



Vol. 7 | Social and development concerns in Africa (c)

Vol. 7 Article 10 | September 2019

Copyright © 2019 The International Journal of Social and Development Concerns (IJSDC) All Rights Reserved
(An International Publisher for Academic and Scientific Resources)

GOSPEL OF PROSPERITY AND ITS WEAKNESS

Authors: ¹Lucy Wanjiru Mbuthia, ²Lucy Kimaro and ³Maurice Owinyo

^{1,2&3}The Catholic University of Eastern Africa. P.O BOX 62157 00200

Nairobi, Kenya

Website: www.cuea.edu

Corresponding author: Lucy Wanjiru Mbuthia. Email: mbuthialucy@yahoo.com

Chief Editor

Web: www.ijsdc.org

Email: info@ijsdc.org

Editing Oversight

Impericals Consultants
International Limited

Abstract: *Pentecostal churches are a worldwide phenomenon. They are Christian churches that have great emphasis on the supernatural happenings such as, wealth, health, prosperity, healing, deliverance, