyaumwe & Mkabala, 2007), whereas diaconal services were administered by Missionaries and the first converts who became assistants to the Missionaries (ELCT, 2016).

In the Communal Life Style, unfortunately, isolation was used as a means to avoid contamination by people suffering from leprosy and epilepsy, because people had a wrong perception of the diseases, whereas *Diakonia* insisted on inclusion. Isolation or discrimination of any sort has elements of oppression. This is the reason to why Jesus

and the prophets challenged those in power and called for rectification of unjust structures and practices that lead to unlawful practices such as greed, violence, injustice and exclusion (Lutheran World Federation, 2003:6). When discussing about isolation or discrimination, one ought to recall Wright (2000:104-105) who affirms that “leaders who find their identity in their relationship with God nurture organizations that care for people as persons loved by God.” Wright is therefore of the opinion that a true leader is one who imitates Jesus Christ and that such a leader will always think and even lay a foundation to communities where reconciliation and healing of wounded relationships occur (p.104). This can be accomplished by identifying new dimensions of *Diakonia* such as putting greater emphasis on the ecclesial, holistic, and prophetic dimension of *Diakonia*. This would be the only way one could understand why transformation, reconciliation and empowerment are determined as basic directions of diaconal work (Lutheran World Federation, 2009:43-47).

With all the above meanings of *Diakonia* and *Communal Life Style*, all insisting on helping the needy, one could ask about the needy who caused the situation they were in, in the first place. Bujo (1990:52) discourages the old tendency of welcoming whole families of lazy relatives who are seeking help. However, Bujo’s disapproval ought to be taken with caution or else it may support individualism unknowingly. Individualism is not a challenge for Europeans or Africans. Tanzanians is now experiencing that new culture. Bujo again insists that “modernization has to go hand in hand with greater humanity” (Bujo, 1990:51). In other words, modernization ought not lose sight of the values of the family, community and clan solidarity which cover all the material and moral needs of their members” (ibid., 52).

ii) An Overview of Diaconal Services in Tanzania before and during the time of Missionaries

As Kitahenga (as cited in Lutheran World Federation, 2006:103) argues, “traditional African societies have always regarded disabled people and the needy as an integral part of their social structure, and family, and community members were obliged to be on good terms with all those who had impairment. Consequently, disabled people always received help. Before the arrival of the Missionaries, traditional leaders, such as kings or chiefs, were responsible for caring of the needy. Kitahenga (as cited in Lutheran World Federation, 2006:104) continues, “...community and spiritual leaders were also fully responsible for the welfare of the disadvantaged members of their society. Each community leader had to make sure that vulnerable people in his territory were safeguarded and not deprived of their basic rights.”

Aligning with the above notion, Mbiti (1970:108) argues that, “whatever happens to an individual happens to the whole group and whatever happens to the whole group happens to the individual.” Similar to Mbiti’s views, Bujo (1990:57) comments: “In Bantu traditional morality, even if one possessed private property, the welfare of the

community and clan was paramount.” However, those few who hid their family members who had some form of disability for the fear of discrimination, deprived the victims of the love and care from the community members who were ready to take care of them.

Although disease was a challenge facing a number of members of communities, a person who was disabled, old, widowed and poor suffered the most. Hence, apart from distributing food to the needy, other diaconal activities in the beginning of mission work in Tanzania were administered by medical personnel especially nurses who were deaconesses. These medical personnel did not only treat patients at clinics but also established relationship to the extent of visiting sick people at home, nursing them and consoling them. Expectant mothers had also an opportunity to get some basic knowledge on how to take care of their children and families in general through domestic education provided by the missionaries. Other Missionaries were taking care of neglected children including slave children who had been freed after slavery was banned worldwide. These children had no place to call home nor a person to call parent; they were without social welfare or security (ibid.). It should be understood that ‘a missionary’ during the time was not a name for a pastor; missionaries included medical doctors, nurses, teachers, craftsmen, and agriculturists (ELCT, 2016).

iii) Overview of Diaconal Institutions

Diaconal institutions were not in the vocabulary of indigenous Tanzanians before the arrival of the missionaries. However, small bodies, formed by chiefs or kings, had roles similar to the roles under diaconal institutions during the time of the missionaries (Nyaumwe & Mkabela, 2007). Missionaries from a diaconal-oriented Mission society were more successful in establishing diaconal institutions in Tanzania. A good example of these were missionaries sent by the Bethel Mission Society who worked in Tanga and Bukoba. They constructed diaconal institutions as centres for physically and mentally handicapped people, hospitals for epileptics, and schools for blind children and orphans (ibid.). Diaconal institutions such as Irete Children’s Home, Irete School for the Blind, Lutindi Mental Hospital and Leper’s Camps, as seen today, are a result of the foundations laid by the missionaries of the time (ELCT, 2016).

To prove that the missionaries loved *Diakonia*, it was not a surprise to see a mission organization building its headquarters in the midst of people with leprosy while other mission organizations established themselves where they could easily help the freed slaves who had no place to go (Urasa & Urasa, 2003). What seems to be the role of nearly all mission societies or organizations was to fight against isolation and oppression of any sort. This is because isolation and oppression were the major reason why some community members were unreached by the diaconal ministry. Today, one finds diaconal institutions in nearly all dioceses of the ELCT. In addition, nearly every ELCT diocese, there are similar diaconal activities such as caring for street children and drug

addicts. Some dioceses have trained and ordained Deacons/Deaconesses while others do not train but they have missionaries with diaconal background for diaconal ministries in those dioceses. At the ELCT level, one finds Mwanga and Njombe Deaf Schools under the ELCT Common Work. Furthermore, the ELCT Health Department coordinates Hospice and Palliative care programmes in 23 ELCT hospitals with about 30,000 patients annually (ELCT, 2016).

iv) Challenges

Having no knowledge on diseases such as leprosy and epilepsy was a challenge to the communities before the arrival of the missionaries. The fear of witchcraft and wrong accusation of some members of the community affected many and became a cause of discrimination among family members and the community. Discrimination was an unbearable punishment for the victims because “Africans are known as people who like living in a group.” (Mbiti, 1989:102). Both challenges affected relationships and the meaning of the *Communal Life Style* among Tanzanians.

Another challenge during the time of the missionaries was that favourable terms of aid were given to converts, leaving non-converts outside the diaconal services. This does not mean non-converts got nothing, for schools and health centres were open for all. But it is also true that priority was given to the converted needy. According to Nathan Nunn (2010:151), “additional benefits, which were provided through mission stations, were needed to entice Africans to convert to Christianity.” In this sense, *Diakonia* as a Christian ministry was defiled, for two reasons. First, it excluded those who ought to be welcomed and experience the love of Jesus preached by the missionaries of the time. Second, it compelled some to join Christianity unwillingly.

Methodology

The study was conducted in Kilimanjaro Region (Northern Diocese), Njombe Region (Southern Diocese) and Mbeya Region (Konde Diocese). The aim was to get the big picture of how the *Communal Life Style* was being practised and how diaconal services were being provided in different contexts. This study employed a cross-sectional research design to allow the researcher to collect data once from participants since the research was based on history. A total of 72 responded to this study: 8 Church leaders and 4 Staff of diaconal institutions were face to face interviewed while 47 church members involved in *Diakonia* and 13 community development staff (government officials) responded. These people were purposefully selected depending on their availability and willingness to participate. The study used mainly primary data, while secondary data like official documents were used to confirm or contrast the results. Semi-structured interviews were employed, especially with respondents who were leaders of diaconal institutions, and government officials. Face-to-face interviews were

also conducted. Official documents, reports and previous studies available online were again used.

Data was analysed by summarizing and organizing it according to the objectives of the research, and then content analysis was applied. Thereafter, the data was interpreted to give the results of the research. Lastly, secondary materials like official documents of the institutions and churches, at large, were used to confirm or contrast the results.

Communal Life Style as Criterion for African Humanity

Responding collectively or communally towards the needy was one of the criteria for humanity in Africa, including Tanzania, even before the arrival of the missionaries and Christianity (Mwamwenda, 1995:54). The same applied to the extended family among Tanzanians. Due to the many challenges Tanzanian communities were facing, responding towards them was extremely necessary. There were different groups of the needy such as people with disability, victims of conflicts and wars, victims of poverty, victims of oppressions of different kinds, old people, those who had shortage of food, and victims of both man-made and natural disasters of different types, and victims of accusation of witchcrafts (Medical Personnel 1, Rungwe District, April, 2023). Others were people whose sicknesses were considered to have no treatment, for example mental illness, leprosy and epilepsy (Medical Personnel 2, Mbeya City, April, 2023).

Responding toward such challenges was one of the duties of the people and the society in general. However, many believed that unstructured kind of responses towards the needy could not bring the intended results. This compelled many Tanzanian communities to search for a more structured way of responding to the problems of the needy. The best solution for many was to introduce the *Communal Life Style*, and to live together as one big family and respond positively towards the needy (Samkange, 1980:44). In other words, in the *Communal Life Style*, people lived together, helped one another while trying to stop the problems from spreading (Hospital Staff 1, Rungwe District, April, 2023).

The worldwide known African Philosophy *Ubuntu* has a lot to tell on how Africans responded towards the needy. That was, according to Africans, a sign of *civilization*, for nobody was considered fully human if one had “*no heart*” for the needy. The philosophy of *Ubuntu* always goes together with a proverb, “*Ubuntu ungamntu ngabanye abantu,*”³ meaning, a person can never become a full person without other people. In other words, even the weak become strong when they are among the strong, who can empower/protect them. However, it is not only the weak who become empowered, beneficiaries of this system or cultural practices also include the strong (Tutu, 1999).

³<https://theconversation.com/the-search-for-ubuntu-in-africas-corporate-landscape-55667> accessed on 1st of October, 2023.

This is because recognition of the strong becomes real after they have rendered services to the weak and poor. In many communities, the weak and poor are the ones who bestow leadership to the strong.

The most popular South African Archbishop Desmond Tutu, in trying to elaborate more the concept of *Ubuntu*, counselled, “My humanity is bound up in yours, for we can only be human together. He believed that the potential of each human being functions more fully collectively rather than individually.” (Tutu, 1999). Among the Nyakyusa people (Wikipedia), a person is considered to have *Ubhundu* if he/she can share with love whatever he or she has. The Nyakyusa people believe that a full human being is that who sees someone in trouble or in need and extends his or her hands towards him or her. The opposite of *Ubhundu* is *Ikipahu*. A person with *Ikipahu* is a person who ignores problems or challenges facing other people. Furthermore, a person with *Ikipahu* can even throw foods (or remains) in the dustbin while his or her neighbours are starving. Such a person is sometimes considered alien in the Nyakyusa society and is nicknamed *Undosi* meaning a witch. It was impossible for someone to marry or get married to someone from a family with *Ikipahu*. It was also not easy for the community to help a family full of *Ikipahu* when faced with disaster or when someone from that family died.

The *Communal Life Style* enabled people within a community to understand the problems facing their neighbours and make them known to the public concerned, so that instead of being an individual or family problem, it became a problem of the whole community. Then the whole community felt responsible for searching for a solution. That is how people lived during the time, and many needy were strengthened or empowered through this cultural practice.

Eligibility

Many respondents in Njombe, Mbeya and Kilimanjaro informed that heads of family, small bodies or organs formed by traditional leaders such as kings or chiefs were responsible for what is nowadays known as *needs assessments* of different groups of the needy within a particular community. This assessment included types of problem that people had, the total number of the needy, and determining who was eligible for what kind of aid. There was also formulation of regulations to be used as criteria for one’s eligibility, before one could get help from the society concerned. Below is a list of some of the criteria for eligibility (Diaconal Staff 5, Mwika, Kilimanjaro, April, 2023); (Diaconal Staff 4, Makambako, April, 2023); Women Group Leader 2, Mbeya City, April, 2023):

- i) A poor person with no ability to work, nor close relative to work for him or her;
- ii) A person with a long-time sickness and without close relatives to help him or her;
- iii) People with disability, who can barely work;
- iv) People with mental disability, leprosy, blindness and can’t work;
- v) An individual rejected by his/her family due to different reasons;

- vi) A victim of natural or manmade disasters;
- vii) A person who became sick during the farming season;
- viii) Death of close relatives during the farming season;
- ix) Family of old people with no close relatives to help;
- x) Family of old people living with grandchildren who are orphans and no one to help;
- xi) Family of old people but with irresponsible close relatives;
- xii) A stranger or a new comer in the community;
- xiii) Old widow; and
- xiv) Orphans.

It was also interesting to know who could be considered not eligible for aid according to many Tanzanian communities. Below is a list of criteria of the needy who were not eligible for aid as represented by the majority of the respondents (Diaconal Staff 5, Mwika, Kilimanjaro, April, 2023); (Diaconal Staff 4, Makambako, April, 2023); (Women Group Leader 2, Mbeya City, April, 2023):

- i) Poor people but healthy enough to work;
- ii) Poor people but having children to help them;
- iii) People with disability but had close relatives who could help;
- iv) People without disability;
- v) People who were poor as a result of their laziness;
- vi) Poor people who were suspected of practising witchcraft; and
- vii) Widows who had children or close relatives who could help.

Interestingly, the above criteria concern who was and who was not eligible for material support seem to be valid even to the present time. It is possible for a Tanzanian to help someone with disability, a victim of manmade or natural disaster, a person with a long-time sickness and other of alike. However, it is very difficult to convince a Tanzanian to help those in a category of those who were considered not eligible for material support. One can imagine how difficult it is today for a Tanzanian to help a person who is poor but healthy or a person with disability but has relatives to help, or a poor but witch. This is to say the wisdom of the people of the time still hold water during the present.

How the *Communal Life Style* was Administered

There were different ways of managing the process such as collecting aid, traditional stock-taking and storing, educating the needy before distribution of aid, and eventually distribution of aid. However, supporting the needy was not limited to giving food, but also material support for those in need of shelter and labour for those in need of help in their farms.

i) Collection of Material Support

There were several means of collecting material support. According to the majority of the interviewees from Njombe, Mbeya and Kilimanjaro, different means of collecting material support were used; some of these are listed below:

- i) Community members worked in farms which belonged to their chiefs, for chiefs had to have more food so that they could distribute it to the needy who were members of his chiefdom;
- ii) In some chiefdoms, people worked in their farms but during harvest they had to bring a certain amount of harvest to store-houses built within the chief's compound ready to be distributed to the needy;
- iii) In some chiefdoms or kingships, each family of abled people was given another poorer family to oversee in terms of basic needs;
- iv) In some chiefdoms, people helped the needy by cultivating crops in the lands of the respective needy and all the harvest was given to the needy concerned;
- v) Some of the needy needed someone to help them fetch water for domestic use. It was the duty of neighbours' daughters to help; and
- vi) Some of the needy required shelter. It was the duty of boys and men to build traditional huts as shelter for the needy.

The means of support listed above show that each member of a community had a role to play in supporting the needy. The young generation learned from the old how to take care of the needy. This practice strengthened societies of the time while avoiding any kind of disintegration.

ii) Traditional Aid Stock-Taking and Keeping

There were several methods of keeping record of the material support given to the needy (Diaconal Staff 5, Mwika, Kilimanjaro, April, 2023); Diaconal Staff 4, Makambako, April, 2023); Women Group Leader 2, Mbeya City, April, 2023). Such methods included the following:

- i) Food and all other aid donated by community members were brought to their respective chiefs or traditional leaders and were recorded. The records showed who contributed what, and the amount contributed;
- ii) Collected harvest or food from individuals was kept under the custodianship of a few people nominated by the council of elders;
- iii) Individuals kept their harvest and gave a portion to the needy as assigned by the leadership of their respective community; and
- iv) There were mechanisms to prove if the aid had reached the intended people and in the right amount allocated to the particular needy.

These methods signify that accountability was regarded a necessary trait of a responsible community during the time.

iii) Educating the Needy Before Distributing Aid

Chiefdoms had empowerment strategies for they did not want to help people indefinitely. Instead, they had to visit them before giving them aid and educate them about the importance of being self-reliant (Women Group Leader 1, Mbeya City, April, 2023). This was emphasized especially to those who had the ability to work but they didn't. These educators warned such people that they would be deleted from the list of the needy if they didn't want to change (Diaconal Staff 4, Makambako, April, 2023). Beneficiaries of aid were also asked to be thankful to those who donated food and other aid. It is through education that the needy were reminded to use wisely whatever they were about to receive so that they did not starve (Diaconal Staff 5, Mwika, Kilimanjaro, April, 2023).

One may wonder whether educating the needy on how to use responsibly what they receive from donors is still a common practice. Evidence has shown that some recipients of aid just misuse what they receive, or disvalue opportunities they get for free, for example scholarships, study opportunities, accommodation etc. This practice is crucial for one to understand how important it is to appreciate gifts donated and to thank the sponsors.

iv) Involvement of Community Members in Helping the Needy

Different groups of a given community had different responsibilities in helping the needy. In Njombe and Mbeya, for example, many affirmed that in many cases, youths were responsible for helping the needy with farming, e.g. cultivating the land and weeding, whereas women were responsible for sowing, harvesting and storing produce. Men helped with building houses or huts for those who were in need of shelter (Women Group Leader of Diocese A, Makambako, April, 2023). In Kilimanjaro, some of these responsibilities were sometimes undertaken collectively by women, men, the youth and the old (Women Group Leader of Diocese B, Kilimanjaro, April, 2023).

While men and women were busy supporting the needy, their children were learning, and sometimes learning by doing, how to do the same to the needy. Many admitted that children were taught within their families on the importance of helping the needy; they were taught that whenever they saw or met a disabled or old person, they should help them whenever they could. Whereas members of the community commended such acts of helping the needy, the opposite was punished (Diaconal Staff 4, Makambako, April, 2023). Children who helped the needy were made known to the community as children with respect and therefore might make good wives or husbands (Women Group Leader 2, Mbeya City, April, 2023).

v) Communal Life Style and Irresponsible Community Members

Not everybody who was in need was eligible for aid. Many respondents in all three areas of the study confirmed that if any needy individual had relatives who could help, such needy person was denied any aid from their community. However, there were a lot of the needy who had relatives who could assist them, but could not receive such support (Ward Staff 2, Kilimanjaro, April, 2023).

There was a number of measures taken by communities towards irresponsible families or family members (Diaconal Staff 5, Mwika, Kilimanjaro, April, 2023; Diaconal Staff 4, Makambako, April, 2023); Women Group Leader 2, Mbeya City, April, 2023). This measure included the following:

- i) Relatives of the needy, who were able to work but were unwilling to do so, were punished by leaders of their respective communities. Punishment was in form of forced labour or a portion from their harvest was taken from them by force and given to their relatives in need;
- ii) They were forced to take care of their relatives, but for those who refused to comply were exiled from their respective communities;
- iii) They received neither respect from nor interaction with the rest of the members of the community, this includes the possibility of their children not finding partners for marriage; and
- iv) They were considered unfit for any leadership position in their community.

Diakonia during the Time of the Missionaries

i) Introduction: The Genesis of Mission and Diakonia in Tanzania

Mission work entails service of the church or an individual of proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ to all people for the promotion of spiritual growth, so that people know Jesus and become followers of Christ. However, preaching the gospel based on the teachings and the life of Christ does not overlook the needy, but instead it responds toward challenges facing the needy while fostering social change, and that is *Diakonia*. Thus, *Diakonia* becomes a “responsible service of the Gospel by deeds and by words performed by Christians in response to the needs of people.” (World Council of Churches, 2002:305).

Mission work is like an engine and *Diakonia* fuel. If one reads the Bible carefully, God calls and sends people to different parts of the world to fulfil His plans and purposes. Some scholars of mission would like to start with God’s calling of Abraham and sending him to an unknown land. Abraham obeys because he knew who was talking to him. Furthermore, God promised to bless him and to guide him (Genesis 12ff.). If one reads the story about the calling of Moses, one can relate to what people understand about mission. God is calling Moses and sending him to get His people, the Israelites, out of Egypt and bring them to the Promised Land (Exodus 3ff.). Again, one can continue to

read about God's calling of prophets after the Israelites had settled in the Promised Land. The prophets in different times were called and sent by God for different purposes, e.g. to deliver prophecy like warning them against their sins or giving the Israelites prophecy of hope (when they were in Captivity or when facing challenges).

When the fulfilment of time came, God sent Jesus Christ to the world for the salvation of His people (Galatians 4:4). Jesus is sent after the relationship was broken between God and His people. Jesus is now sent by God to restore the relationship. Such restoration is a key to liberation of the whole person from all kinds of bondage and captivity (2 Corinthians 5:18). And then Jesus sent the twelve apostles to the world to teach and baptize people from Jerusalem to the end of the world (Matthew 28:16-20). The missionaries of the time and ministers of today are not different from the apostles. The missionaries and ministers who have really been called by God to work for Him, are given the mandate to carry God's Mission – that of liberation of the whole person from any kind of bondage or captivity.

Liberation of the whole person was among the crucial goals of the missionaries of the time and the ministers after them. However, some missionaries misunderstood the concept of liberation of the whole person. Such missionaries thought that replacing African culture with western culture was liberation (Bediako, 1999). This was a very dangerous misperception.

ii) Missionaries in Tanzania

Tanzania's history tells us that during the arrival of the missionaries, like how it is today, there were needy people with diseases such as leprosy, epilepsies, and many other diseases whose causes and treatment were unknown. There were also groups of old people, widows, orphans and people with mental disability. Another group, as mentioned earlier, was that people accused of witchcraft who had to flee to start new life far away from their original homes. Those who had not been reached by the *Communal Life Style* scheme were in great need of food, shelter, clothes and consolation. There were also freed slaves and their children who together with their families, were in need of shelter, clothes and food. But there were also children of slaves who had lost their parents. In some places, wins were considered as a curse and therefore rejected by their families (Urasa & Urasa, 2003).

Responding towards the needy was not without challenges. Some affirm that it was not easy to have enough food to feed everybody who was in need of food or shelter. Without modern farming technology like what the world has today, it was hard to have enough harvest that could sustain normal families, never mind helping the needy (Church Elder 1, Mbeya City, April, 2023).

In the midst of such challenges, and while Tanzanians were responding towards those challenges, missionaries together with their Christian faith arrived in Tanzania. Although Christian teachings brought by the Missionaries differed from those in African religions, the two groups responded to the needy more or less the same way (Retired Ward Staff 1, Rungwe, April, 2023).

One of the early fruits of mission work was to bring back to their respective societies all victims who had been isolated. Missionaries were able to convince or even prove to the natives that people in isolation had been wrongly accused. They persuaded the natives of the fact that many of the calamities, diseases and even deaths of their relatives or neighbours were not being caused by the suspected victims but were natural occurrences (Ward Staff 1, Rungwe, April, 2023).

Again, the arrival of the Missionaries was also the time the word *Diakonia* got adopted into vernaculars. Some argued that like Mission, a definition of the word *Diakonia* and management of diaconal services, were under the administration of the missionaries and the church of the time. However, Tanzanians continued to practice the Communal Life Style as they used to do before the arrival of the missionaries. Due to many circumstances like the First and Second World Wars, it was necessary for the missionaries to involve the converted natives in diaconal services or ministry (Retired Church Elder 1, Mbeya City, April, 2023). The involvement of natives made it possible and even necessary for the missionaries to come up with theories and practices of *Diakonia* familiar to Tanzanians and which suited Tanzanian contexts.

The Missionaries arrived in Tanzania with the understanding of living according to the message they were carrying. It seems the Missionaries understood that words and deeds, faith and obedience, evangelism and social justice must go hand-in-hand. If the church failed in this harmony her credibility would disappear and she would become irrelevant or unnecessary (Adeyemo, 1999). People, who lived during the time of the arrival of the missionaries, could testify this. Many argued that the Missionaries brought the Word and many lived according to the message they brought to Tanzania.

The Word preached by missionaries became more powerful, vivid and also practical through diaconal services. Even for those who did not want to listen to the Word of God, their eyes witnessed a living and loving God throughout the life of the Missionaries. In other words, the love of God was not read or heard only, but also seen and experienced by both believers and non-believers (Church Member 2, Mbeya, April, 2023).

iii) Communal Life Style as a Preparation for Mission and *Diakonia* in Tanzania
The *Communal Life-Style*, which was an important cultural practice among Tanzanians, made it easier for Tanzanians, both Christians and non-Christians, to accept *Diakonia* easily. Since people were already used to responding towards other people's needs, the

introduction of *Diakonia* by the Missionaries was received without discussion lot of persuasion although it was not easy for Tanzanians to abolish some of their old practises like polygamy, drinking, traditional dances and some rituals. (Church Elder 3, Njombe, April, 2023).

There were many who accepted Christianity after seeing their sick relatives being treated by the missionaries and joined their respective families after a long time of sickness. There were some Tanzanian families or individuals who accepted Christianity after their relatives had returned from isolation (Retired Bishop of the Diocese C, Mbeya, April, 2023). However, all these reasons fall into one category, which is, the challenges facing people of the time required a response especially from an institution, which preached about the love of God to all humankind (Retired Bishop of the Diocese A, Kilimanjaro, April, 2023). Knowing that preaching alone could have never convinced people to leave their African religions and accept Christianity, the missionaries felt a need of putting words into practice; thus *Diakonia* was necessary (Retired Bishop of the Diocese B, Njombe, April, 2023). This is to say *Diakonia* translated the message of God's love preached by the missionaries into deeds of kindness. This is what made a big number of Tanzanians accept Christian; through words and deeds, people were compelled to believe that God is real and therefore diaconal services made the Word to become more effective and powerful.

iv) Biblical Teachings in Support of Mission and Diakonia

The missionaries, knowing the need of the Christians of the time, started introducing them to biblical texts which became favourite to many Christians of the time, including the Parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37); the story of food distribution and the murmuring from the side of Hellenist widows (Acts 6:1-7); the story of Ananias and Sapphira, who cheated on what they had promised to bring to the apostle for church use (Acts 5:1-11). Furthermore, they introduced to the natives biblical texts, which depicted Jesus as a servant and not someone to be served; this impressed many Tanzanian Christians of the time. Many felt obliged to serve so as to become like Jesus. Having the Bible, telling how Jesus responded to the needy and how the early church responded to challenges facing the community of believers of their time, many Tanzanian Christians were motivated to practice *Diakonia* (Retired Bishop of the Diocese A, Kilimanjaro, April, 2023).

Although there were simple theological expressions and discussions on the texts presented, the effect was great. People responded positively towards the challenges facing not only the needy who were fellow Christians but also all non-believers. This is to say, the Communal Life Style was strengthened through *Diakonia* introduced by the missionaries and many Christians became part of the solutions to the problems facing members of their communities. Every Christian wanted to be called a *Deacon or*

Deaconess. The name *Diakonia* and Christian were used interchangeably. In other words, a Christian was known through his or her role in rendering services through *Diakonia* (Retired Bishop of the Diocese B, Njombe, April, 2023; Retired Bishop of the Diocese A, Kilimanjaro, April, 2023).

Diakonia and its Management during the Time of Missionaries

The extent of rendering services to the needy through *Diakonia* during the time of the Missionaries was not very different from the practise of *Communal Life Style* practiced in Tanzanian communities. For example, before the coming of the Missionaries, sharing of resources among Tanzanians was limited to old people, widows who had nobody to take care of them, disabled people who could neither work nor search for food by themselves and people with sickness like leprosy and orphans. Again, important aid during the time was food, shelter, and some other domestic services e.g. fetching water, washing one's clothes collecting firewood, and cultivating land. However, services through *Diakonia* under the missionaries expanded the scope of doing diaconal work as already mentioned above.

Before assistance was extended to a particular group or individual in need, these people were evaluated to verify their eligibility for aid and ascertain the type and amount of aid needed. In short, diaconal services became more than distributing food, clothes and handling other activities such as shelters and farming activities, but also advocacy on justice and fairness for equality and inclusion, though this was still a long way to go (Pastor I, Mwakaleli, Mbeya, April, 2023).

The Missionaries had different sources of income for diaconal services, because they were sent to Tanzania by different mission societies/agencies and churches from abroad. The missionaries who were sent to Tanzania by mission organizations with insufficient financial capabilities like Leipzig Mission worked hard in agriculture. They established coffee and other tree plantations around Kilimanjaro area. Therefore diaconal services around Kilimanjaro area were supported by funds obtained through agriculture (Retired Bishop of the Diocese A, Kilimanjaro, April, 2023). However, things like medication, health professionals and other facilities for the disabled and other challenged groups came from abroad (Urasa & Urasa, 2003:81). Missionaries from rich mission organizations or churches did not depend on other activities other than preaching the Word, for everything needed for diaconal services was sent from abroad directly to Tanzania (Retired Bishop of the Diocese C, Mbeya, April, 2023).

After some years of mission work in Tanzania, Tanzanian Christians in their respective areas started to contribute to diaconal services by working in farms established by missionaries and their colonial governments. This was one way of showing appreciation to the diaconal services rendered by missionaries to the needy (Retired Bishop of the Diocese B, Njombe, April, 2023). Tanzanian Christians in their respective contexts

contributed their harvests through offerings as part of supporting diaconal services of their churches (Retired Bishop of the Diocese C, Mbeya, April, 2023).

Management and Distribution of Aid Collected for Diaconal Services

There were different procedures that missionaries and leaders of Diakonia followed before distributing the resources collected for the needy. Below are examples of these procedures (Retired Bishop of the Diocese C, Mbeya, April, 2023; Retired Diaconal Staff 1, Njombe, April, 2023; Retired Diaconal Staff 2, Kilimanjaro, 2023):

- a) Identify the needy, find out their kind of disability and the kind of aid they need;
- b) Since the missionaries could write and later taught some indigenous people to do so, all names of the needy were written down together with the kind of aid they needed, either as individuals or families. All collected resources were recorded to ensure they knew how much they had in store. This went together with recording the names of those who contributed to the needy, and how much was contributed;
- c) Trustworthy people were identified for the task of distributing aid to the needy. These were chosen by their respective parishes or communities;
- d) Mission stations were established to take care of the converted but who were being hunted or rejected. The stations served as refuge for twins, orphans and widows who denied normal life in their communities; and
- e) Dissemination of education on basic human rights was done through seminars and workshops.

Diakonia in Search for Permanent Solutions to the Challenges Facing Tanzanians of the Time

The missionaries of the time knew exactly that helping the needy was one task but addressing the causes of their problems was quite a different task of the church. Therefore, the missionaries had to try and identify the main causes, and respond appropriately. Here are some of strategies they used to identify the problems:

- i) Searching for a permanent solution through formal education for the victims. The missionaries educated people on the importance of believing in God and becoming self-reliant. They insisted that a good Christians ought not to become a burden/ a beggar (Diaconal Staff 3, Rungwe District, April, 2023);
- ii) Educating the community through non-formal adult education on matters related to equality, fairness, gender equality, the importance of happy family, the right to choose, the importance of freedom etc. Such education involved also perpetrators e.g. kings /chiefs who were responsible for keeping cultural practices, some of which were oppressive (Retired Diakonia Project Manager, Njombe, April, 2023);
- iii) Through advocacy and diplomacy, not all bad traditional practices were abolished by force. Instead, the missionaries together with the converted of the time had several discussions with chiefs or kings or traditional religious leaders on different matters that were considered important for their community welfare; and

iv) Making Tanzanian Christians models of a just community reflecting from the love of Christ. Those who were isolated because of Christianity and the freed slaves learned this in Mission Stations.

Concluding Remarks

The Communal Life Style found among Africans is as a phenomenon as old as the history of the continent. It paved the way for Diakonia to be understood by many Tanzanians and, to a big extent, it helped Christianity to penetrate into the heart of Tanzania. Tanzanian communities responded towards the needy of their time by donating whatever they could as a gesture of love. However, some of the needy were excluded from the programme due to false beliefs people of the time had towards those who were accused of witchcraft and other evils. The missionaries came and rescued such wrongly accused members of the community.

Preaching the Word of God especially the love of God and practising it compelled many Tanzanians to embrace Christianity. The Word motivated the converts of the time to even give more than before for the welfare of the needy around their communities. As alluded to earlier, the needy whose situation was caused by either their own irresponsibility or that of their relatives were not illegible for aid from the community or the church. They were encouraged to work hard and fulfil their responsibilities in order to meet their end.

The church of today, together with the Tanzanian community as a whole, should respond towards the needy accordingly, timely and effectively. However, it should be understood that irresponsible people and those who are able to do something good for their living, must be encouraged to fulfil their duties and become independent. People should be reminded to invest in things which yield good fruits, e.g. educating their kids, being good role models to their families especially on matters related to faith in God and morality, and working hard.

The Communal Life Style should be taught to children and the generations to come, for this cultural practice made a lot of people living today who they are and who are now contributing a lot to spiritual and socio-economic development of Tanzania. Further, Communal Life Style in Tanzania should be included in the formal school curriculum as a *Diakonia* Programme. Improving diaconal institutions through capacity building among workers and matters related to sustainability of such institutions should be given special attention. Income generating projects should be established to support institutions and restructure leadership of diaconal institutions. This should go hand in hand with turning diaconal institutions from departments of a parish or a church to a Christian sustainable enterprise. The church should become an overseer but not part of management dealing with day-to-day activities of the institutions.

Recommendations

Today, the needy are all over – Christians and non-believers. Although the church did and is still doing a lot through *Diakonia* as response towards the needy, it has a lot to learn from the Church and indigenous knowledge of people of the past on how they successfully responded towards the needy. Below are suggestions of what should be the responsibilities of the Church, individual persons and the Tanzanian community as a whole, towards sustaining the need:

- a) The Church should create awareness among people so that Tanzanians realise that one of their roles as human beings is to listen to the cry of the needy and respond accordingly through diaconal institutions around them or through their Churches or as individuals;
- b) The Church should compel people to understand that the needy are not always after material things such as food or clothes, but most of them need love; they need people they can trust to share their painful stories including regrets or guilt;
- c) It is the role of the Tanzanian community to convince and compel relatives of the needy to be responsible for the life of their relatives who are less gifted;
- d) Not all people with disability are unable to do something for their living; therefore, diaconal institutions should encourage and empower all the needy who are able to do something for their living, to do so;
- e) In responding towards the needy, both biblical teachings and indigenous knowledge should be applied;
- f) The unity among church leaders and other community members can enable diaconal services to reach even the disabled who have been exposed to the public;
- g) For the sake of sustainability of diaconal institutions, depending on Church offerings for diaconal services should be discouraged; instead, income generating projects should be encouraged;
- h) Searching for permanent solutions towards problems or circumstances can pave way to success of diaconal institutions or ministries, for it reduces the number of the needy and the frequency of offering assistance;
- i) The Word of God should be the key when teaching or empowering people to love their neighbours and help the needy;
- j) The Church together with community members should also engage in fighting for human rights and justice as a means to shut down industries producing the needy such as street children and drug addicts. This means that the Church should fight against bad practices such as child pregnancies, child labour, and drug abuse;
- k) Capacity building should be another role of diaconal institutions – that of empowering their workers with new and old skills to help them to work effectively;
- l) Fighting against corruption, segregative politics and bad cultural practices including false religious teachings should be included in diaconal programmes. The reason behind this fight is that some of these aspects contribute to new forms of slavery for many Africans, especially youths who later flee their countries to search for what they claim

to be greener pastures in Europe and Arab countries. Many ends up being tortured and kept in slavery for life;

m) Church leaders should be encouraged to value the life of the people they serve as much as the missionaries did. Reconciling the isolated with the rest of the members of the community was among the great lessons to be learnt by Church leaders of today, because disintegrations are a real experience, which defile Christian teachings about love and unity;

n) The Church should engage herself in tackling challenges facing people today and apply new ways of responding effectively toward such challenges, e.g. the problem of human trafficking, and killing of people with albinism; and

o) Constructing buildings or premises for different Church uses or even for educational purposes is very important. However, building a community of believers through rendering diaconal services to the needy proves that the Word of God is true and the love of God through Jesus Christ is not theoretical but tangible. People have heard a lot concerning God's love to humanity, what they wish now is to experience it in their life. *Diakonia*, if effectively administered, can serve the purpose.

Acknowledgement

Tumaini University Dar es Salaam College (TUDARCo) provided funding for data collection.

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The 16th Century Reformation in Europe and its Aftermath in Africa: Mapping the Transitional Movement of Reformation Spirit from Europe to Africa

Eberhardt Ngugi¹

Abstract

This article demonstrates how the 16th-century European Reformation impacted many series of Reformations in Africa. The European Reformation was not deemed a schism; reformers cited several reasons the Church needed reforming. Hence, the Reformation in Africa reflected the same historical events within the Protestant Churches as in the 16th-century Catholic Church. The Holy Spirit influenced the mission theology of 19th-century Europe, compelling the sending of missionaries to Africa. However, most Reformation Churches in Europe went to Africa to plant Churches with a biblical conviction of missions but shaped by a colonial ideology. Data collection employed a library research methodology. Different resources were consulted, including books, websites, scholarly journals, magazines, and newspaper articles. The findings show that the missionary Churches in Africa adopted the Western contexts of written liturgies, theologies, professional clergies, and Church structures with centralised solid control. Besides, missionary Churches were perceived as spiritual colonies, the direct extensions of the mother Churches overseas. This contributed to the feeling in Africa that these Churches were "foreign". Consequently, the Church and society resulted in the Reformation of African Christian belief and worship, the rise of African Independent Churches, and the Church's prophetic voice. The article concludes by recommending that the African Church must engineer a reformation of both the Church and the many insensitive regimes like injustices, inequality, racism, ethnicity, corruption, poverty, and other oppressive regimes within the ecclesiastical hierarchies and in the larger society in Africa and beyond.

Keywords: Reformation, Sola Scriptura, Sola Christus, Sola Gratia, Sola Fide, Soli Deo Gloria, Extra Ecclesiam Nullasalus.

Introduction

Martin Luther (1483–1546), Ulrich Zwingli (1484–1531) and John Calvin (1509–1564) are the greatest reformers of the 16th Century who ushered in the era of Reformation. "These Protestant reformers courageously sought to reconstruct the (Catholic) Church from within albeit with considerable challenges" (Gathogo, 2006: 420). Remarkably, they differed sharply with the claim: extra ecclesiam nullasalus (outside the Church,

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there is no salvation). They propounded their Protestant Reformation thesis of sola scriptura (the Bible alone), sola Christus (Christ alone), sola gratia (salvation is by grace alone), sola fide (salvation is by faith alone) and soli Deo Gloria (God's glory alone) (Gathogo, 2006). The five solas are fundamental doctrines that can help the Church regain its footing. This study argues that the five solas are a firm and solid foundation for the Church, which held the Church together during the turbulent times of the Reformation.

The 16th-century Reformation may have been the period of transition from the medieval into modernity, but this did not mean the end of the Church Reformation. This period saw the expansion and the planting of Christianity through the efforts of missionaries, mainly from Europe and America. The Protestant Reformation attempted to bring the Church back to biblical faith. Today, it is still relevant and warrants the attention of all Christians. Eddie Robinson (2023) says, "The Protestant Reformation is a historic Church event unequally sustained across generations and denominations. Luther and the other Reformers did not seek to divide the Church. They only wanted to bring the Church back to the Bible. The Reformation gave birth to many faith communities committed to the Gospel of Jesus Christ and generally agreed on broad and basic tenets of the faith." (Robinson, 2023: 203).

The Reformation was assisted by the founding of missionary agencies in history, which saw their sole responsibilities and task to evangelise and spread the Reformation messages worldwide. This task of the missionary agencies helped the cause of Reformation because it underscores the missionary character of the Reformation and the onus of Europe and North America to see to the propagation of the Gospel to the continent of Africa and even beyond (Michael, 2020). If the spiritual awakening of the 18th Century was the heart of the Reformation in history, the creation of the missionary agencies became the "hands" of Reformation theology. It greatly affected planting missions and Reformation in Africa (Michael, 2020).

Therefore, there is a close similarity between Luther's act of defiance against the cultural and ecclesiastical impositions of the papacy over the German people and the pioneering protest and defiance of African scholars at the cultural imposition of an irrelevant Christianity, which was not adequately contextualised to the worldviews of the African people.

Problem Statement

Reformation was transported to Africa and around the world by the forces of colonisation, which primarily sought to extend European empires abroad using imperial conquest and the founding of colonies in Africa, Asia and Latin America (Michael, 2020). This period saw the expansion and the planting of Christianity through the efforts of missionaries in most parts of the world (Mokhele Madise, 2005). European Churches also seek to replicate these colonial and political arrangements by extending their ecclesiastical influences by founding ecclesiastical colonies in Africa and beyond (Michael, 2020). Madise (2005:71) noted, "Most of these missionaries appeared to believe that, in Africa, the Church would be perfect since it had just gone through the fresh process of Reformation." Most European Reformation Churches went to Africa to plant Churches with a biblical conviction of missions but shaped by a colonial ideology (Michael, 2020). The African Churches planted were generally perceived as spiritual colonies, the direct extensions of the mother Churches overseas.

The colonial mindset of the period influenced this Church planted in Africa to mirror the spiritual, doctrinal and denominational lining of their home Churches, but undermining the unique cultural and contextual realities of African Churches. "Like Luther, the pioneering scholarship in African Christianity and the subsequent ones protested against the cultural conditioning of the Christianity transported to Africa" (Michael, 2020: 13). They underscored broadly the relevance of the Gospel to the African people. However, they rejected the "demonisation" of African cultures and the insensitivity to the contextual realities of the African Church that largely came with the missionary enterprise (Michael, 2020). The Missionary Churches arose in the Western contexts of written liturgies, a set of theologies, highly educated and professional clergies, and Church structures with centralised solid control. This often contributed to the feeling in Africa that these Churches were "foreign" and that people first had to become Westerners before becoming Christians.

In this rejection of the cultural conditioning of the Gospel and their quest to contextualise the Gospel in African societies, the pioneering African theologians trod in the path of Luther, who also rejected the Latinisation of Christianity and sought to indigenise Christianity for the German people (Michael, 2020). In the context of this paper, as also noted earlier by David Bosch (2005:428), "Contextualism thus means universalising one's theological position, making it applicable to everybody and demanding that others submit to it." Therefore, the task of Luther and the job that confronted these pioneering African scholars to contextualise Christianity were the same.

Methodology

The research methodology for this article is a mixed-methods study. The first part of the study is text-based. The text-based narrative provides a historical, descriptive, and investigative review of the Protestant Reformation. This review includes the history of the Reformation, the key Reformers and the theology inherent in the five solas. A brief history of the African Reformation is also included in this review, as well as an investigative study of the African influences on the Reformation. This research section aims to aid in establishing the importance of the Reformation to Church history and to show its relationship and significance in Africa.

Another method of data collection for this article was through reviewing secondary data. Secondary data refers to information gathered by others (for example, researchers, institutions, and other NGOs). Struwig & Stead (2004:158) believes that "...secondary data helps design subsequent primary research and can provide a baseline with which to compare results from primary data."

As such, the secondary data for this study was obtained by reviewing several studies through literature review, official statistics, technical reports, scholarly journals, and review of articles. Journals generally contain reports of original research or experimentation written by experts in specific fields. Articles in academic journals usually undergo a peer review whereby other experts in the same field review the article's content for accuracy, originality, and relevance.

Literature Review

A Historical Perspective of Reformation in Europe

Martin Luther (1483–1546) was an Augustinian monk and university lecturer in Wittenberg when he composed his "95 Theses", which protested the Pope's sale of indulgences, the position of the clergy and the inaccessibility of scriptures to lay people. Lack of scriptural interpretation in the vernacular and failure to address the time's socio-economic, cultural and political context also played a part in the causes of the Reformation. In a nutshell, Reformation is the name given to a series of reforms and reorganizations of the Western Church at the local, regional and national levels in the 16th Century (Gathogo, 2009).

From a broader perspective, it can also refer to the period from the beginning of the 15th to the close of the 17th century A.D. A variety of factors caused it. These influencing factors were religious, theological, cultural, social and economic. In particular, political developments in the late medieval and early modern periods were a critical cause (Sifuna & Otiende, 2006). In turn, the Reformation had profound effects on the future politics and the religious life of Western Europe and the world at large, as evidenced by the fact

that it has been subjected to various interpretations by historians. For instance, in the 19th Century A.D., it was regarded as the religious wing of the Renaissance, which, to some historians, paved the way for the so-called modernity.

Reformation was not only a protestant movement but also a fundamental evangelical revival. Martin Luther sympathized in 1525 with the unhappy and dissatisfied peasants and their pitiful, sorry plight in Germany (Wilson, 2007). What happened was the exploitation of the corporate workforce, and labor disputes were the order of the day. Luther saw it as a concern in the kingdom of the world, of which the kingdom of God could not remain silent. Luther pointed out the exploitation of the struggling peasants by the wealthy state princess and the Church. He called on peasants for self-control and patience but mainly to show regard and submit to the higher authorities of this world.

Moreover, the theological debates of the Reformation, especially in the different views of the reformers, were eventually transported to Africa with the distinctive colorings of the reformations from the lands of Germany, France, Switzerland, Holland and Britain into the regions of Africa, Asia and Latin America. Significantly, the exportation of Reformation ideas to Africa was facilitated by four essential factors:

First, Gutenberg's invention of the printing press helped spread the ideas of Reformation to the different parts of Europe and onward to Africa and the New World – as the regions of Africa, Asia and Latin America were then called (Undorf, 2014).

Secondly, Reformation was transported to Africa and around the world by the forces of colonization, which essentially sought to extend European empires abroad through imperial conquest and the founding of colonies in Africa, Asia and Latin America (Bediako, 2004).

Thirdly, the Industrial Revolution also aided the transportation of reformation ideas worldwide, particularly in Africa. The Industrial Revolution providentially helped the cause of missions to transport God's tasks worldwide (Hutchinson & Wolffe, 2021).

Fourthly, the Reformation was greatly helped by the founding and creation of missionary agencies in history, which saw their sole responsibilities and task to evangelise the entire world and spread the fervent messages of Reformation worldwide. This task of the missionary agencies helped the cause of Reformation because it underscores the missionary character of the Reformation and the onus of Europe and North America to see to the propagation of the Gospel to the continent of Africa and even beyond. If the spiritual awakening of the 18th Century was the heart of the Reformation in history, the creation of the missionary agencies became the "hands" of Reformation theology. It greatly affected the planting of missions and Reformation in Africa.

A Continuous Reformation of the Church and Society in Africa

In this section, it is argued that the attempt at continuous Reformation of the Church and society in Africa resulted in the Reformation of African Christian belief and worship, the rise of African Independent Churches (AIC), and the prophetic voice of the Church as a religious language in radical Reformation.

According to Lizo Jafta (2004), the 16th-century European Reformation came from the German's consciousness about their own identity; the same was true of the English, the Swiss and the French. The same can be said of the AICs in Africa during the missionary and colonial period. The fact that the Peasants' Revolt marred European history at that time meant that the reformers had triggered a sense of consciousness in their society. Against this background, the AICs should be considered part of the African perspective and the continuing process of Church reformation. The Reformation in the 16th Century took place under the influence of cultural, political, economic, social and religious contexts and activities. The AICs emerged in a context similar to that of Europe.

The context of the European Reformation was nationalism, which had become a severe issue as certain countries became conscious of themselves and their identity. The African context followed the same pattern: Indigenous people began to adopt nationalism as a form of identity apart from a Christian background and culture that was influenced by the mission Churches and that were characterised by inequalities and isolation. In both contexts, prophetic voices called for the Church to reform. Benson Bagonza (2013:76) acknowledges that "The Spirit of God gave the prophets wisdom, insights, authority and courage to speak against evils in the society like corruption, wickedness, idolatry, injustices and exploitation of the poor such as orphans and widows."

According to Gathogo (2009:1), "The fire of Reformation, which was ignited by Dr Martin Luther by composing and posting 95 theses on the Church's door at Wittenberg, Germany on 31st October 1517 has had a lot of far-reaching and transformative impacts in many parts of the world including Africa." The Reformation has been explored in Africa as a model of the Church and socio-political reform among Protestant believers and thinkers. Following the example of Luther, they exposed abuses and misuse of power. They sought to revive the Reformation spirit to bring far-reaching social and political changes. Protestant leaders in Africa searched for a radical shift in theology to find ways to communicate a message that reflected and spoke to the social and political realities of the time.

The most critical observation one can draw from this history of Africa is that they were not passive recipients of knowledge from the West but rather active agents of the creation of the Reformation discourse. They did not simply let the legacy of the

Reformation transform their lives. However, they instead energetically transformed their world through the Reformation spirit (Christian Han, 2018). The result was an array of religious, social and political changes that continue to impact the region even after the 500th anniversary of the Reformation. Christian Han believes that understanding the history of the Reformation in the non-Western world allows us to grasp the extent and depth of its global impact. It also reminds us that the legacy of the Reformation lives on to touch and transform the lives of many with considerable force, including African Christian belief and worship (Han, 2018).

The Spirit of Reformation on African Christian Belief and Worship

Matthew Michael (2020:14) states, "Colonisation was also a spiritualist exercise for the European missionaries, especially seen in the shaping of Churches in Africa to operate in liturgy and doctrines like ecclesiastical colonies of Churches abroad". The colonial mindset of the period influenced this Church planted in Africa to mirror the home Churches' spiritual, doctrinal and denominational lining, thereby undermining these African Churches' unique cultural and contextual realities (Michael, 2020). Like Luther, the pioneering scholarship in African Christianity and the subsequent ones protested against the cultural conditioning of the Christianity transported to Africa. Hence, "They underscored largely the relevance of the Gospel to the African people, but they rejected the demonisation of African cultures and the insensitivity to the contextual realities of the African Church that largely came with the missionary enterprise" (Michael, 2020: 14).

In their rejection of the cultural conditioning of the Gospel and their quest to contextualise the Gospel in African societies, the pioneering African theologians trod in the path of Luther. He also rejected the Latinisation of Christianity and sought to indigenise Christianity for the German people. The task of Luther and the job that confronted these pioneering scholars were the same. For example, Bolaji Idowu (1965) sought continuity between the Christian God and the pre-Christian deity of the Yoruba people despite their differing cultural and ceremonial forms. Similarly, John Mbiti (1969) also argued for the African people's pre-Christian spiritual/religious experiences that prepared the ground for the African communities' reception of the Christian deity (Mbiti, 1969). In addition, Kwame Bediako (2004) has also underscored this particular interest in his quest to show the continuity between African understanding of the ancestors and the Biblical representation of Christology.

According to Johan Cilliers (2009:1), Africans are "worshipping with the body" than is typically the case in Western liturgies. He believes Africans have an almost natural or instinctive bodily awareness, particularly in a communal context. Cilliers gives an example of the Independent African Churches, the Dutch Reformed Church in Africa

and some congregations of the Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa; the African culture (spirituality) of bodily and sensory expression is clearly illustrated in the liturgy. Music with rhythmical musical instruments, dance and physical movements all form part of the pulsating expression of faith. Perhaps Romano Guardini (1997:60) had Africa in mind when he wrote the following:

The people who live by the liturgy will learn that the bodily movements, actions, and material objects it employs are all of the highest significance. It offers excellent opportunities for expression, knowledge, and spiritual experience; it is emancipating in its action and capable of presenting a truth far more intensely and convincingly than mere word of mouth.

Cilliers (2009:2) elaborates the point further by reminding us of the incident of an old African man who could only shuffle his feet while the others in his clan were dancing vigorously in the worship service. Cilliers explains:

He was mumbling something like mpho, mpho by himself all the time. When a visitor asked him what the word meant, he said: "Well, actually, it does not mean anything." "But why do you keep saying this and moving your feet?" he asked. "I am praying with my feet", he answered.

He performed his prayer through dance, praying and worshipping with his body, a typical example of African Independent Churches.

The Rise of African Independent Churches

African Independent Churches (AICs) is a Church founded in Africa by Africans and is primarily for Africans. Madise (2005) believes these Churches were formed to address and serve Africans. AICs arose and separated from established mainline Churches founded by missionaries. They emphasise healing and expect immediate cures. Dreams, speaking in tongues and visions are some of their standard features. Singing and dancing with drums are common in their worship. According to Hans Spitzneck (2018), these Churches offer ordinary people a sense of orientation and a spiritual home. Since their developmental efforts have a broad reach, they can be valuable partners for international development agencies.

Allan Anderson (2001a) has celebrated the ingenuity of the African Independent Churches in their quest to contextualise the Gospel within the milieu of African contextual realities through a theological/pragmatic protest against the irrelevant character of the mainline missionary-founded Churches. Anderson (2001a:18) has termed this development "African Reformation." The works of the pioneering African scholarship in the virulent protest of the preceding personalities could be broadly placed within the Reformation, particularly in Luther's quest to free the German Church from ecclesiastical control and conditioning of the German Church. Significantly, "African Christianity has continually expanded and continued the reformation ideal in its

conservative fidelity to the Bible and its continuous advocacy for human salvation in the finished works of Christ" (Michael, 2020: 15).

It is also evident in Luther's passion to indigenise the Bible and the Gospel for the German people. Through this generalised view, African scholarship has taken a path to actualisation of the ideals of Reformation (Michael, 2020). More significantly, the works of Byang Kato (1975) also narrowly pursued this quest to critically position the African Church within the reformation tradition.

In addition, most older missionary Churches arose in the Western contexts of written liturgies, sets of theologies, highly educated and professional clergies, and Church structures with centralised solid control. Thus, "That often contributed to the feeling in Africa that these Churches were "foreign" and that people had first to become westernised before becoming Christians. In contrast, the AICs' emphasis on immediate personal experience of God's power by the spirit was more intuitive and emotional" (Anderson, 2001: 62).

The AICs have followed their trajectory, cultivating indigenous spirituality and exist in almost all sub-Saharan African countries (Spitzeck, 2018). These Churches originated out of the need of indigenous people to address their worldview. These Churches were formed to manage and serve Africans. Their search for independence and rootedness in the African context was a positive step in developing the Christian faith in Africa that responds to the needs of the people. David Bosch (2012:10) believes that the Church has been called and privileged to participate in "Missio-Dei," and one of her tasks is to interpret the message of God to every generation since God is a God-for-people. "Social services like education, medical care, and diaconal services have been used as part of the Church's mission work" (Joyce Kibanga, 2015: 5). However, more effort should be contextually made to model re-evangelise. The way to proclaim the gospel message must respond to the needs and realities of the people's everyday lives.

African Independent Churches have no links or ties with the Western missionary Churches and operate independently. The Missionary Churches arose in the Western contexts of written liturgies, a set of theologies, highly educated and professional clergies, and Church structures with centralised solid control. This often contributed to the feeling in Africa that these Churches were "foreign" and that people first had to become Westerners before becoming Christians. In contrast, "the African Independent Churches emphasise on immediate personal experience of God's power by the spirit was more intuitive and emotional, and it recognised charismatic leaders and indigenous Church patterns wherever they arose" (Anderson, 2001b: 23). In this light, the AICs must also be seen differently since they have two categories: Ethiopian and Zionist.

Ethiopian Churches emphasise the importance of Africans controlling their affairs in religious and secular spheres. They are considered close to the mainline Churches since they adhere to Western Christianity. However, Mokhele Madise (2005:72) argues that the "Ethiopian type of Churches was born on the foundations of self-supporting, self-governing, and self-propagating. African Churches which would produce a truly African type of Christianity suited to the needs of the race, and not a black copy of any European Church." These Churches may not have any links with the mainline Churches. However, they are regarded as such because they follow the same patterns as the historic Churches.

Zionist Churches, for example, the Christian Catholic Apostolic Holy Spirit Church in Zion, founded between 1917 and 1920 by Daniel Nkoyane, "are primarily interested in the adaption of Christian teaching and liturgy to indigenous cosmology and the ways of worship; they stress expressive and emotional phenomena and cater to the string fears of witchcraft among Africans" (John Pobee, 2002: 33). For them the rules, regulations and liturgies are subordinate to the spirit (pneuma). Their liturgy is such that the spirit can "take over" (Pobee, 2002: 33). This is why, in the worship services of such Churches, people dance and run in circles as they sing, sometimes accompanied by drums or musical instruments. In these Churches, the congregants sing and dance until they drop down in ecstasy; this is regarded as Spirit possession (Pobee, 2002). The Zionists believe the Ethiopians and mainline denominations need Reformation since they are less open to the operation of the Holy Spirit. These Churches are governed by rules, regulations and prescribed liturgies.

However, the negative potential of pneumatic Christianity has already become evident in Africa. The growth of the personalities called prophets moves beyond what Manas Buthelezi (2002:12) envisaged, "the Holy Spirit democratises as well as globalises ministry." Recent developments have seen the growth of personality cults. Only a few individuals are deemed endowed with the spirit and entitled to benefit in cash and kind from their unquestioning followers. The growing Gnostic type of Christianity, where a few individuals are said to have special illumination by the Holy Spirit, seems to be buttressing a skewed economic system where gullible Christians are cheated into believing that if they give their hard-earned money to these particular prophets, they will be blessed with more from God (Kenneth Mtata, 2021). In a culture where personhood construction tends to be hierarchical, this emergence of a Holy few endowed with the Holy Spirit may recreate the scenario confronted by Martin Luther and the other reformers when the gullible, superstitious masses sought to earn their salvation through indulgences (Mtata, 2021).

Moreover, African Churches are also increasingly dominated by the prosperity gospel. Bradley Koch (2009:1) emphasised the point that "Prosperity gospel (sometimes

referred to as the prosperity theology, wealth gospel, or the Gospel of success) is a Christian religious doctrine that financial blessing is the will of God for Christians and that faith, positive speech, and donations to Christian ministries will increase one's material wealth. As a result of this kind of theology, Christians are flocking into these ministries, which may end up in bankruptcy and frustration.”

Michael Kruger (2010:11-12) believes that "Zionist Churches in particular need Reformation because the Churches do not comply with the standards found in the Bible and prescribed by the Reformers; he concludes that they have missed the mark of a true Church." He based his view on Zionist Churches' emphasis on traditional custom, ancestor veneration, and what he calls the magical view of the Bible, corruption, egocentricity and lack of prophetic voice (Kruger, 2010). For Kruger (2010:12), "For the Church's prophetic voice to be seriously heard, the Church should always reform and clean itself."

Prophetic Voice of the Church as a Religious Language in "Radical Reformation"

Radical Reformation "is a term which implies that groups outside its opposite the Magisterial Reformation, should be seen as consisting of small scale gatherings advocating extreme or radical dissent/reformation" (Alastair Hamilton, 2013: 42). In this regard, the Prophetic Voice has nothing to do with predictions of the future or apocalyptic expectations. However, it uses other aspects of the complex and heterogeneous prophetic tradition, which contains many strategies for claiming, legitimising and questioning authority for Radical Reformation (Hamilton, 2013). Prophecy must be seen as a prime example of such a "religious language" and has particular ties to religious dissent (Hamilton, 2013). As one of the oldest distinct modes of religious expression, it constitutes a proto-language of religious innovation. It went through a period of particular popularity during the later Middle Ages. At the same time, it has a specific inbuilt immunity to criticism. Helmt Smith (2016:17) recognises that "Prophets and seers are known to proclaim or interpret the word and the will of God in situations of crisis, but often from a precarious or marginalised position."

Ian Nell (2009:102) defines prophetic voice as "one form of preaching, about social comment and socio-economic and political critiques of a society and its body politic." The prophetic voice is an activity that addresses injustices in society. It assists people in their search for meaning. It creates a framework of understanding for the necessity of socio-political change. Jesus Christ, the head of the Church, is a role model of the Church's prophetic role. He never hesitated to give a prophetic voice whenever he needed. In his ministry, Jesus always raised His voice against religious and political authorities, which were corrupt, misused their powers and oppressed people. Moreover, the prophetic voice "...enables the community to respond to the critical challenges of

social transformation" (Nell, 2009: 567). In that sense, one should consider this ministering as "social preaching on justice, which in turn focuses on fidelity to the community or fidelity to justice for the hungry oppressed" (Nell, 2009: 567).

Jesus' determination to fight against corrupt systems and to advocate for the poor and the marginalised people in society is clearly expressed in his sermon at the beginning of his ministry: "The spirit of the Lord is upon me because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed and to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour" (Luke 4: 18-19). Throughout His ministry, Jesus identified Himself and partnered with the poor, the suffering, the oppressed and the marginalised. The Church is therefore called and commissioned by Jesus to fulfil its prophetic duty of changing people, issues and systems that affect people's lives spiritually, socially, economically and politically.

The Church's prophesy is guided by the spirit of God. From ancient times to the present, the spirit of God has chosen various prophets and sent them to tell people and authorities what God has commissioned them to say. "The spirit of God gave the prophets wisdom, insights, authority and courage to speak against evils in the society like corruption, wickedness, idolatry, injustices and exploitation of the poor such as orphans and widows" (Bagonza, 2013: 76).

One of the factors that dismantled the apartheid system in South Africa was the prophetic voice of many religious leaders who emerged from ecumenical formations and fought the system by speaking truth to power. According to Johan Cilliers (2015), the prophetic voice was consistent and persistent until the fall of racial segregation in 1994, when South Africa received democracy. The leaders spoke in unity about reconciliation, peace, unity and a prosperous South Africa with an aggressive, critical and authentic voice.

In the Lutheran Church in Tanzania, the prophetic voice aired through the famous Bagamoyo Statement is praiseworthy. The Church stood firm to criticise the dubious situation of the country at that time. Some decisive issues raised by the Bishops are corruption, the plunder of resources, illicit drugs, the theft and misappropriation of government property, and the free market. In its conclusion, the statement emphasised that the Church will continue to have an overt and close relationship with the government, observing the following: accountability, transparency and openness, human rights, no misappropriation of people's property, true democracy, the rule of law, respect to the constitution and unity of the country (ELCT, 1994). The Church appealed to the government to take all recommendations seriously.

The Church's prophetic statement made the Tanzania government withdraw its decision to present the Islamic Court bill before the parliament in January 2015. Brighton Katabaro (2015:6) speaks emphatically, Had the Church kept silent, it is believed that the government could have tabled the bill. The ruling party (Chama Cha Mapinduzi or CCM.) promised in the 2005 general election that it could ensure the Islamic Court is introduced in the country. The promise was even put in the CCM election manifesto."

The Church that sees societal evils and keeps silent loses its credibility and legitimacy. Eric Metaxas (2010:5) recalls Dietrich Bonhoeffer saying, "Silence in the face of evil is itself evil: God will not hold us guiltless. Not to speak is to speak. Not to act is to act." By standing firm and timely against the totalitarian regime of Hitler, Bonhoeffer has set an excellent example for the Church to speak out and always stand firm against corruption and all sorts of evils committed by some people holding powers in the country. The Church is called to speak for the voiceless, to see on behalf of the blind, and to walk on behalf of those who cannot walk alone. Sufferings, persecution and death are part of what Bonhoeffer (1959) refers to as the cost of discipleship.

The prophets often uttered words that the authorities did not want to hear. "However, the Church must be the voice of the exploited, marginalised, working employees whose working and labour practices are misused, conditions which are at slave level, especially amongst the lower paid workers." (Jerald John Pillay and Johannes Hofmeyer 2019:154).

However, the challenge for the Church is whether the Church itself is corruption-free. There have been some allegations that some Church leaders have gained power by offering bribes to voters. Some have attempted to or have managed to change constitutions in their favour. In some areas, we have also heard about fraud in the Church, something which hinders the Church's prophetic role. For the Church's prophetic voice to be heard, the Church should always reform and clean itself; otherwise, its voice will not go far or will not impact society. Only the Church, with integrity, can stand boldly against societal injustices and evils.

General Findings

The findings have revealed that the Reformation was originally a European event; however, after 500 years, the Reformation has increasingly become a defining African activity or movement, with more than half of the population of global Reformation adherents currently situated in sub-Saharan Africa. This present shift in the population of proponents of the Reformation from Europe and North America to Africa has profound theological implications (Michael, 2020).

As such, there is a close similarity between Luther's act of defiance against the cultural and ecclesiastical impositions of the papacy over the German people and the pioneering protest and defiance of African scholars at the cultural imposition of an irrelevant Christianity, which was not adequately contextualised to the worldviews of the African people. The African Churches planted were generally perceived as spiritual/reformation colonies, the direct extensions of the mother Churches overseas.

The colonial mindset of the period influenced this Church planted in Africa to mirror the home Churches' spiritual, doctrinal and denominational lining, thereby undermining these African Churches' unique cultural and contextual realities. Like Luther, the pioneering scholarship in African Christianity and the subsequent ones protested against the cultural conditioning of the Christianity transported to Africa. The colonial mindset of the period influenced this Church planted in Africa to mirror the home Churches' spiritual, doctrinal and denominational lining, thereby undermining these African Churches' unique cultural and contextual realities.

As a result of this feeling, the Church and society resulted in a reformation of African Christianity; thus, the paper argued that the attempt at continuous Reformation of the Church and society in Africa resulted in the Reformation of African Christian belief and worship, the rise of African Independent Churches, and the prophetic voice of the Church as a religious language in radical Reformation. The spirit of God gave the prophets wisdom, insights, authority and courage to speak against evils in society like corruption, wickedness, idolatry, injustices and exploitation of the poor, such as orphans and widows.

As Michael (2020) has concluded, the African Church must nail its theses/protests against social injustices, inequality, racism, ethnicity, corruption, and oppressive regimes, whether within the ecclesiastical hierarchies or in the larger society. We must protest against conditions of poverty and deprivation that have continually sabotaged the desires of most African people to live a dignified life as Christians and God's people.

Conclusion

This article surveyed the 16th-century Reformation in Europe that proceeded from the age of the Renaissance and which later on impacted many kinds of reforms in Africa. Martin Luther's 95 Theses started a religious revolution. From when he first began to question the Church's authority to when he nailed the Theses to the doors of Castle Church in Wittenberg, he only wanted answers. When none were forthcoming, he tried to drive the Church to change, and when this was rebuked, he stripped the Church's authority over him. His protest for reform soon began to inspire others to do likewise. This, in turn, sparked a call for reform and a demand for religious change. Equally, social activist Martin Luther King Jr.'s protest was not against Roman Catholicism but

against racism and social inequality, which has generally dehumanised the African-American people in the socio-political climate of the pre-civil rights American society (Michael, 2020).

Later on, the Reformation took another step whereby Western culture, worship and way of life were transmitted to Africa through the work of the missionaries. However, the mission Churches could not have reformed their forms of worship and even began to understand the lives of the indigenous people without taking seriously African socio-economic and political reforms. As a result, AICs arose and separated themselves from the established mainline Churches established by the missionaries. The AICs represent an indigenising reform movement in Christianity. They, in effect, protest the verbal and cerebral mode, which puts Western Christianity beyond the reach of people's comprehension and experience. The worship reforms aimed at the Africans' worship and feel at home, dancing and using African instruments like drums and marimba.

While Reformation is taking place in Africa, some key concerns must be addressed. These include but are not limited to corruption, injustices and exploitation of the poor, such as orphans and widows, tribalism and xenophobia, the killing of people with albinism, poverty, unemployment, illiteracy, democracy, environmental degradation, HIV and AIDS, patriarchy, and infant mortality rate. We must protest against conditions of poverty and deprivation that have continually sabotaged the desires of most African people to live a dignified life as Christians and God's people. Africa has to address these challenges as the continent seeks to position itself globally, given globalisation alongside the ongoing natural Reformation process in African Churches as the indigenisation of African Christianity continues to take its course.

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Exploring the Influence of Accommodation Challenges of Female University Students on Class Attendance in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania

Hawa Mkwela¹, Fulgence Swai² and Neema Timothy³

Abstract

This study investigated the influence of lack of accommodation services on female students' class attendance at the city of Dar es Salaam. The specific objectives were to: a) solicit views on the factors contributing to poor female students' class attendance b) evaluate the relationship between accommodation services and female students' class attendance, and c) propose practical measures to address the challenges of accommodation services. The study collected data from 40 students and 39 staff of the university. The results revealed that lack of accommodation services severely affected female students leading to poor attendance. This is due to students' engagement in non-academic activities such as rampant sexual practices, drunkenness and gambling. The study showed that the university should assist students to look for safe off-campus private accommodation and plan to own and rent buildings as hostels near the campus. The study suggests various measures that could be taken by the university to address lack of accommodation problems includes constructing hostel buildings, renting nearby buildings, providing transportation to female and physically challenged students as well as providing counselling to female students with young children and other demanding family issues. The university could also work with real estate investors, the Eastern and Central Diocese of the ELCT, the government and financial institutions in financing construction for hostels within the campus or the nearby areas. The study concludes that providing accommodation services to female students will improve their class attendance, improve their enrolment and subsequently attract more female students to study at the institutions in the city.

Keywords: Student accommodation, class attendance, female students.

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Introduction

Student accommodation is an essential provision in tertiary institutions, enabling students to attend class regularly and perform better academically (Nwanekezie & Mendie, 2019). Campus dormitories provide various benefits to students such as easy access to libraries, classrooms, and campus-wide internet connectivity. It also facilitates social interaction with fellow hall residents, ensures greater bonding opportunities, and enables participation in university social activities including sports for relaxation, among others (Graham *et al.*, 2018). In addition, higher learning institutions that provide accommodation services attract large numbers of students from different backgrounds to pursue higher education (Kolawole & Boluwatife, 2016). Despite these benefits, most universities in Tanzania do not have their own dormitories, and female students are affected more than male students by the lack of accommodation because they are vulnerable and easy to be affected by violence and sexual harassment while travelling to and from the university (Nwanekezie & Mendie, 2019; Mosha *et al.*, 2022). Because of lack of or unavailability of university dormitories, female students rent rooms outside the campus, which are often not safe and are not conducive to their studies (Maina & Aji, 2017). As a result, students engage in non-academic activities such as prostitution and drinking, among others, in order to pay for their bills. According to a study conducted by Mugane (2022), peer influence is a factor that drives university students who lack adequate funds for basic necessities such as food, clothing, and housing to engage in prostitution. These distractions affect their class attendance, leading to poor academic performance (Sundkvist, 2010). Therefore, this study aimed to explore students and staff insights on the impact of lack of accommodation services to female students' class attendance in universities at the city.

Related Literature

Access to higher education has been recognized as a critical factor in achieving gender equality and empowering women across sub-Saharan Africa (Mersha *et al.*, 2013). However, the issue of student accommodation has been a significant challenge in this region (Chiguvu & Ndoma, 2018), and it has been found to have a significant impact on female students' attendance in class (Mtani & Nuhu, 2019). This problem is particularly acute for female students, who often face more significant challenges in finding secure and affordable accommodation (Kisanga & Matiba, 2023).

In most sub-Saharan African countries, female students who come from rural areas or distant regions have to travel long distances to access higher education institutions (Sikhwari *et al.*, 2020). This situation is further compounded by lack of on-campus accommodation, which makes it even more challenging for female students to attend classes regularly and participate in extracurricular activities such as sports (Magambo *et al.*, 2020; Tuomi *et al.*, 2015). In many cases, these female students end up living in unsafe and overcrowded hostels or boarding houses, which can negatively impact their academic performance and well-being (Mtani & Nuhu, 2019). Furthermore, lack of safe

and secure accommodation also affects female students' mental health and safety (Ndung'u, 2015). Female students are often subjected to sexual harassment and assault while seeking accommodation off-campus (Mosha *et al.*, 2022; Muasya, 2014). This risk is particularly high for those who live in informal settlements or informal housing, which is often the only option available for those who cannot afford more secure accommodation (Sundkvist, 2010). Long distance travelling to the university campuses not only makes students late for lectures, but also subjects them to many forms of harassment (Muasya, 2014). A study by Mosha *et al.* (2022) noted that 88% of University of Dar es Salaam and Muhimbili University of Health and Allied Sciences female students who live off campus are subjected to verbal harassment while travelling from long distances to the university.

In Tanzania, like in many other countries in sub-Saharan Africa, lack of accommodation for university students remains a significant challenge (Muller & Haller, 2012; Magambo *et al.*, 2020). According to a report by the Higher Education Students' Loans Board (HESLB), only 14% of the total student population in Tanzania receives accommodation in university-provided hostels. This situation has significant impact on female students, who are disproportionately affected by the lack of accommodation on campus (Tumaini, 2022). Furthermore, female student prostitution is one of the reasons they miss classes. A study by Mugane (2022) reveals that many female students who are engaged in prostitution do not have enough money to support their basic needs such as housing, clothing and food.

It is observed that one of the universities in the city of Dar es Salaam, the Examination Regulations (Section 22.8: ii) states that a student is required to attend 75% of all classes of their registered courses in a semester and must attend 8 consecutive days of class in order to be allowed to sit for the final university examination (TUDARCo, 2021: 61). Data showed that 13% of all students who were required to sit for Semester one University Examinations in 2022/23 academic year were female students who didn't qualify to sit for the examination due to poor class attendance and abscondment. This is proof that poor class attendance for female students at this particular university has been an issue of concern affecting their academic performance. In the light of these challenges, therefore, lack of accommodation for female students in sub-Saharan Africa, and particularly in Tanzanian universities, is a pressing issue that needs to be addressed to ensure equal access to education for all students.

Problem Statement

Accommodation services in higher learning institutions, particularly dormitory facilities affect female students more than male students. Female students must rent rooms outside the campus, which are often unsafe and uncondusive to their studies because these accommodation facilities are very expensive, unhygienic, lack constant electricity, noisy, and far away from the university. As a result, they engage in non-academic activities to pay for their bills, leading to poor class attendance. This study aimed to

assess the views of staff and students at the university on the impact of accommodation services on female students' class attendance.

Objectives of the Study

The general objective of this study was to assess the perspective of staff and students on the extent to which accommodation services have an impact on female students' class attendance at the university. The specific objectives were to (a) assess staff views on the factors contributing to poor female students' class attendance, (b) evaluate the relationship between accommodation services and female students' class attendance, and (c) propose practical measures to address the challenges of accommodation services at the university.

Methodology

Tumaini University Dar es Salaam College (TUDARCo) was chosen as a case study. TUDARCo is committed to quality education and research. In addition, it has collaborations and partnerships with other institutions in the catchment area, research organizations, industry partners with connections that has enhanced the research environment and provided additional resources. This included faculty with expertise in research area of the study with access to relevant databases on issues of accommodation for students. The geographical location of the college aligns with the geographical scope of the research. This is particularly important as all the university and college students have been competing for accommodation in Dar es Salaam, the catchment area. It was essential to conduct thorough research in this institution and communicated with relevant faculty members and administrators for needed data. Furthermore, it was convenient to check recent sources directly for the latest and most accurate information with ease cooperation from both students and faculty members as well from the top educational management.

The study has made use of purposive sampling methodology which was the crucial aspect of research and data collection as it was impractical to study the entire population of TUDARCo. This sampling allowed the researchers to gather data from the subset of the college population and had the benefits of reduced costs, time saving, practical feasibility, focusing on a manageable subset, population representativeness, targeting accessible individuals and overcoming logistical challenges. Purposive sampling is a non-probability sampling technique where the researcher selected only the subjects that satisfied the objectives of the study (Obilor, 2023).). The purposive sampling allowed researchers to collect valuable data while minimizing potential ethical issues and the researchers adhered to issues related to informed consent, confidentiality, providing incentives and various forms of research misconduct (Camille *et al.*, 2016). The purposive sampling methodology was a practical and efficient approach to data collection, providing researchers with the means to draw meaningful conclusions.

The study employed the purposive sample of 40 students and 39 employees including management officials who filled in questionnaires. The questionnaires had open and closed-ended questions and the interviews were arranged for top management of the university in order to tap their experience and insights of the subject matter. Quantitative data were analysed using the SPSS statistical program and qualitative data was processed through content data analysis. The interviewed staff worked at the university and shared their experiences on the impact of accommodation services on female students' class attendance.

The rationale for using content data analysis is that is a valuable research method used to study and extract valuable insights from textual data. Content data analysis allowed the researchers to interpret and make sense of the information as it is versatile enough within the text or media (Stemler, 2001). This method enabled the researchers to explore a wide range of topics within the data. This method allowed for the discovery of trends and relationships that were not obvious immediately. Analysing content data provided context for the accommodation of students' phenomena being studied. It allowed researchers to place the data in its relevant social, cultural or historical context, which was crucial for a deeper understanding of accommodation of students. Indeed, content analysis enabled the researchers to extract rich information; by comparing the responses to the content analysis, the researchers were able to assess the accuracy and validity of the data.

Findings of the Study: Students

Students' accommodation has been identified as one of the most important factors that influence class attendance and academic performance for female students in many countries. This study examined the extent to which accommodation services have an impact on female students' class attendance. Figure 1 presents the number of students which make up 12 (30%) males and 28 (70%) females.

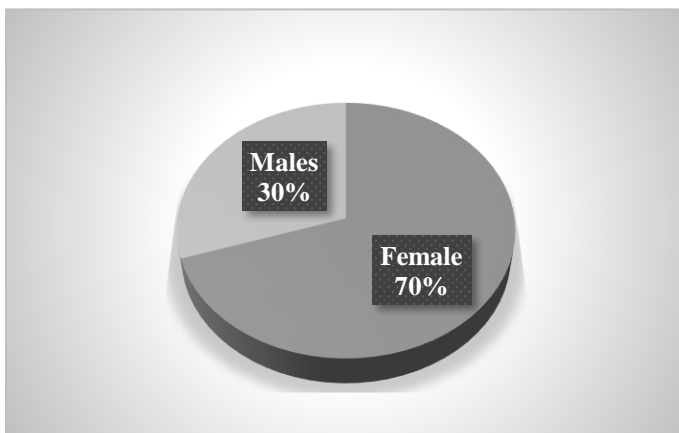


Figure 1: Sample of students by sex

Accommodation Location of Students

From the data collected from the students, Figure 2 clearly shows that the majority of

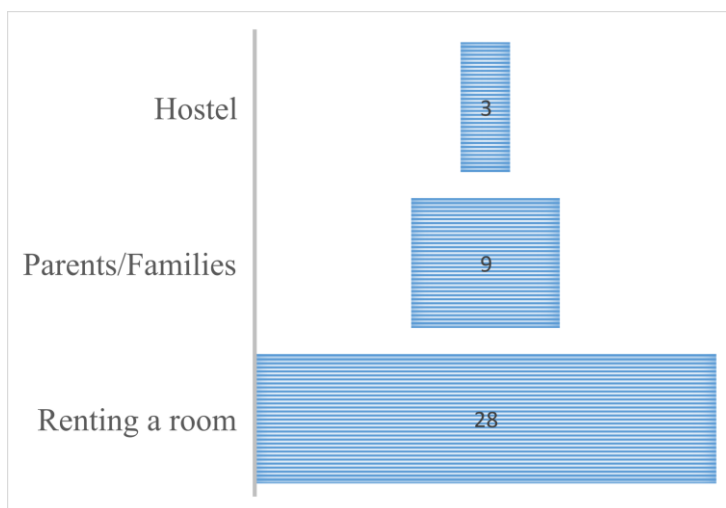


Figure 2: Accommodation location of students

students are renting. Out of 40 students taken from the sample, 3 are renting in hostels, 9 are staying with parents/families and 28 are renting a room. It is to be noted that students were not willing to mention other places they were getting accommodation. This could be an area for further study, to find out why students were not forthcoming to disclose where they were staying. In line with setting, one participant said that

To find suitable accommodation, students can explore online platforms, college bulletin boards, local real estate agents, or seek recommendations from fellow students. It is advisable to start the accommodation search well in advance to secure a desirable place. There is the need consider local authorities in Dar es Salaam, or connect with current students who can provide insights into their own experiences and recommendations (Female student).

Distance and Time of Travel/Walk to the University

On being asked, how long it took to walk to the university, the majority (31 out of 40) reported that it took about 60 minutes or roughly less than one hour. The other nine students took more than one hour, as reflected in Figure 3. In a study that investigated the critical factors that influenced students' choice of residential accommodation facilities as well as the effect of accommodation type on academic performance in Ho Technical University, Ghana, it was found out that proximity to lecture halls, spacious and well-ventilated rooms, calm and peaceful environment, availability of study area, accommodation fee, and availability of electricity and water were the critical factors that influenced the students' choice of residential accommodation (Zotorvie, 2017). Linking with the above, one participant reinforced the following

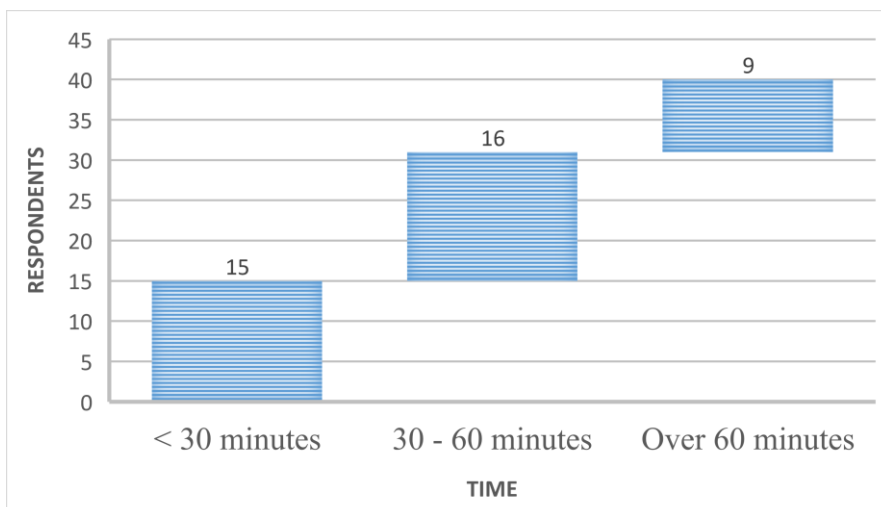


Figure 3: Time travel to university

Safety is a top priority for students for the chosen accommodation is in a safe neighborhood with adequate security measures in place. The availability of essential amenities such as electricity, water supply, internet connectivity, and other facilities like laundry services. Lack of resources may act as a barrier to regular class attendance. Ensuring safe and reliable transportation options can remove a significant barrier to attendance, particularly in areas where commuting may be challenging. This is especially relevant for female students who may face additional safety concerns. In addition, proximity to grocery stores, pharmacies, and other essential services is also crucial (Female student).

Key Factors that Contribute to Good Class Attendance

From the responses, the factors considered for good attendance showed that financial resources take 43%, followed by the availability of hostels (35%) and good teaching (22%) (see Figure 4). Clearly, the study revealed that the financial status of students takes a bigger role as far as class attendance is concerned, despite good teaching and despite having hostels. It shows therefore that if the student does not have the fare, he or she cannot go to the university.

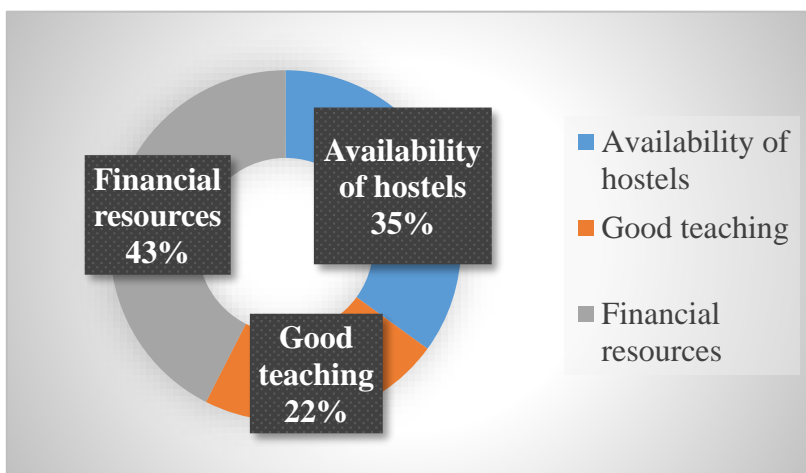


Figure 4: Factors to class attendance

Factors that Contribute to Good Class Attendance by Female Students

Using a Likert scale of 1 to 5, where 1= affects a lot; 2 = affects somehow; 3 = not sure the factor affects; 4 = does not affect much; 5 = does not affect at all, the following were the responses that were claimed to affect female students more than male students. The most serious factor is lack of hostels, as indicated by 37 out of 40 respondents (92.5%). It is interesting to note that out 16 out of 40 claimed that family matters did not matter at all; that is 40% of the responses. Further information is supplied in Figure 5 where financial reasons, transportation and good catering contributed greatly to class attendance by female students. Surprisingly, intimate relationship contributed about 45%, and those who were not sure were 12.5%. Only 5% felt that this kind of relationship did not matter at all.

Transport to the Campus

Out of 40 students, 27 (67.5%) students used bus, 9 go to the university by motorbike and 4 (10%) go on foot. The campus is not connected to public transport but there is private bus service to the university. In addition, there is a need, during rush hours, to devise a way of easing transport. It takes several minutes waiting to cross the Mwenge junction going to the university and therefore delaying students rushing for lectures. Regarding transport, 38 (95%) students acknowledged that transport was a big handicap.

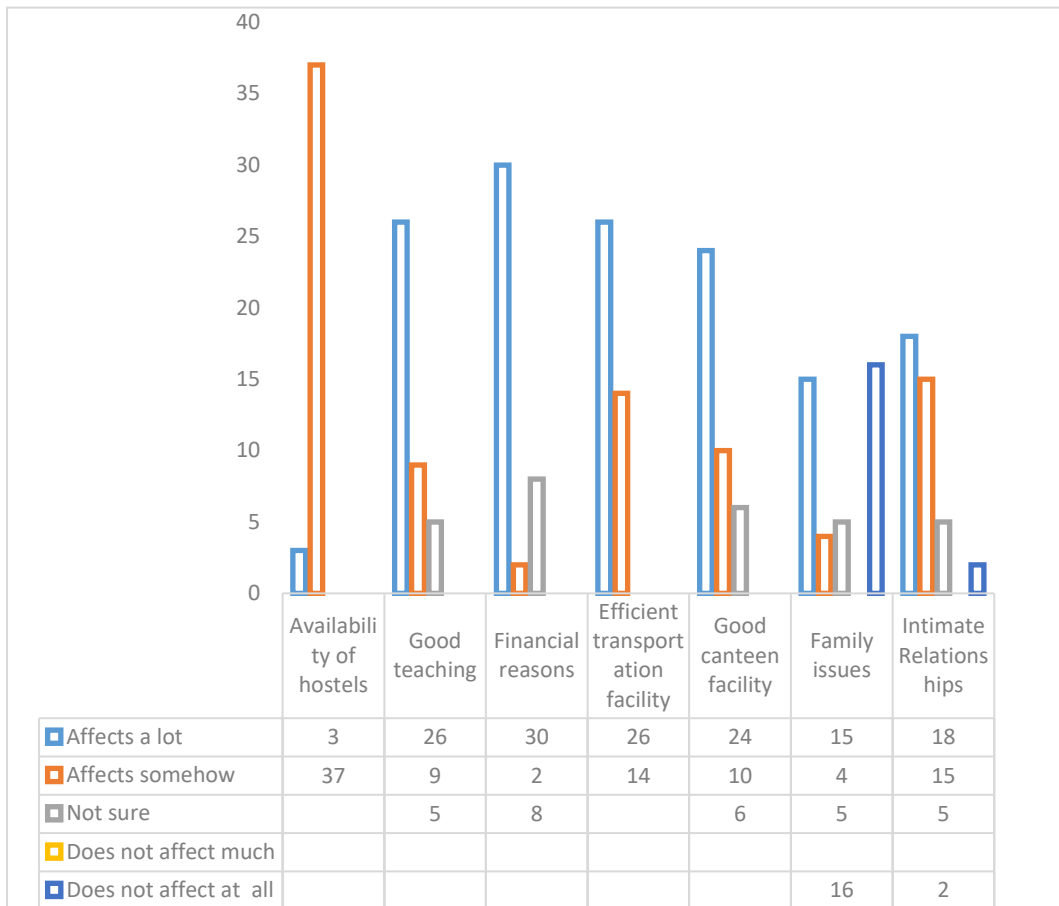


Figure 5: Factors that affect female students

Accommodation at the Campus

There was a very specific question inquiring whether lack of accommodation at the university would increase class attendance. About 82.5% of the respondents confirmed that this was an important factor. It was also shown by the 65% of respondents that lack of accommodation facilities at the university was one of the reasons for their poor academic performance. This needs further study to substantiate the claim. However, a similar study carried out in Ghana showed that there was no significant impact of accommodation type on the academic performance of students (Zotorvie, 2017). It is being recommended that the university should develop a feasible plan for building hostels by entering into partnership with firms, groups and other stakeholders.

Findings of the Study: Staff

This section presents the views of employees (lecturers and administrators) at the university regarding the question of accommodation. The study involved 39 employees as respondents, of whom 51% were males and 49% were females. The majority (67%) of the employees had worked at the university for over five years, while only 33% had worked for between one to four years. This suggests that the respondents had good understanding of the accommodation services offered at the university, as well as their limitations, and were in a position to provide valuable suggestions regarding the provision of better accommodation services for all students, particularly for female students.

Availability of Accommodation Services

When asked whether university provided accommodation, over half of the respondents indicated that it did not offer accommodation to students, and there were no special arrangements in place to provide accommodation for female students. As per Table 1, approximately 40% of respondents noted that while the university did not offer accommodation services directly, it provided a list of reputable hostels, through the office of the Dean of Students, where students could find accommodation. The respondents cited various reasons for the lack of accommodation services for female students; these included limited space for constructing hostels on campus, the costs involved in construction and management, and limited financial support from the government for students. Additionally, some respondents noted that the cost of living in the area surrounding the university was high, making it difficult for students to afford accommodation near the campus. The strict regulations governing hostel management, including high taxes and utility bills, were also mentioned as factors that contributed to the difficulty in running hostels. Despite the challenges associated with running a hostel, some respondents suggested that the university could explore alternative options such as signing a memorandum of understanding with nearby hostels to ensure that the quality and pricing of accommodation is student-friendly and affordable. One participant noted that

Economic factors may affect female students' ability to afford transportation, textbooks, or other resources that can impact attendance and academic success. Considering other restraints, Dar es Salaam has a range of accommodation options, from budget-friendly to more upscale that can constrain students' budget. Finding a balance between cost and quality is essential. Dar es Salaam offers a variety of accommodation types, including hostels, shared apartments, and private residences. Students may choose based on their preferences and budget. In addition, Access to academic support services, such as tutoring or counseling, can help students overcome challenges and improve their overall academic performance, reducing the likelihood of absenteeism (Male staff.

Table 1: Availability of accommodation services

Accommodation services availability	Frequency	Percentage
No available	21	53.8
Available	17	43.6
Not sure	1	2.6
Total	39	100

The Impact of Accommodation Services on Female Students' Class Attendance

Responses from the lecturers and administrators indicate that lack of accommodation services is a major factor contributing to poor class attendance by female students. Among 39 respondents, 64% identified this as the primary cause, as many female students live far from the campus and lack transportation. Additionally, many private accommodation facilities lack basic amenities like food, water, and electricity, which make it difficult for students to attend morning classes. Students from outlying areas, such as Kibaha, Kibamba, Bagamoyo, and Chamazi, often forego morning classes due to long travel time. Discrimination and sexual harassment on the way to campus exacerbate these problems (Mosha *et al.*, 2022).

According to the findings, the main reasons for female students' poor class attendance were long distance from home to university (49%), harsh physical environment (36%), time wasted searching for accommodation (10%), and unsettled minds (5%). Respondents also mentioned other factors such as lack of seriousness in studies, unlimited freedom leading to engagement in risky behaviours like unprotected sex, drinking, and prostitution; as well as financial difficulties and family responsibilities like taking care of sick family members or infants. While family responsibilities were only cited by 8% of respondents in this study, a previous study has shown that student mothers struggle to balance childcare and coursework (Kisanga & Matiba, 2023).

As a final point on the same, 33% of respondents noted that lack of accommodation posed a challenge to female students' attendance but that students who were serious about their studies could overcome this obstacle, given the availability of good private hostels nearby. Based on interviews conducted with university management, it was revealed that the primary factor contributing to poor class attendance among female students was not lack of accommodation, contrary to popular belief. Instead, management identified lack of seriousness as the leading cause for the low attendance

rates among female students (Table 2). One participant had the following mouthful information.

Cultural or familial expectations may shape female students' attendance and academic dedication. Female students might have additional responsibilities at home that impact their ability to attend classes regularly. Teaching methods that consider gender differences can enhance female students' participation. Dynamic and interactive teaching methods that capture students' attention and involving them in the learning process can make classes more enjoyable, encouraging regular attendance. Offering flexible schedules, especially for students managing responsibilities such as work or caregiving, can enhance attendance. This flexibility can accommodate diverse needs and circumstances. The inclusivity of the educational environment can influence female students' comfort and engagement in the classroom (Female staff).

Table 2: Factors for female students' poor class attendance besides accommodation

Other reasons for female students' poor class attendance	Frequency	Percentage
Lack of seriousness on studies	15	38.5
Engaging in non-academic activities	11	28.2
Financial difficulties	7	17.9
Family responsibilities	3	7.7
Sicknesses	3	7.7
Total	39	100

Measures Taken Regarding Lack of Accommodation Services

Although the university doesn't offer accommodation services, 46% of respondents stated that it helps students secure safe and reliable lodging, with priority given to female and physically challenged students, as well as first-year students. About 18% of respondents noted that the university was planning to own and rent buildings for hostels near the campus to provide accommodation especially to female students. On the other hand, 25.6% reported that the university hadn't taken any measures to address lack of accommodation services, and 10% were unsure if any measures had been taken (Table 3). During an interview with an administrator responsible for arranging accommodation it was revealed that there's a list of all nearby hostels available for new students to assist them in selecting a secure place to stay. The list is updated annually, and the university assesses the hostels' quality and rent prices before they are listed and made available to new students. At present, the list includes 17 hostels within a 5-10 km radius, with monthly rents ranging from Tshs. 50,000/= to 150,000/= per person. According to the

respondents, the accommodation facilities which are suggested by the university are too expensive for many students coming from low-income families. Student loans and allowances are very low, many students cannot afford to stay in the hostels close to the campus, as these hostels are expensive areas for anyone to live in, let alone poor students. Furthermore, interviews with top management revealed that the university has secured land on the outskirts of the city for hostels.

We have limited space and resources to develop student hostels here at the campus; however, we have secured land in the coastal region for future expansion (One male management reported)

While it is crucial to have accommodation services to improve female students' class attendance, students' willingness to pay for such services is also a critical. A study conducted at the College of Business Education (CBE) in Dodoma and Mbeya regions found that students were willing to pay for hostels that charge a reasonable monthly rental fee and provide other amenities such as Internet connectivity (Tumaini, 2022). One participant has noted that

Issues such as stress, anxiety, or depression may disproportionately affect female students and impact their class attendance and academic performance. Female students may face challenges related to menstrual health, affecting their attendance and focus during certain times of the month. The dynamics of relationships with classmates, particularly in a male-dominated college, can impact female students' attendance and academic confidence. Recently, disparities in access to technology may affect female students' ability to participate in virtual classes or access online resources, influencing academic performance (Female staff).

Table 3: Measures taken regarding lack of accommodation services

Measures taken by university	Frequency	Percentage
Arrange for private hostels nearby	18	46.2
No any measures taken	10	25.6
Plan to own hostels in the future	7	17.9
I don't know	4	10.3
Total	39	100

Measures to Solve the Accommodation Problem for Female Students

The study findings indicate that respondents had several suggestions to address the accommodation of accommodation for female students. Most respondents (74%) recommended that the university should construct its own hostel buildings to accommodate female students (Table 4). Other proposed measures included renting nearby buildings, seeking quality hostels with the assistance of the Dean of Students' office, and looking for additional land for expansion to include both male and female student hostels. One respondent was of the opinion that the Eastern and Central Diocese (ECD), as the university's owner, has the responsibility to ensure that female students are well cared for and protected. In addition to constructing hostels, the university should also seek external funding, such as fundraising or approaching social security funds, to provide accommodation. For example, in 2015, the then President of Tanzania mobilized the University of Dar es Salaam to fundraise for and construct student hostels on campus. Currently, these hostels accommodate about 3,840 first year male and female students, and this could be a means of engaging other stakeholders to fundraise for additional hostel construction at this university, which is under the study.

Table 4: Suggested measures to solve lack of accommodation problem

Suggestions on solving the accommodation problem	Frequency	Percentage
The university should construct hostels	29	74.4
Partner with other stakeholders to construct buildings for hostels	7	17.9
Students and parents should look for hostels that observe high morals standards	2	5.1
The university should rent hostels	1	2.6
Total	39	100

Recommendation of Staff to Improve Female Students' Class Attendance

Female students' class attendance is crucially linked with accommodation availability (Kisanga & Matiba, 2023; Iqbar *et al.*, 2020; Maina & Aji, 2017; Acker & Dillaborough, 2007). Respondents in this study propose that all stakeholders, including the ECD, the university, parents, students, and real estate investors, should work collaboratively to solve the accommodation problem faced by female students. This involves finding cost-effective ways to provide accommodation services close to the campus through joint ventures with real estate companies and the government, as well as giving priority to pregnant students and students with disability (Tuomi *et al.*, 2015). A non-

discriminative and supportive environment should be created to help female students with children and family responsibilities balance their studies and other social and financial obligations (Kisanga & Matiba, 2023). While accommodation is an important factor, respondents suggested that more research should be conducted to investigate other reasons explaining the problem of poor class attendance by female students. Furthermore, provision of accommodation services is crucial for improving student enrolment and academic performance at the university, as suggested by previous studies (Zotorvie, 2017; Mersha et al., 2013) and the respondents in this study. One participant mentioned that

It is important to note that individual experiences may vary, and these factors interact in complex ways. Addressing these issues may involve a combination of policy changes, educational interventions, and social support systems to create an inclusive and supportive environment for female students. Concurrently, family support plays a crucial role in encouraging regular attendance. When families emphasize the importance of education and create a supportive home environment, female students are more likely to prioritize their studies and attend classes (Male staff).

Discussion

The findings of the study shed light on the impact of lack of accommodation services on female students' class attendance at the university. It is clear from the study that the absence of accommodation services is a significant factor that contributes to poor attendance among female students. This is a common problem among many sub-Saharan African universities, where studies have shown that inadequate accommodation leads to poor academic performance among female students (Nwanekezie & Mendie, 2019; Marshak *et al.*, 2010; Muller & Haller, 2012). To achieve Sustainable Development Goal five (SDG 5) by 2030, higher learning institutions must create a supportive environment for women to complete their studies, attract more women to enrol, and reduce the gender gap that is widening in Africa and other parts of the world (Meena, 1996).

Although the university provides some support for securing safe and reliable accommodation, there is still a great need to address lack of accommodation services for female students. The study found out that many private hostels organized by the university are too expensive and do not have all the amenities that female students need to help them attend classes regularly and on time (Mtani & Nuhu, 2019). To address this issue, the university should sign memoranda of understanding with selected hostel owners to ensure that the rental fee, electricity, and water bills are affordable to students and the hostels are safe and secure especially for female students. Tumaini's (2022) study found that the College of Business Education (CBE) in Mbeya and Dodoma partners had private hostels to offer accommodation to its students. These hostels provide top-notch amenities like cleaning, electricity and water, and their rental rates are affordable to students from diverse financial backgrounds.

The study also identified other factors contributing to poor class attendance among female students, including lack of seriousness towards studies, too much freedom leading to engagement in bad behaviours such as promiscuity, drunkenness, and prostitution. Social responsibilities such as caring for sick family members and babies also contribute to poor performance. A study in Kenya showed that female students were forced to engage in sexual activities in order to access other college facilities and services such as changing courses of study, and accessing government loans and reading materials; as a result, class attendance was negatively affected (Muasya, 2014). Family responsibilities, pregnancies and maternal care are factors that lead to female students' absence from class (Kisanga & Matiba, 2023). The university should encourage female students to seek counselling services, which are currently available at the gender desk, providing guidance to first-year students regarding their responsibilities as university students and future mothers.

The study also found out that the cost of constructing and managing hostels and the strict rules and regulations associated with running a hostel are some of the reasons the university does not offer accommodation services. While constructing hostels can be expensive, it is crucial for colleges and universities to provide these essential facilities, especially given the increasing number of students enrolling each year (Ndun'gu, 2015). In Tanzania, the recent policy allowing for free secondary and high school education is expected to result in a surge of new university students. As such, it is essential to have adequate hostel facilities to accommodate the growing number of students and ensure they have safe and affordable housing options while pursuing their education. By investing in hostel infrastructure, colleges and universities can support student success and promote equitable access to higher education (Zotorvie, 2017).

Conclusion

Overall, the study underscored the importance of providing accommodation services to female students in higher learning institutions, to ensure that they have the necessary support to complete their studies successfully. Moreover, it highlighted the critical need for accommodation services for female students at the university under the study, and how lack of such services is affecting their class attendance. The study has revealed that many female students, especially those with disability, struggle to attend classes due to lack of accommodation services close to the campus. The findings also indicate that the university provides some support to students in securing accommodation, but more needs to be done.

This study has given a few recommendations that could be implemented to improve the accommodation services for female students. The university can prioritize the provision of accommodation services to female students by constructing hostel buildings or renting nearby buildings for accommodation. It is important for the university to collaborate with real estate investors, the government, and other stakeholders to find less expensive ways of providing accommodation services to female students.

Additionally, the university should provide guidance and counselling services to female students, especially those who are physically challenged, pregnant, and those with children and family issues. This can help to address some of the underlying reasons why female students fail to attend class. The university should also provide transportation services to female students who live far from the university and financial support to enable them to afford accommodation services near the campus.

In conclusion, by implementing these recommendations, the university can improve the accommodation services for female students, which will in turn improve their class attendance and academic performance. This will also contribute to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goal 5, which is to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls by 2030. It has not yet been established beyond reasonable doubt that lack of accommodation services at the university is one of the main reasons for poor academic performance of female students in the classroom. This is an area for further study to substantiate the claim. It is important to note that individual experiences and preferences vary, and the impact of accommodation services on class attendance may differ among female students. Conducting surveys, interviews, or observational studies specific to the institution or group in question can provide more insights into the nuanced relationship between accommodation services and class attendance. Understanding and addressing the factors in the study can contribute to creating an environment that supports regular class attendance for female students. It is essential to recognize the unique challenges faced by different individuals and communities and tailor interventions accordingly.

Acknowledgement

Tumaini University Dar es Salaam College (TUDARCo) provided funding for data collection.

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Quest for Ecumenical Movement's Involvement in Fighting Against Injustice as a Poverty Alleviation Strategy in Tanzania

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Abstract

In Tanzania, research has shown that people face many challenges, including poverty, which result from different kinds of injustice. People have been crying for help while injustice causes poverty and hostility, hence conflicts among other social groups. It becomes worse when leaders who perpetrate injustice call for poverty alleviation. No matter how good poverty alleviation strategies are, people are reluctant to implement such strategies when invited to do so by unjust leaders or leadership. Injustice is also done under the name of the church or its teachings. False preachers and ministers, compelled by greed, have been interpreting the Bible for their benefit, subjecting many followers to poverty. Bad cultural practices in the family also cause poverty. The researcher brings to light the relationship between poverty and injustice to compel the ecumenical movement in Tanzania to fight against injustice to alleviate poverty in the country. The power of a single church is not comparable to the power of churches joining together through ecumenism. This work is a qualitative research conducted in Dar es Salaam, Mbeya, Arusha and Dodoma regions. The four selected regions are among the few with firm and vibrant ecumenical movements but also politically vibrant and diverse. The study collected data from 69 respondents who self-administered a semi-structured interview guide and 17 respondents who were interviewed face to face. Respondents were church leaders, human rights activists, politicians, community development strategists, and government officials. The findings prove that although poverty is a phenomenon with many definitions, still all definitions lead to understanding poverty as a deficiency, especially of basic needs experienced by a person, a household, or a community. Further, even though there are many causes of poverty, injustice is one of them and therefore a quest for ecumenical movement in Tanzania to fight injustices within and outside the church is indispensable.

Key Words: Poverty, Injustice, Churches, Ecumenism, Poverty Alleviation Strategy

Introduction

Poverty is one of the main challenges facing many African countries, including Tanzania. Many are poor because of the unfair distribution of natural resources in their countries. This is an oppression of Africans. Bad enough, in some cases, the perpetrators

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are fellow Africans in collaboration with citizens from other countries. Historically, fairness in sharing national resources brought Africans together. In Tanzania, the history of nationalism and socialism aimed at the same purpose – to enable people to live prosperously through fair sharing of their national resources. Although the natural outcome of such policy did not last long, people can still testify to the goodness of such practice. The spirit of the Arusha Declaration, Ujamaa’s policy and Julius Nyerere’s wisdom was to centralise natural resources. They put them in what one can call a standard basket, ready to share pretty. These policies tied Tanzanians together, simultaneously being the beneficiaries and watchdogs of their resources. In other words, Nyerere and some leaders at the time considered the policy mentioned above and declaration to be essential poverty alleviation strategies. However, for unknown reasons, these collapsed, resulting in the emergence of two classes of people: the haves and the have-nots.

Many Tanzanians feel that their country has been ‘sold’ to rich people without considering the natives and the poor. The cry is about how natural resources within the country have been given to the wealthy minority while the majority do not have a right to be beneficiaries. Unfortunately, the cry of the poor is not heard by the powerful of the world, and if heard, the response has been of no benefit to them. Some influential individuals or countries are among the beneficiaries of the wealth stolen from poor countries such as Tanzania. Some influential individuals or countries pretend to be generous defenders of people experiencing poverty and their natural resources while they indirectly benefit from the stolen richness; they are the primary beneficiaries when it comes to stealing wealth from poor countries, and as a result, poverty prevails.

While the above occur outside the church, different injustices occur in faith-based institutions such as churches through false preachers, ministers and prophets/prophetsess. Such preachers or ministers preach sermons aimed at accumulating money from low-income people. They threaten their followers if they do not give whatever they have or do not pray or prophesy for them if they do not provide what they cherish the most. Misinterpreting biblical texts is done to suit their goal, which is wealth.

Many mainstream churches preach about God’s promises, especially abundant life to all. One hears of churches being involved in commissions for peace and unity among Tanzanians. However, how can mainstream church members understand their churches’ meaning and importance if they do not concern themselves entirely with fighting against injustice? What is the importance of being a member of a church which does not bother when natural resources are unfairly distributed and when greedy preachers continue to oppress the poor by using the Bible? How can churches, in such situations, continue discussing doctrinal issues, such as the Trinity or Holy Communion, while people are poor and unable to access basic needs such as shelter, food, clothes and health services? This leads people to question when the ecumenical movement in Tanzania will wake up and start addressing clearly-through deeds- poverty and injustice as ungodly. There are

cultural practices in Tanzania which have been accelerating poverty in many communities. Some of the perpetrators of the oppressive cultural practices include church members, church elders and some pastors. Such situations have caused some believers to leave their church after they discover that the church blesses such injustice caused by bad cultural practices, which leads them to poverty.

Since becoming independent, Tanzanians have been turning to religious bodies for answers to their challenges, especially when they find no answer. Tanzanian Christians typically turn to their respective churches for answers. It is an irrefutable truth that, for so long, churches in Tanzania have tried to stop injustice. However, the body of Christ is divided according to denominations for reasons that need further research. Nevertheless, a voice from an individual church can never have equal power with a voice from an ecumenical movement. Therefore, for the ecumenical movement to have meaning for Tanzanians, churches must join together to fight injustice as a poverty alleviation strategy so that people can understand the message of ‘let them have life abundantly’.

Literature Review and the Theoretical Perspective

Poverty is a phenomenon with many definitions or explanations. However, all the definitions or explanations lead to understanding poverty as a deficiency, especially of basic needs experienced by a person, a household, or a community.² Amartya Sen (1987) argues that if a person lacks basic needs to enable them to improve their standard of living, such a person is considered a poor person. Sen asserts that deprivation of basic needs alone does not give a complete picture of poverty; more elements or factors should be considered. Eva Ludi (2016: 1), summarising the work of Chamber, argues that poverty is more than material lack; it instead has to do with “Inadequate access to services... what people can or cannot do, or can or cannot be... human capabilities, such as skills and physical abilities,” This implies that poverty hinders a poor person from exercising freedom of what to have and who to become. The poor situation one finds oneself dictates where one can go, what one can eat, and things like that. This view is well understood among Africans because, in various African communities, a poor person can get a place to sleep, be it by a neighbour or a friend. A poor person can also get food and clothes, but getting help to send a child to their favourite school is difficult. That kind of freedom of choice does not apply to a poor person.

Although poverty, as one of the great enemies of the country during independence, continued to flourish, people still trusted the government to work on it. It has been argued that what the country achieved from independence to the 1980s in terms of

²Definitions and Measures of Poverty. <https://devinit.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/Definitions-and-measures-of-poverty.pdf> accessed on 18.08.2023.

poverty alleviation was because “the nation had visionary leadership built around the pillars of the Arusha Declaration whose aim was to build a self-reliant society, led by people of integrity; responsible and accountable leaders” (Ngurumo, 2010: 24). However, since 1985, people have continued experiencing the widening gap between the haves and the have-nots with little effort on the government’s side to narrow the gap between the two.

Many scholars agree that poverty is non-existent without elements of injustice or inequality. It has been argued that poverty is an indicator of injustice. It is a sign that essential human interests have probably been violated—even though these violations could have been prevented (Kreide, 2007). One can think of poverty among the Maasai who once lived in Ngorongoro before eviction or the Maasai in the neighbouring countries of Kenya and Uganda who were displaced to create Mount Elgon National Park (Vayda, 2021). One can affirm that such evictions, which are due to injustices, made many Maasai poor. Vayda continues, “Landlessness has prompted joblessness or a decrease in income and opportunity” (Vayda, 2021: 45).’ She argues further, “Joblessness and lack of or reduced access to resources are two of the causal mechanisms triggering economic marginalization” (Vayda, 2021: 47). The above arguments affirm that poverty has much to do with injustices or inequalities. This implies that although there are several strategies for poverty alleviation, fighting injustices is among the best methods for fighting poverty.

Methodology

This work is a qualitative research conducted in Dar es Salaam, Mbeya, Arusha and Dodoma regions. The four selected areas are among a few with a firm and vibrant ecumenical movement but also politically rich and diverse. A total of 69 respondents filled in the semi-structured interview guide and 17 responded to face to face interviews. Respondents include church leaders, human rights activists, politicians, community development strategists, and government officials. The study used mainly primary data; secondary data like official documents such as Memorandum of Cooperation between Churches and Partner churches, church constitutions, and Ecumenical Movement Guidelines and Manual have been used to base discussion on the results.

Data was analysed by summarising and organising it according to the research objectives, and then content analysis was applied. After that, the data was interpreted to give the study results. Lastly, secondary materials like official documents of the institutions and churches at large were used to confirm or contrast the results. The official records of the institutions and churches include church constitutions, committee minutes, and Memorandum of Cooperation between churches or institutions.

Examples of Injustice in Tanzania

Although Tanzania has been a peaceful country for decades, injustice still hurts the country and causes poverty. One can agree that if a country wants its people to be poor or to remain poor, it starts by providing irrelevant or poor education. According to the UNICEF report on *Education in Tanzania*, "...the poor quality of education dampens children's prospects of a productive future³. Ruth Wedgwood (2007:14) insists, "The quality of education has been so poor that many of the potential benefits of education have not been realised." While the country insists on self-employment, in some schools and colleges or universities, entrepreneurship is not a priority, and the government still does not condemn those schools and colleges or universities that do not adhere to it. This kind of education liberates no one; instead, it leaves graduates without the skills to become self-reliant and therefore, they fail to alleviate poverty.

Unfairness in sharing natural resources is another aspect of injustice which hinders poverty alleviation. Some Tanzanians believe foreigners have more rights than Tanzanians regarding who should access or enjoy natural resources (Church Leader 1, Mbeya, April 2023).

Displacement or removal of people by force from places where natural resources are can prove the argument above. About the Geita region's experience, it is written, "The residents of Mine Mpya were evicted by the Tanzanian government to make way for the Geita Gold Mine (GGM), operated by gold mining company AngloGold Ashanti, which is headquartered in South Africa".⁴ Unfortunately, minerals have been taken and transported to foreign countries, but Tanzanians are told that what the foreigners take are just by-products from the minerals known as *Makinikia*. Several containers of such minerals have been sent to Europe and China, leaving the country with empty holes. The same has been affecting the Maasai of Tanzania for so long. Vayda (2021: 31) writes, "The Maasai continue to experience systematic evictions from and changes in land use within the areas the Tanzanian government resettled them." Again, Vayda affirms, "As recently as this year, the Tanzanian government has continued systematic evictions from areas of Maasai resettlement and has instituted changes in land use policy in those areas, making livelihood adaptations to changes a continuous struggle" (ibid: 63). However, it pains when one hears that the driving force behind eviction is due to foreign investment involving United Arab Emirates-based Ortello Business Corporation (Mittal & Fraser, 2018). All of the above have been enhancing poverty to a great degree because people are no longer allowed to continue with activities which were the source of their income.

Recently, the Tanzanian government took a step known by many as tax reform and came up with 'Tax Amnesty' or a grace period for the payment of taxes by new businesses as

³ <https://www.unicef.org/tanzania/what-we-do/education> Accessed on 18.08.2023.

⁴ Tanzanian farmers displaced by mining live like refugees <https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/news/2013/06/03/tanzanian-farmers-displaced-mining-live-refugees> produced by IRIN News while it was part of the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (Accessed on 21.08.2023).

a means of creating a favourable environment for doing business and investment in the country.⁵ However, some years back, the grace period was granted to foreign investors only (TRA Staff 2, Arusha, May 2023). Despite the offer, unfaithful foreign investors came to Tanzania with nothing; they obtained land and used it as collateral to obtain big loans from Tanzanian banks. In short, they are investors who came and invested using Tanzanian ‘capital’ (TRA Staff 5, Dodoma, April 2023).

It has been argued that some foreign investors started small businesses, which are not for foreigners according to the country’s law. The so-called investors took business opportunities from the natives, and such practices have caused many Tanzanians to remain in poverty without any hope (Legal Staff 1, Mbeya, April 2023).

Many affirm that corruption and injustice work together to foster poverty in any community because there is no act of corruption which has nothing to do with injustice (Legal Staff 1, Mbeya, April 2023 cf: Church Leader 1, Mbeya, April 2023).

One has to think of a person with a land, which he cultivates for his living. Later, someone takes the land which is not his, but he obtains and subsequently owns the land by bribing the authority. This is what it means to say that corruption never ends without doing injustice to people (Legal Staff 1, Mbeya, April 2023). From this example, the legitimate owner of the land, who also depended on the land for a living, now becomes a poor beggar. This is the experience of many Tanzanians.

Some have taken their cases to court, spending money and time defending what belongs to them. That is how corruption creates injustice and causes poverty to people (Legal Staff 1, Mbeya, April 2023).

Again, one has to picture someone without driving skills who obtains a driving license through bribery. Such people have caused accidents which kill several breadwinners and leave their families without anyone to provide for their basic needs. Some children from victims’ families are expelled from schools because accidents caused by such drivers have taken the lives of the people they depended on (Pastor 1, Dodoma, April 2023).

It is becoming routine for many Tanzanian politicians and government officers to drive a four hundred million shillings car, live in a luxurious house and send their children to expensive schools. The politicians call themselves ‘sons of farmers’ to identify with the poor Tanzanians. That kind of lifestyle fosters poverty in Tanzania because the money they use to buy expensive cars could have helped many to fight against poverty. Many argue that the money could have improved roads to make transportation of the harvest more accessible and, therefore, reduce the price of such goods to the rest of the community members (Farmer 1, Dodoma, May 2023). However, because roads are not

⁵The Citizen of March 12, 2023 <https://www.thecitizen.co.tz/tanzania/news/national/tax-grace-period-excites-investors-and-economists-4154648> Accessed on 18.08.2023.

in good condition, goods are not affordable for some people. People with low incomes remain poor, and because of poor nutrition, they end up having health challenges which need medical attention. Unfortunately, medical attention also costs money. A poor person is ultimately prone to early death (Church Leader 3, Arusha, May 2023).

The Tanzanian government has a special fund, namely the Tanzania Social Action Fund (TASAF), to help poor households attain basic needs. However, unintended families often receive the funds while the intended ones do not get what is designed for them. This is a sign of poor fund management. This compelled the deputy secretary general for the President's Office (TAMISEMI) to rebuke the staff members of the TASAF for a tendency to help unqualified households while leaving the qualified households out of the project (Gwajima, 2020). This means that failure to manage the funds effectively fosters poverty in many societies in Tanzania.

Some Tanzanians experienced injustice in the form of privatisation. To adhere to the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF) policy, the Tanzanian government was forced to privatise government-owned industries/companies and parastatals. Unfortunately, companies and industries that made significant profits for the government were also sold and later closed by the investors (Bank Staff 1, Dodoma, April 2023 cf. Church Leader 4, Arusha, May 2023). The decision affected many Tanzanians who were employees of such companies and industries. Many families were economically devastated by the decision. Many could no longer support their families because they abruptly became poor. Some died because of shock, and their families remained without any support and became poor (Bishop 1, Dar es Salaam, April 2023).

While some Tanzanians experienced the above, some have experienced many oppressive and unjustifiable taxes, which have been causing inflation, something which does not affect only business persons but also people with low incomes. People who depend on baking half-cakes or biscuits find that the price for recipe ingredients has increased. Those who send their children to school find that the school fees are already higher than before these oppressive taxes were established. Many agree that those who depend on farming discover that they can no longer afford necessary farming equipment, and even the price of fertiliser has increased. Those who want to build shelters fail to do so because they can no longer afford building materials; they are more expensive than before unjustifiable taxes. Such injustice in the form of oppressive and unjustifiable taxes has become the Tanzanian experience, and with this kind of injustice, poverty becomes obvious (Lecturer 1, Dar es Salaam, April 2023).

The Tanzanian government gives subsidies to government-owned schools and universities but not to private schools and universities. This is also an injustice which causes poverty to prevail. Bad enough is when the government-owned universities receive funds the government obtained as a loan from the World Bank, but the loan is paid back by all Tanzanians, including those who are not beneficiaries of such loans, i.e.

those who were denied that right because they worked with or studied at private universities (Professor 1, Dar es Salaam, May 2023). All students in government-owned schools and universities and those in private schools and universities are Tanzanians. They all have the right to education and a suitable environment for studies. Unfortunately, students in government-owned universities pay less fees compared to those in private universities, as if those in private universities are not Tanzanians. This is possible because government-owned universities need no money to pay the salaries of their instructors or lecturers, whereas students in private universities must pay a higher fee. After all, private universities are obliged to pay the wages of their staff from student fees (Professor 2, Dar es Salaam, May 2023). This is why many poor parents fail to send their children to private universities even if their children have fulfilled all the requirements for them to join the universities. The poor parents would like to invest in their children's education, hoping to receive financial assistance from their children after they graduate and get employment. Unfortunately, due to hefty fees, many children from low-income families remain home waiting for miracles, which often do not occur (Dean of Students 1, Dodoma, April 2023 cf: Dean of Students, Mbeya, April 2023). This is one of the reasons why such injustice perpetuates the poverty cycle in Tanzania.

Another form of injustice reveals itself through low wages paid to workers by employers, owners of industries or companies or family members paying a housemaid. This kind of injustice in the form of slavery is rampant in Tanzania, and it enhances poverty. Stress and depression have now become an everyday experience among many Tanzanians. Some Tanzanians opt to remain at home rather than work and earn little, which cannot help them afford their basic needs (Housemaid 1, Arusha, May 2023).

In trying to fight against poverty, many Tanzanians have been involved in many different activities for a living. Some of them are in the Film Industry working as actors or actresses. In contrast, others have devoted their time, energy and money to composing songs, singing different songs, and recording and selling their CDs or DVDs. Some, for the same purpose, are busy with the handicraft industry. However, protecting their property rights has had no positive results (Legal Staff 3, Arusha, May 2023 cf: Choir Leader 1, Dar es Salaam, April 2023). Some of the people, especially youths, who are in these groups have reached the point of going to the streets to fight or take back by force their work, which in one way or another is a result of unfaithful business people who would like to benefit than the owners themselves (Choir Leader 2, Arusha, May 2023). This also causes poverty to flourish.

Hospitality or generosity, one of the criteria of humanity among Tanzanians, attracts lazy relatives to become a big load on the shoulders of their relatives who have succeeded. Some relatives do not want to work yet expect their well-to-do brothers and sisters to assist them. These are the relatives who may be drunkards and bear children whom they cannot care for. They may have more than two wives but cannot care for them (Church Leader 5, Mbeya, April 2023). They sometimes believe it is their right to be

helped by their relatives. Such people perpetuate the poverty cycle unnecessarily (Choir Member 1, Mbeya, April 2023).

There are some preachers, being compelled by greed, who continue to oppress many Christians and non-Christians by teaching wrong messages. These messages do not liberate the followers but force many to remain impoverished while recruiting others to join. One finds a preacher praying and professing for a parent who needs money to send his son to school, while the same preacher is asking people with low incomes to sow seeds for his son to go to a university. One can ask why to pray for a church member for the same problem that money can rectify when it faces the preacher (Professor 1, Dar es Salaam, May, 2023). Some so-called Ministers of God cannot pray for a sick person or one with a problem unless the person concerned pays some money to the minister. Nowadays, Miracles are bought, and poor people cannot get services or are compelled to sell whatever they have to seek miracles. Some sell their only pig or chicken for miracles (Pastor 2, Dodoma, April 2023). This has caused poverty and other oppressive religious practices to flourish.

Some preachers demand social security funds from their followers (the funds they obtained after working in government or private sectors for many years). Some preachers can discover that a particular church member has received a loan and therefore prophecy that God requires that loan as a special gift to the preacher concerned. Because of fear of the so-called 'Anointed Man of God', the victim gives the money. These practices create new poverty daily (Church Member 1, Dar es Salaam, May 2023 cf: Church Member 2, Arusha, May 2023).

Some preachers urge people to stop working or toiling because 'God will provide' for them. They prevent their followers from seeking medical attention when they get sick and tell them that God will heal them without any medication. However, the victims decide to go to the hospital when their condition is critical, after waiting for healing but in vain. Some preachers have secretly forced their followers to work on their farms and leave their farms uncultivated (Pastor 4, Mbeya, April 2023). Followers of such preachers are now in a poverty circle.

The Effect of Injustice

The significant effect of injustice is poverty and the generation of several evil acts. Many, having nothing legal to do which they once had, turn to illegal activities such as selling illicit drugs, robbery, thefts and hacking as new means of survival. Many youths travel abroad in search of green pastures. However, they find themselves doing what they never dreamed of before. Some sell their bodies (in prostitution) in different parts of Europe and the Middle East. At the same time, some involve themselves in pornography videos (Pastor 6, Dar es Salaam, May 2023).

The use of illicit drugs such as cocaine, heroin or marijuana is rampant. If one asks the victims, their answer proves they have lost hope. It becomes pathetic when they say that

they trust no institution, including the church, for some churches have corrupt staff. Such staff take funds or other goods intended for the poor and give them to their families while leaving them unattended (Pastor 7, Dar es Salaam, May 2023).

The painful truth is that some Tanzanians, especially politicians, have decided to become who they are today to answer the challenges of poverty they faced during their youth. Instead of assisting other poor in the country, they use their opportunity to regain what they believe they lacked before (Church Leader 6, Dar es Salaam, May 2023). It is worse when someone decides to work as a pastor to fight poverty without knowing that being a servant of God does not always guarantee wealth and popularity. The result of someone joining Pastoral Ministry because of wealth is to preach what is not by the Gospel. Such ministers force people to give them more money, causing poverty to flourish (Pastor 7, Dar es Salaam, May 2023). The same applies to other professions; the majority choose a particular career, having been frustrated by a previous experience - poverty.

Having a significant number of poor citizens is like a ticking bomb. Such citizens are ready to do anything, even demonstrations, for they have nothing to lose. In neighbouring countries, many demonstrators on the streets are poor and have nothing to lose. Since Tanzanians are like other human beings, it will not be a big surprise if they do the same when a high degree of intolerance is reached (Pastor 8, Arusha, May 2023).

The History of Ecumenical Movement in Responding to Injustice

A call for ecumenism⁶ to fight injustice in Tanzania as a poverty alleviation strategy calls for a historical review of its establishment to see whether fighting against injustice was one of the reasons for its establishment and whether fighting against injustice is on its agenda. Byang Kato (1975: 129) states that the concept of ecumenism was established in the early church councils of Nicaea (325), Constantinople I (381), Ephesus (431), Chalcedon (451), and Constantinople II (553). Others claim the Edinburgh World Missionary Conference of June 14-23, 1910, to be the origin of ecumenism (Ibid.130). If one reads Jesus' prayer in John 17.21, one can understand that the unity of the church Jesus prayed for is what is known today as ecumenism. This means the author of ecumenism is Jesus Himself. fact compels many to Whatever is said, it must remain that Jesus Christ is the founder of ecumenism, described in the content of His prayer in John 17.21, when he prayed for unity in His body (Goosen, 1993: 3). Going back to the history of Christianity, one can prove that the power for unity and disunity were both at work. On one side, Christians of the time worked hard to sustain unity among themselves; on the other, the power to destroy unity affected the efforts of bringing churches together (Ibid: 14). This proves that Christians, at different times, were anxious to see themselves coming together, worshipping, and relating with one

⁶Ecumenism in this article denotes the unity or cooperation of Christian churches.

<https://www.britannica.com/topic/ecumenism> Accessed on 15.08.2023.

another while sharing their experience of their faith in Jesus Christ.

After many world wars, the World Council of Churches was founded in Amsterdam in 1948. It is written “The World Wars had dominated the first half of the 20th century. Everyone was sick of war, despair was everywhere, and people of goodwill looked for a future in which to hope. The coming together of the churches was somehow a symbolic phoenix amid the ashes and negativity of two world conflagrations” (Ibid: 22).

The above suggests that, although ecumenism has many dimensions, like affirming unity in one faith, facilitating an ordinary witness, and maintaining relations with national councils (Ibid.), it still gives hope to people without hope, healing the wounds and despair caused by wars were among the main aims of ecumenism. This was revealed in the World Council of Churches (WCC) constitution. The constitution clearly states that the aim of the WCC is:

To express their commitment to Diakonia in serving human need, breaking down barriers between people, promoting one human family in justice and peace, and upholding the integrity of creation, so that all may experience the fullness of life (Ibid: 23).

The author of this article is aware that some of the social dimensions of the movement are sometimes interpreted negatively, as when the ecumenical movement of the WCC pays attention to matters of social justice, when it tries to fight against racism or ethnic antagonism, or when it supports liberation movements (Goosen, 1993: 28). Some would like to see the WCC pay attention only to matters concerning doctrine. However, one can agree that, although doctrinal issues are of great importance when discussed in peace and love, commitment to service is still among the most significant signs and significance of ecumenism in Tanzania.

i) The Role of the Ecumenical Movement in Tanzania

The church’s role as a prophetic voice concerning injustice facing Tanzanians should be one of the tasks of the Ecumenical Movement in Tanzania. The tendency of some church leaders to remain silent while poverty is affecting the lives of many Tanzanians in different ways belittles the meaning of the church and the importance of the ecumenical movement. To be subservient to world political leaders is not what church leaders and ministers are called for (Bishop 1, Mbeya, June 2023). The ecumenical movement should take steps to hold face-to-face talks with people in authority rather than waiting until the war is declared, as is the case in many African countries (Ecumenical Staff 1, Dar es Salaam, May 2023). Such church leaders can never help understand ecumenism and establish roots in Tanzania.

The church must do away with what is known as *Ambulance Theology*, a church tendency to come up with a strong statement only after a specific injustice occurs. A prophetic church can never be caught unaware; she should be able to foresee what the rest of the people do not see yet. The church should become aware of what is about to happen and start working on it before it happens. Such a church can educate and prepare

people on how they should respond to a challenge or injustice. The church should wake up and do all that God requires of her. It has been argued, “Words and deeds, faith and obedience, evangelism and social justice must go hand-in-hand. If the church fails in this harmony, her credibility disappears, and she becomes irrelevant or unnecessary” (Adeyemo, 1999: 109).

The church should restore justice by rebuking corruption. Unskilled persons with fake medical qualifications must not be allowed to enter operating rooms and do something which causes the death of a breadwinner. Bribery must be stopped by giving driving licenses to unskilled drivers to spare the lives of many breadwinners who become victims of accidents (Youths Church Leader, Dodoma, April 2023).

About unjustifiable and oppressive taxes, the church should come up with a strong statement urging the government not to do it again, for the life of the Tanzanians should not be brought into a *laboratory* test. The time for testing is over, and the results will affect the nation for many years. Several businesses collapsed, and many families remained impoverished because of such taxes, which later caused inflation and sent a terrible message to the poor (Church member 7, Dar es Salaam, May 2023). If the church is serious about poverty alleviation, it should strongly condemn and discourage these taxes.

Rebuking unjustifiable taxes should not be left to the opposition alone; it should be on the church’s agenda, for such taxes accelerate poverty among Tanzanians (Pastor 8, Mbeya, April 2023).

The church should advocate for fairness, especially in funds obtained as loans, so that all Tanzanians become beneficiaries without excluding private universities or schools.

When a child from a low-income family can pay the same fee as children in government-owned universities, injustice will be defeated, and poverty will be alleviated (Professor 1, Dar es Salaam, May 2023).

For example, the government may be hesitant to renovate a private school or a private university for fear that the owner will change the usage of the premises from a school to a restaurant or from a university to a hotel or shopping mall. If that is the case, the government can set a contract with the owner to ensure that the owner of the education institution, which receives funds from the government, does not change its usage. Alternatively, the government, instead of funding the renovation of premises, can give a subsidy in the form of salaries for staff, as the government does to staff seconded in many hospitals in the country.

It is a shame for high government officials who studied in private universities not to advocate for the fair distribution of funds (Legal Staff 4, Dar es Salaam, May 2023).

If this injustice is gone, many children from low-income families can study, become breadwinners of their respective families, and therefore break the poverty cycle.

Changing political leadership, which has no room for justice, is also a role of the church. This means that the church should encourage people to vote for those who prove that they respect justice and hate poverty. Leaders should understand that they cannot continue to give lip service and expect people to continue to vote for them. James Cone argues, “We contend that we know what people believe by what they do and not by what they say in their creeds, conference statements, or theological textbooks” (Cone, 1992: 42). The church should tell people clearly, “Unless the masses assume responsibility by voting, they will not be able to affect the political process” (Ibid: 45). This is very important in fighting injustice, especially for Tanzanians who sometimes do not believe in elections. Some Tanzanians believe that votes are always stolen, so they think there is no need to vote. Concerning justice, the church must boldly speak until people understand that they should engage themselves in voting and competing for political positions. “Christians are called not only to pray for justice but also to become actively involved in establishing it” (Ibid: 46). “The freedom of our children and others depends upon our political engagement in the struggles for justice” (Ibid: 46). The church should discourage those who insist on prayers without taking action. Such people should be told, “To pray for justice without analysing the causes of injustice is to turn religion into an opiate of the people” (Ibid: 46).

The church should condemn bad cultural practices, which some Tanzanians support.

Cultural practices which oppress women, e.g. denying the right of women to be employed, the right of a widow to inherit the house of her deceased husband, gender-based violence and others, should be condemned by the church because they lead many women and their families into poverty (Community et al. 2, Arusha, May 2023).

Take the example of an educated woman whose college or university certificates are confiscated by her husband, and some family members justify the act. The church should strongly rebuke such injustice.

In some families, even if a husband loses a job, he does not allow his wife to search for employment, even if it means the family have nothing to eat (Lecturer 3, Arusha, May 2023).

This kind of injustice has been tormenting many, especially children, and it permits poverty to flourish. The church should educate such husbands to see a woman as a complete human being who deserves freedom, especially to work.

Another example of harmful cultural practices is child marriage. The church should join the government (through deeds) to make child marriage illegal. Let the church make it clear that such practice is an injustice against children. Although culture is essential, some might argue that to be a Christian does not mean to abolish culture. Still, Jesus, through His life, proved that “He is the fulfilment of cultural aspirations and the restorer of the institutions of true society” (Niebuhr, 1956: 42). Again, “Christ is, indeed, a Christ of culture, but he is also a Christ above culture” (Ibid.). Let the church educate people

about the adverse effects of such practice. The church should establish an office to deal with such issues.

The church should urge the government to implement a law which prohibits children under 18 years of age from watching movies which contain nudes, explicit sexual material or abusive language that is not appropriate for children. The church should condemn those who own such local halls as VibandaUmiza, where children gather to watch such movies (Pastor 11, Mbeya, April 2023).

The church must urge parents to spend more time with their children and be ready to discuss their challenges. The church should discourage parents from spending more time making money while neglecting their role in raising their children. Some parents believe a housemaid is enough to care for their children. It is a child's right to be brought up by parents and not a housemaid. The church must be bold enough to tell parents that they are doing an injustice against their children and that sooner or later, the children can turn to reject their parents. Such children will no longer listen to their parents; they will start doing evil things, which can have financial implications and burden the family financially. Much money can be required for the rehabilitation of such children whose upbringing is disadvantaged (Church Leader 6, Dar es Salaam, May 2023).

The church should teach morality to people, especially youths because immorality has led many youths into drugs, theft, and other immoral acts. Many families have used all their money in their reserves to get their youths out of these problems, but not all families have succeeded. These appeals to the church to invest in teaching morals to youths while she fights against people who sell drugs, such as cocaine and heroin (Pastor 19, Arusha, May 2023). Further, the church should confront those who engage in selling illicit drugs or those who recruit youths into theft. The church should use all possible platforms to teach moral principles, even if it takes her to preach during the funerals of unbelievers or backsliders (Women Church Leaders, Dar es Salaam, May 2023).

Christian education in primary and secondary schools should also be considered an opportunity to teach moral principles. Youths who are the Manpower of Tanzania have been affected by immorality, which made them useless citizens because of drugs. (Pastor 10, Dar es Salaam, April, 2023).

Poverty alleviation requires the church to discourage donating millions of shillings for a single-day wedding ceremony while leaving the couple in poverty with unpaid loans for their lifetime. The church's role is to encourage people to donate money to different projects which can reduce poverty. Let people be encouraged to raise funds to support studies of children from low-income families and other similar projects (Pastor 12, Dar es Salaam, May 2023 cf: Pastor 13, 14, 15, Mbeya, April 2023).

The church should discourage people from visiting fortunetellers because many demand hefty fees from the poor and cause conflicts between relatives. It is time for the church

to rebuke fortunetellers who depend on poor people searching for answers to their problems. Many families break up because the fortunetellers misinformed the victims on who is the causative of their difficulties by mentioning close relatives to be responsible. Because of such a breakup, families remain disintegrated and poor. The church is obliged to urge the government to stop fortunetellers from doing what they do as one way of alleviating poverty among Tanzanians. The church should consider educating members about the fraudulence of fortunetellers (Church Leader 8, Mbeya, April 2023).

Sharing is one good African cultural practice that is not widely practised. A good Christian is the one who has a heart for the poor. Loving a neighbour is a criterion of a good Christian. Forell (1954: 152), a genuine Christian, comments, "...lives in Christ through faith, in his neighbour through love." Poor neighbours want to experience love from people around them. One of the signs of love for the poor is for the church to revive a Diakonia department. Through diaconal services, many low-income families of the time were helped to attain their basic needs (for details on this topic, see Mwamugobole on this Issue).

Generosity is not a sin. However, relatives who depend on their brothers and sisters should also work hard to care for their families instead of relying on other family members. In this regard, Bujo (1990: 52) argues, "Let us ask whether one person is to concern him or herself with all the innumerable cousins and second cousins...even if they comfortably live off a single income-earner like veritable human parasites?" Further, Bujo discourages a person from taking all his or her family members to his or her brother or sister and turning his or her house into a boarding house (Ibid.).

The church should rebuke people who use vulnerable groups or disadvantaged groups such as orphans or disabled as their income-generating projects.

The church must put to an end the tendency of some people, including Christians, to receive grants from donors to take care of the groups mentioned above and instead use the fund for their benefit while leaving the intended groups unattended (Church Members 5,6,7, Dodoma, April 2023).

The freedom of worship is such an incredible freedom. However, any freedom without restrictions can be chaotic. If there is no church institution to monitor, evaluate and regulate the conduct of ministers and churches, the door is open for false teachings to prevail. It should be understood, "We live near the edge of a slippery slope where envy and pride lead to our downfall" (Crouter, 210: 138). It is the role of the church to fight injustice, which is brought by preachers who purposely preach sermons to accumulate wealth from the poor. Such ministers should be required to stop preaching false doctrines, or their licenses be confiscated (Professor 1, Dar es Salaam, May 2023). The church should rebuke any minister who twists the Bible to suit their ambitions while leaving the followers poorer than before. The church must fight this kind of injustice without delay if the church wants to alleviate poverty in Tanzania.

The church can effectively fight against injustice if it reviews itself to see whether it is free from injustice, which leads many to poverty. Start with the lifestyle of some church leaders who live an extravagant life (Church Members 8,9,10, Mbeya, April 2023). Many agree that such church leaders identify themselves more with oppressors than with the oppressed; they identify themselves more with the rich than with the poor. That is why some Christians have been leaving their church after they discover that their church leaders have no heart for the needy and the poor. Wright (2000: 104) asserts, “Leaders who find their identity in their relationship with God nurture organisations that care for people as persons loved by God.”

Further, church leaders should live by example and be good models for people to rely on. Wright continues, “Leaders who place their hope in God will respect commitments, keep promises, encourage trust” (ibid: 104-105). It is time for church leaders to live their sermons and their words.

The church should rectify what is happening within her as she fights injustice outside her (the church). Many churches have reached a point where a poor person has no chance to be a chosen church elder or choir adviser because they are not well-off.

Many church elders in different churches are those who are financially stable. Such a church cannot alleviate poverty, for to such church elders, the poor are non-existent and therefore not on their agenda (District Pastor 1, Dar es Salaam, May 2023 cf: Church Leader 8, Mbeya, April 2023).

As one of the poverty alleviation strategies, the church must become more inclusive, especially in engaging the poor in fighting injustice within and outside the church.

ii) Jesus as a Model

Jesus, while in the world, was considered a good preacher and teacher. He attracted many, and many followed Him. However, He is the same Jesus who stopped teaching after knowing that the people He was teaching and preaching to were hungry. He asked for bread and fish and fed them. He is the one who, after He discovered that there were lepers in a community, could not continue with his journey and other activities; instead, He called them and healed them. This implies that the ecumenical movement in Africa has a lot to do, which sometimes sounds louder than the preaching itself (Theologian 1, Arusha, May 2023). While discussing doctrinal issues, the ecumenical movement should pay attention to injustice, which burdens peoples’ shoulders. If such burdens are not removed, people are hindered from receiving and accepting Jesus as their Saviour. Injustice can sometimes compel people to live syncretism if not rebuked ecumenically (Theologian 2, Arusha, May 2023). If churches wish to operate within a community of real people in the real world, they must touch the daily life experience of their members so that the movement can have real meaning to them.

Jesus, though a great famous preacher, did not accumulate wealth; instead, one of the signs was that He was the one Messiah to John the Baptist; he told the disciples of John to say to him that the poor had preached the Word of God. Taking Jesus as a model of a

servant in our unjust world, church ministers must fight against greed because greed oppresses the poor. Lochman argues, “Our lust for possession and power not only orbits egotistically around our interests but also runs counter to the interests of our fellow human beings. It has an antisocial, dynamic, destructive power over our neighbour’s freedom and development, his property, his means of livelihood, his marriage and his private life” (Lochman, 1982: 155).

iii) Godly Way of Dealing with Conflict Caused by Injustice

In search of justice, one can become judgmental, looking for punishment for those who cause injustice. This is a danger that the ecumenical movement in Tanzania should avoid. Punishment for those causing injustice causes war and brings no peace to the country but causes more conflict. The ecumenical movement should study the situation and respond effectively to disputes caused by injustice. This will include research and suggestions for better leadership and procedures in decision-making, sometimes known as the democratic process. With a firm foundation, the ecumenical movement in Tanzania will do remarkable work since injustice can never be fought “tooth by tooth.”

The ecumenical movement should use conflict within the country and then let the ecumenical movement suggest lessons be taken to Tanzanian leaders and the people (Retired Bishop 1, Mbeya, May 2023).

iv) Involvement of Lay Church Members in Fighting Against Injustice

Church leaders misunderstand people’s readiness for ecumenism when they think it should go slowly to avoid conflict within their churches (Mugambi *et al.*, 1982: 93). This is wrong since people with joint problems are already in an ecumenism. If churches continue to slow the movement, especially when their voice is badly needed to tackle issues of injustice, the churches will be left alone. Experience shows that lay church members are sometimes faster than church leaders (Ibid.). They are waiting for their leaders to lead them in an already-established movement. Many fellowship groups in Tanzania, for example, were not led by pastors but were ecumenically formed without the help of a pastor. Lay Christians were hungry for the Gospel, rejoicing and praying for the sick, so they took the initiative alone. Pastors followed the established groups. The same applies to the fight against injustice in the country. Church members are ready to fight against injustice; however, church leaders tend to slow the battle. Church leaders should change from inactive to active leaders.

v) Syllabus Review for Sunday School and Confirmation Classes

Churches in Tanzania prepare future leaders through Sunday school and confirmation classes. However, many syllabuses have no topics on understanding the effects of injustice and how grave injustice is before God. There are neither topics that prepare them to fight against injustice nor issues that prove the relationship between injustice and poverty.

Churches should understand that if pupils are not taught to hate injustice, they may become perpetrators of injustice (Choir Members 4, 5, Dar es Salaam, August 2023).

It is time for churches to review their syllabuses to respond more effectively to Tanzanian communities' challenges today. It is time for churches to recruit and use qualified teachers to teach Sunday school and confirmation classes. Churches may need to invest resources to get qualified teachers for children to ensure the present and future church can stand up for justice.

vi) Joining Hands with Partner Churches in Fighting Injustice

Experience proves that there are strong partnerships among churches in Tanzania and churches abroad. They pray for each other, they share faith experiences, and the churches abroad financially support Tanzanian churches. One can argue that partner churches should be invited to join the struggle for justice because “to suffer in solidarity with others is redemptive. It tends to open a window of liberation in the granite wall of suffering” (Kinnamon & Cope, 1997: 239). It can be a sign of hypocrisy for the churches abroad to continue to support churches in Tanzania in other needs but overlook justice as if justice is less important.

Because the world is becoming like a small village, what is happening in one region affects another. Wars in Africa compel churches Abroad to think about how to handle large numbers of refugees, how to control immigrants and diseases and how to make the environment favourable to refugees. It has been argued, “Our Titanic is on a collision course...If we fail to reduce and bridge the gap between first and third-class passengers on this spaceship Earth by mutual solidarity, the prospect for the future is gloomy indeed, and this is all three ‘worlds’” (Lochman, 1982: 158). This proves that “Injustice in one place has ramifications in other places” (WCC, 2005a: 289).

The above argument does not mean churches abroad should support violence as a means to struggle for justice, nor is it the author's intention to ask churches abroad to involve themselves, directly or indirectly, in accusing Tanzanian governments of the abovementioned matters. If one of the above is done, there will be tension between churches in Tanzania and the government on the one hand and hostility between the government and churches abroad, together with their governments on the other. The author intends to affirm that, just as churches abroad join hands with churches in Tanzania on issues such as the fight against HIV and AIDS and rural or community development, including water projects, to mention a few, the same should be applied when fighting against injustice. This is the task entrusted to all churches. It is suitable to support the argument that “To carry out the task entrusted to us, we need each other” (Kinnamon & Cope, 1997: 252).

vii) Prayers in the Ecumenical Movement

Sanford (1972: 49) comments, “When enough people in a nation have learned to pray for the nation's forgiveness and the world's forgiveness, nations will build their policies upon the rock of loving-kindness and wars will be no more.” It should be understood that praying is one of the tasks of the ecumenical movement. While praying for people

and the church in the whole world, attention should be paid to injustice which affects people in Tanzania and puts them in the bondage of poverty, bondage which many have no hope to escape from. Many church members in Tanzania, especially in small groups, have been praying for their problems. They consider prayer the number one motivation, as prayer brings hope to an individual while creating a sense of overcoming problems when God's time comes. Through prayer sessions, the ecumenical movement will enable Tanzania to build hope and believe firmly in Jesus as their Liberator.

Prayers and praying together ecumenically shake the authority of perpetrators of injustice. When people turn to God for liberation from the injustice done by fellow human beings, it brings fear into the hearts of those who obtain wealth at the expense of the poor.

While war is made in the flesh, prayer is a fight in the Spirit, which is the most effective way to fight injustice when done ecumenically (Fellowship, April 2023).

The Possible Challenges to Face Ecumenism in Tanzania

One of the most significant challenges facing ecumenism in Tanzania is the issue of church unity. Tanzanian churches, each in its context, have been trying to work cooperatively to form an ecumenism of a kind. Members of different churches observe the struggle to build firm cooperation among churches. However, sometimes, a corrupt regime tends to divide churches to weaken the power of the movement, as in the case of Uganda during the Idi Amin regime (Mugambi *et al.*, 1982). Overseas churches once said, regarding apartheid in South Africa, that "apartheid is too strong for a divided church" (Kinnamon & Cope, 1997: 241), and is still applied to injustice in Tanzania. The fight against injustice is too great for a divided church. Churches carry different messages whenever there is division among them. "Christianity has been both a promoter of justice and, at the same time, an instrument for and initiator of injustice" (WCC, 2005b: 380). This has been the case in different countries, but the situation's seriousness differs from country to country.

Another challenge facing ecumenism in Tanzania is how to do away with lip service and turn to deeds in response to the cry of people with low incomes. It is like telling churches to review the aim of the All-African Conference of Churches (AACC) in Kampala, Uganda of 1963. Through member churches, the body was and still is one of the best forums for African Christians to meet, discuss, evaluate and exchange ideas (Mugambi *et al.*, 1982). During its formation in Kampala, doctrinal and other important issues were discussed. Some issues churches under AACC once dealt with were initiatives in development, medicine, and refugee work (Ibid: 36).

Although some people fail to find a clear difference between ecumenism and cooperation among churches, Christian teaching and sharing experience of one's faith in Jesus needs a good environment to be understood. It is easier for non-converts to understand the message of salvation after experiencing how good Jesus, whom one

preaches about, is. Preaching about salvation and the love of God to the poor and oppressed is not always understood through words without deeds. Buthelezi, a bishop of the evangelical Lutheran church in South Africa, in his paper presented at a meeting of the WCC's Faith and Order Commission in Paris in 1985, said, "When somebody suffers, and you stand by his side to the extent that you also share his suffering, you become a sign of Christ to that person and your physical presence becomes redemptive" (Kinnamon *et al.*, 1997: 239).

The true mission of a church is to render spiritual, mental, physical, social, and economic services to the people. This is in line with the topic, "The Church's Responsibility for the Total Life of Mankind", discussed during a conference of the WCC in Stockholm in 1925 under the supervision of Nathan Söderblom, Archbishop of Uppsala and a chairman of the 1920 Geneva preparatory conference (Goosen, 1993). This role of the church involves rebuking the government and church leaders who support injustice to the poor. This is why this role is rejected by those who live a prosperous life at the expense of the poor. Meyer (1960: 110) asserts, "To speak truth may mean that your popularity, your position, your material advancement, your family's safety might be at stake." Should the church fear attack from evildoers? The answer is NO. Again, Meyer wants the church to know that a lie has never defeated the truth. He argues, "In times like these, you must look up at the cross and see what the lie did to the truth." (Ibid.).

Many churches in Tanzania have considered the above dimensions for a long time, except for a few churches that would like to preach only about the world to come (heaven) and overlook today's world. These churches emphasise that the poor are the first-class citizens of heaven and, therefore, do not need to fight against poverty.

However, many churches, which consider the importance of today's world and the world to come, have been associating the Gospel with the life people are living to give the Gospel real meaning (Retired Bishop 2, Dar es Salaam, August 2023).

The main task ahead regarding the said mission is to convince all churches in ecumenism to adopt such an understanding that the Gospel must be contextualised to have meaning to people living today.

The church should be prepared to answer the following question: Where would ecumenism be if Tanzania would continue only with doctrinal issues such as the Trinity, Holy Communion, Baptism and others and leave aside social issues, like the fight against injustice as one of the poverty alleviation strategies. Perpetrators of injustice in Tanzania are those who accuse the churches of what they call "mixing up religion and politics." They do so to ensure that churches have no voice in the evil done by corrupt leaders. The answer to the above question can be given in this way: The time people live in now is the time of awakening, like that of Christians in Zambia in the 1950s and 1960s.

The claim above does not mean that there is no other way that churches in Tanzania will

unite. The author is aware of efforts by church leaders to join churches and form a solid ecumenical movement, not only in Tanzania but in Africa as a whole. For example, efforts are to formulate a standard syllabus for Christian education, or religious education in Africa, to promote Christian unity. In some countries, this was done many years ago (Smith, 1982). The author is aware of the aim of the ecumenical movement, which includes fighting against injustice in Tanzania and Africa in general. The difference is that through many declarations, some churches in many African countries were discussing how to fight injustice brought about by foreigners through different regimes, e.g. colonialism e.t.c. (Kato, 1975:162). Some Tanzanian church leaders were unaware of the existing truth of Tanzanians being oppressed by fellow Tanzanians. For example, for so long, Tanzanians were told by fellow Tanzanians that they were poor and that development was impossible without foreign Aid. However, during Magufuli's regime, the tone changed. People experienced development projects from revenue collected by the government. This makes the study valid; the fight against injustice in Tanzania should be a non-stop fight because injustice paves the way to poverty.

Some churches in Tanzania are facing a challenge to understand the meaning and goals of the mission. Not all churches know that the main task of churches is to do mission work. However, the mission done by the church is God's mission. Namsoon Kang (2005: 282) affirms, "If mission is God's mission, then mission activity takes its character from the nature of God." Doing mission work without a prophetic voice against injustice is like carrying an incomplete mission or message. It has been argued, "Prophetic faith sees a God of justice as well as of mercy; it denounces social injustice and calls for a conversion of both the hearer and the social system to ensure that God's will is indeed done on Earth to bring about a world free of war, slavery and oppression." (Ibid: 283).

The above argument implies that churches can do mission work effectively if they understand God well. God enables churches to understand His mission goals and context (Ibid). Furthermore, a community of believers is due to a relationship with God, which calls people to live in solidarity with all who are under oppressive powers of all kinds (Ibid.). This calls for churches in Tanzania to turn to God and learn more about Him and how He executes His mission instead of rushing to preach and teach what is not from God. Teaching and preaching to people about life after death has meaning if people will see God, who liberates people and frees them from all kinds of captivity and oppression.

Another challenge for ecumenism in Tanzania is that fighting against injustice must start from within the ecumenical movement itself. It is not easy to fight against injustice in a society when the churches are known to cause injustice. In many churches, members of the ecumenical movement hear about undemocratic practices, corruption, and the denial of transparency. Such churches will not succeed when fighting against injustice because leaders from the secular world, e.g. government leaders and those from the private sector, will not pay attention to such church leaders since they are doing the same as the

leaders in the secular world. It becomes difficult for church leaders to comment on any oppressive policy if lay world leaders know the weaknesses of church leaders. Many support the argument that: “The Church is called to witness, by her own life and example, the love and peace which she commends to the nations.” (Kinnamon & Cope, 1997: 244). For the ecumenical movement to succeed in the fight against injustice, it must re-evaluate itself and allow room for self-criticism.

Conclusion

Tanzania is one of the African countries rich in natural resources; it has everything it takes to prosper. However, injustice in all aspects of life has been a great enemy of the country and its people for so long. The painful truth is that no sacred or secular institution can alleviate poverty without fighting against injustice. Churches are called to empower people so that they may enjoy life abundantly. Justice must be part and parcel of the concept of the fullness of life. Unity among churches, or “ecumenism”, has meaning if it touches people’s lives, such as bringing justice to an unjust world or region. Tanzania can be healed if the ecumenical movement strengthens its voice against the injustice people experience. This must go together with preaching the message of true love, peace, reconciliation, and salvation.

The good news is that church members are ready for the fight against injustice, and God has always been on their side. However, a church’s fight differs from worldly fights. The church must be led by the truth of the Word of God and by the guidance of the Holy Spirit in this fight so that the results will glorify God. Therefore, church leaders should join hands with church members in calling upon Jesus Himself to lead the ecumenical movement in the fight against injustice in the country.

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Striking a Balance between Writing Policy Briefs and Journal-Based Publications

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Abstract

Policy briefs (PBs) are popular mainly because the policymaking authorities seem to love them on the claim of being time-limited to reading lengthy and technically jargon academic or research documents. Proponents use this view to suggest the need for PBs to be officially part of curricula recommended for higher learning institutions (HLIs). The good thing is that there are HLIs and their allied private and public sector research institutions that have already responded by making PB writing one of the criteria used for appraising their staff performance, contributing to such staff increase chances for job promotion. Many other institutions have not, although they might eventually be influenced or prompted to respond accordingly. This paper argues with a concern that owing to the reported benefits or advantages and the high demand for them, PBs are essential in research and academic institutions. Notwithstanding, there is a need to weigh their added values by tracking the balance between writing them and knowing their pros and cons compared to peer-reviewed journal-based publications. The paper concludes by pointing to the need to regard PBs as just supplements or complements to peer review journal-based publications but neither as substitutes nor as alternatives.

Keywords: Policy, policy brief, capacity building, journal articles.

Introduction

Before discussing the issue of policy briefs (PBs), readers need to be put into perspective by looking at what the word/term 'policy' means. There are somewhat diverse descriptions or definitions of a policy, but generally, all the narrations reflect the same meaning. According to Pollack *et al.* (2018), a 'policy' is 'a standard set of principles that guide a course of action'. Carol Barker (1992) acknowledges Cunningham (1963) who, commenting on what a 'policy' means, resembled it with something taking a shape of an elephant that once seen using naked eyes cannot be defined easily at the end in straightforward words. Therefore, Barker regards *a policy* as being a statement that may reflect the attitudes or criteria for selecting a particular course or action. She further remarks that the respective policy may appear as a plan or a more generalized statement about the approach. In its official existence form, such a statement has to be formal by having undergone agreement upon or approval by the appropriate legislative or other

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bodies. She, however, criticizes a situation whereby a policy statement is presented on evidence-based grounds of its proposed implementation strategy or directives.

The latter Barker's viewpoint is shared by almost all other authors commenting on the same topic. The doubt expressed by such authors is about either the respective poor policy if designed without a research evidence needed to be used as a reference point by the parties or the authorities with the duty of policy conception or creation of amendment in ways that help to prevent or to minimize any of the avoidable failures in its implementation stages or processes (Viennet & Pont, 2017; Erismann *et al.*, 2021; Arnautu & Dagenais, 2021; Nagyova & Michie 2023).

Nagyova and Michie (2023) join other analysts whose views seem to suggest the need for 'effective communication' between researchers and policymakers to be influential. However, there are numerous factors behind the observed communication challenge(s), such as the different viewpoints about the needs and / or the language used in the communications systems, as well as the deadlines set either on paper or in mind concerning the need for the desired decisions to be made (*ibid*). The world seems to continue pointing fingers at researchers and academics apparent failure to link well with policymaking authorities. They are corrected for their dominant preference to disseminate their policy-contained research feedback through peer-review or professional journals that are rarely followed up by busy and time-constrained policymakers (Lauder, 2014; Cairney & Oliver, 2020; Mallidou *et al.*, 2020; Arnautu & Dagenais, 2021; Alazmi & Alazmi, 2023). Their preference for that way is triggered by their professional requirement to prove their intellectual abilities, and such publications are a requirement for them to advance in their career through job promotion, hence the notion of '*publish or perish*' (Rawat & Meena, 2014).

John Walley *et al.* (2007) underscore the need for research teams to consider how they can influence policymakers with their research presentations as early as they begin to conceive their studies. A similar view is shared by Cairney and Oliver (2020), Arnautu and Dagenais (2021), among several other authors who challenged the occasional failure of many researchers to inform policy making authorities earlier or in advance as they begin to conceive their study ideas or research proposals. As viewed, such authorities could have been giving a useful feedback to the research teams concerned meanwhile being prepared to get the reports from the studies/research actually conducted. However, some critics have noted that, policy-making or policy-decision making authorities sometimes are made aware but being biased to get feedback from the reporters they trust (Arnautu & Dagenais, 2021). Otherwise, they may claim the respective research feedback to have either come untimely, for example very late, or having been presented in a style that is not user-friendly, especially in terms of the language used, its length, or the nature of the evidence presented as an evidence base not found appealing for

particular policy courses of action (Michael *et al.*, 2020; Cairney & Oliver, 2020; Arnautu & Dagenais, 2021; Nagyova & Michie, 2023).

To put into perspective those eager to know more about PB and policy aspects in general or in particular areas, there is a number of articles presented by the scholars and other experts in fields of health policy and in political science, public policy, and public administration, for example, textbooks written by Carol Barker (1992), Weimer and Vining (2010), Bardach (2011), Mintrom (2012), and several others (uncited herein). To cite a few in relation to PBs, Laura French-Constant (2014) describes PBs as concise documents written by authors that convey messages to policymakers and sometimes to other policy stakeholders or actors, including, for example, the managerial authorities and the frontline practitioners within a given policy implementation framework. Arnautu and Dagenais (2021) comment on PBs as a short document synthesizing the results of single or multiple studies. Such results are usually accompanied by recommendations to be considered for action by the respective policymaking authorities. Keepnews (2016) sees PBs as documents that succinctly explain a policy-related issue or problem analytically, with a set of policy options or recommendations regarding what to do and how to solve the policy-related issue or problem. In their view, Antonopoulou *et al.* (2020) define a PB as a strategy for promoting evidence to inform policy and eventually contributing to a reasonable policy decision. In general, PBs are claimed to be one of the best gateways researchers can use to increase their visibility, helping inform policymaking authorities by communicating their research evidence or messages. The recommendations given by such message conveyors need to consider the acceptability of the policy decision or action if made to other policy stakeholders, such as the individuals in the frontline of translating the policy or the policy guideline eventually established into practice (Erismann *et al.*, 2021).

Serrat (2017)'s view that there is a cause for every effect partly marks the genesis of the current article, likewise, the comment made by Nagyova and Michie (2023) who viewed that, discussing about PB issues including their pros and cons or the problems associated with their writing and presentation can be a useful tool to initiatives aimed for bridging the gap between research and policy making. Therefore, the author was triggered to make a decision to prepare the current paper after noting the stage at which the discourse on PB writing has so far reached required a critical, albeit constructive comment.

Thus, owing to the growing demand for PB writing and the accompanying campaign, this paper aims to accelerate the debate about PBs' importance and limitations regarding their intrinsic use-value and the observed space they occupy in contemporary literature. The paper gives an overview of the literature about PBs, highlighting the pros (advantages) claimed about them. Still, the discussion section highlights the shortcomings (cons) of their usability in real-life policy decisions generally and the risk of a trending increase in the call for the researchers, amongst whom are the academicians

and students, to pay more attention to PB writing (Haynes *et al.*, 2012; Arnautu & Dagenais, 2021; Ifeanyi-obi, 2022; Dunlop *et al.*, 2023).

Methodology

The current paper combines arguments based on an overview of the contemporary literature on the existing discourse on PB writing and my knowledge and experience-based opinions. Therefore, it is not fall in the category of a systematic review nor a meta-analysis nor a presentation from an original research undertaking. Rather, it gives an overview of what a poliy is and what PBs are and reasons for a growing advocacy for writing and presenting them as per both the old and the contemporary literatures, based on which the author's personal knowledge and experience guided ideas or views have been infused. The citations as used throughout the paper are only to papers (journal articles or book chapters) identified as crucial and representative reference sources to support the personal arguments presented. Journal articles were mainly retrieved from the internet using appropriate keyword types in search engines such as Google search and a few of its linked websites, namely, PubMed, Medline and HINARI. The author also visited the physical libraries at various HLIs in Dar es Salaam including the one hosted at the National Institute for Medical Research.

Results

There is an apparently no general consensus on how researchers' interaction with policy makers can/should be made, including research feedback sharing. The main reason for this to be so is reported as a lack of a general or a standard guideline on how to achieve that, this being in the area of education (Viennet & Pont, 2017; Alazmi & Alazmi, 2023) and in the field of health and other disciplinary areas (Hanney *et al.*, 2003; Erismann *et al.*, 2021; Dunlop *et al.*, 2023). As for the issue of PB usage, there seems a trending increase in the advocacy for them. This implies that, researchers working in mainstream research institutions and those working in the academic ones (such as in HLIs) are called upon to prioritize PB writing also instead of continuing to over-rely on sending manuscripts to peer review journals (Yildiz *et al.*, 2011; Haynes *et al.*, 2012; Arnautu & Dagenais, 2021; Trueb, 2013; Ifeanyi-obi, 2022; Dunlop *et al.*, 2023). In spite the latter call sounding as a good one, PBs remain unpublished in scholarly journals in their recommended/standard formats. There is yet no reasons as to why this is the case, but most likely, their standard format(s) cannot be presentation in wholesale since they are incompatible with guidelines or the standards set for scholarly or scientific journals. To increase chances for PBs' publications, researchers (amongst whom are academicians) are advised to reconsider moving with time-based needs or market demands. They are cautioned to not remain feeling over-pleased with the applause they have been receiving from their colleagues or co-workers in their fields or areas of expertise. Ensuring that they reach their messages and to influence policy-decision-making

authorities and successfully influencing decisions based on their PB presentations could make a difference in their increased recognition (Yildiz *et al.*, 2011; Antonopoulou *et al.*, 2021; Arnautu & Dagenais, 2021; Ifeanyi-obi, 2022).

Meanwhile, their critics who are concerned about the possibility of HLI-based researchers to turn on PB writing limiting their chance for continuing being motivated to publish in peer-reviewed journals. This view is argued against also by other scholars (Arnautu & Dagenais, 2021; Erismann *et al.*, 2021; Nagyova & Michie, 2023). Other critics doubt about writing PBs sometimes does not depict innovativity for the presented documents to make the best sense of the scientific approach(es) employed in the generation of the evidence being presented before the policy audience. Some of the commenters have argued that, even the so belived 'well-written PB' may still not be sufficient to attract the attention or the acceptance by the policy decision making authorities. Such authorities might already have their trust vested in particular researchers or academics such as those renown for their high credibility, for example, by virtue of their training or professional backgrounds or the credibility of the institutions to which they are affiliated (Haynes *et al.*, 2012; Arnautu & Dagenais, 2021). In general, both the academics and researchers working in non-academic research institutions of a public or private sector natures continue to be under pressure as they are required to prove demonstratively or evidently that their research undertakings are making or have made positive impacts by influencing policy decisions (Lauder, 2014; Cairney & Oliver, 2020; Arnautu & Dagenais, 2021). This is one of the reasons for PB writing to be advocated for featuring in the educational curricula of HLIs in both high-income countries as in the yet developing ones (Hynes *et al.*, 2012; Siarova & Tudjman, 2018; Judge, 2021; Bhasin & Butcher, 2022; Dunlop *et al.*, 2023). Other PB writing proponents appeal for opportunities to be given to academicians and their students, as also recommend for other categories of researchers (employed and freelancer ones), and some other categories of stakeholders who are interested to learn about PB writing even outside the formal academic curricular systems by undergoing courses of short-term natures (Siarova & Tudjman, 2018). Comments are also made in favour of appealing for the students who after leaving the HLIs where they were studying degrees come to be employed in either the private sector departments or in the public ones where they meet a challenge after being required to write and present a PB to their immediate or higher-level management authorities (Yildiz *et al.*, 2011; Trueb, 2013). This challenge is also faced by their instructors or tutors who have not been adequately or at all before about PB writing issues (Haynes *et al.*, 2012; Siarova & Tudjman, 2018; Ifeanyi-obi, 2022).

Moreover, the motive behind the researchers working in HLIs and those in private or public research institutions to rely on the '*Publish or Perish*' notion as one of the critical requirements for their career advancement is criticized for masking such intellectuals to sense the good smell of the PBs' potential benefits over journal-based publications (Rawat & Meena, 2014). Those holding on to such a notion at the back of their minds

while already aware of policymakers' generally time-limited nature to read lengthy and technically jargon academic or research reports and journal-based articles are seen as negligent or careless. Policymaking authorities are found to be more desirous of reading summarized research feedback, especially in the form of PBs. Nonetheless, the most important is for the PBs to contain the correct information with clearly guiding and practicable recommendations (Hanney *et al.*, 2003; Lavis *et al.*, 2012; Rajabi, 2012; McLeod, 2014; Mallidou *et al.*, 2020; Arnautu & Dagenais, 2021; Leong & Howlett, 2022; Dunlop *et al.*, 2023). The requirement for PB writing is more pressed when the development partners require the researchers concerned when being approached in a request for funding their proposed studies to justify how their research, if supported, can/could contribute to influence policy (Jones & Walsh, 2008; Harry 2011; Erismann *et al.*, 2021).

Thus, as long as the discourse on PB limitations is almost undocumented as per the contemporary literature, it is high time to break the silence. The high number of senior academicians and researchers lacking theoretical and / or practical knowledge of PB writing implies that even the majority of their students lack such knowledge (Yildiz *et al.*, 2011; Siarova & Tudjman, 2018; Lightfoot, 2020; Ifeanyi-obi, 2022). Giving more highlights that expose these groups on PB writing issues is likely to inculcate the spirit/culture of PB writing without compromising a motivation for peer review journal-based manuscript submission.

Discussion

Without a clear or sufficient understanding of the differences between PBs and journal-based articles, the advocacy of one over and above another may not be realistic. It is easy to keep pointing fingers at academics on what is perceived as their apparent lagging behind a PB writing habit. Still, it should not be the case since there are reasons for their continuity of submitting their works to be published through journals. After all, there are areas where PBs and journal-based articles seem to marry each other. For example, both can pass the intended messages to policy authorities for consideration. What matters in this case is the category of the policymaking authorities targeted and eventually approached, the nature of evidence or information presented in the document(s), and the style of presentations, including the issues of language usage and the length of the report(s) (Arnautu & Dagenais, 2021). Although PBs continue to be promoted, more policymaking authorities are still interested in them, and they are accustomed to reading articles published in peer-reviewed. It also costs nothing for the researchers or academicians to remain aware of the policymakers who were once lecturers or tutors in colleagues such as HLIs; others have been working in research institutions. These people are, therefore, intellectuals by background. So, they can share their critical and constructive opinions during academic or research scientific presentations, backed by their culture of reading textbooks and journals. This means that

underrating their ability to criticize a so-called as being a 'well-packaged PB' might be a grave mistake if the PB is not evidence-based. During their training to be academicians, the respective authorities also had a chance to be equipped with the theoretical and practical knowledge that capacitated them to think critically when analyzing issues. After listening to the presentations or after reading the document presented, they can sense the taste and, where necessary, chew the perceived hard material before imbibing it for policy digestion.

Although the truth that policymaking authorities do not prefer feedback presented in too lengthy or linguistically complicated forms remains (Michael *et al.*, 2020; Mallidou *et al.*, 2020; Arnautu & Dagenais, 2021), there is no way one can argue with complete confidence that researchers or the academics will be driven to go away from fulfilling their duty of publishing in peer review journals. The abovementioned occupational requirements and opportunities cannot be seized if they behave so. My point of emphasis is to agree with the authors who so far have proposed the need for designing and carrying out studies that can contribute to enhancing the policy-learning and policy-analysis capacities in HLIs (Leong and Howlett, 2022; Ifeanyi-obi, 2022). In addition to the advantages mentioned before, this opens another chance for the public policy eventually made based on the feedback given by the respective researchers to be informed adequately for more public in terms of benefits or for more practicability (Shaxson & Boaz, 2021).

PBs follow a structure that is not absolutely like that of journal articles. Their concise nature, however, well-intended as policy authorities prefer them to be, limits the chance for additional detail to be presented regarding the background and rationale of the study, as well as the methodology based on which the summarized results and their resultant conclusions or recommendations have been drawn. Meanwhile, an attempt to simplify the language to meet the audience's needs runs the risk of messing up if there are no formal words for particularly presentable technical jargon. The author is also suspicious of the possibility of the presence of untrustful PB writers who may use the chance to present what they claim to be 'key policy messages based on their study findings' in a summarizing form while knowing that their lay policy audience cannot discover their conceptual and / or methodological approaches. The consequence is to present recommendations that are not easy to contest while they are actually brainwashing the respective policy audience. In other words, the 'too-summarised reports' can sugarcoat the audience by containing faulty or insufficiently evidence-based facts. However, the same possibility applies to research-related feedback such as technical research or consultancy reports (Cairney & Oliver, 2020).

Misleading policy decision-making authorities can cost the public or a given social group if the outcome of a policy decision made based on the feedback given by the researchers appears to be negative on their side. Thus, because PBs are not formally

contested against each other as typically is the case for peer review journal-based publications, the act of the policymaking authorities concerned to eventually imbibe the kind of 'suspicious messages'. It is not uncommon for the policies to be written or the policy guidelines to be amended by the authorities concerned merely referring to PB presentations (Antonopoulou *et al.*, 2021; Arnautu & Dagenais, 2021; Dunlop *et al.*, 2023). It is also critical to note that almost all authors seem primarily inclined to promote PB writing with virtually no mention of PB shortcomings or limitations.

The author cannot be surprised if one comes forward with a critique against the opinion regarding the possibility of dishonest PB writers' misreporting to mislead the policymaking authorities simply because cheating also occurs in peer-reviewed journal-based publications. However, the point of emphasis is that journal-based publications have an advantage over PBs because they are exposed to a larger public domain that many readers can access. At least some of them can use their intellectual positions and eye lenses to trace any misinformation or deficiency the respective author(s) might have presented in the document. Where it deems necessary, for instance, should there seem to be some severe and intolerable deficiencies such as those associated with fact misreporting, the editorial authority of the journal concerned can be alerted. If the allegations presented by the critics seem convinced, appropriate action(s) can be taken by retracting the article (Wang *et al.*, 2019; Mark *et al.*, 2022; Somipam, 2023). This is why authors are warned to avoid approaching the journals categorized as 'predatory'. Such journals are the home of cheating authors (Elmore & Weston, 2020). To the best of authors knowledge, the latter advantage is rare, if any, in the PBs' presentation cases since a critical review followed by a retraction of the ill-written one misses. This view brings the point of insisting on the need to continue respecting the '*Publish or Perish*' slogan regardless of the critique raised against an overreliance on it (Rawat & Meena, 2014). In reality, academicians and their allied researchers will continue to publish in peer-reviewed journals as long as the abovementioned job requirements remain. After all, through such publications, the potential authors will likely remain critical thinkers striving to present the best possible intellectual work that can be more informing and educative than a PB kind of presentation. Any failure to publish in journals, especially high-impact ones, implies a failure to grow intellectually or career-wise.

Additionally, over-emphasizing the agenda for PB writing by academicians in HLIs runs the risk of sweeping the minds of such parties away from their careers as think tanks should the institutions employing them respond vigorously to enforce them. Eventually, the respective employees can be prompted to see PB as a substitute or an alternative to journal-based publications. This experience is likely to happen unless the rate of the points attached to an article published in a journal is far higher than that of a PB. Otherwise, PBs may be pursued because of their fastness to writing and publishing compared to the time typically invested in peer-reviewed journal manuscripts. Thus, I need to avoid the risk of what is called '*a cosmetic type of publishing*' through PBs, the

so-claimed research-based facts. At the same time, there is little space, if any, for being critically reviewed and debating about the authors' credibility or integrity and the institutions to which such authors are affiliated. Therefore, it is appealed to the journal editors to remember the identified limitations or shortcomings of PBs if the trending increase in advocacy for their writing were to prompt anyone to consider their publication in their wholesale format.

The paper also cautions the human resource management authorities that might stick to PB writing as one of the critical criteria for appraising staff performance by allocating the credits or points to a PB of the same weight as that of a peer review journal. There is nothing to doubt about the standard criteria commonly employed in judging the weight of a peer-reviewed journal article because of the universal nature of such criteria, such as the impact factor. As yet, PB do not have an impact factor as a criterion for judging their public usability. This means subjective bases are to be used by the authorities or the management committees involved in their assessment during a staff appraisal exercise. So far, there is neither a universal rule nor a guideline directing where to submit a PB of which nature. This means the room for comparing the contents value and the impact of PB on the one hand and those of peer-reviewed journal articles on the other is also limited.

Conclusion

The ongoing call for and discourse on the necessity of PB writing among academics, students, and researchers in mainstream research institutions is justifiable and exceptionally justified. For this reason, the call idea given by those calling for a systemic building of the capacities of these groups in PB writing makes sense, given the presence of members in these groups who are not familiar with the subject and the exercise of it. However, the suggestion for incorporating PB writing in the curricula of HLIs needs a careful eye given the shortcomings mentioned above of PBs compared to reviewing journal-based publications. There is a need to weigh PBs and journal articles academic and policy impacts on the beam balance, whereby the pros and cons of each can be compared and contrasted. To conclude, PBs qualify to be regarded as supplements or complements to publishing in peer-reviewed journals, but neither are they substitutes nor alternatives.

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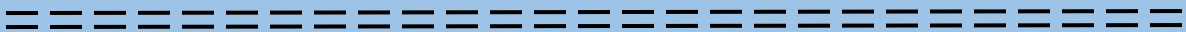
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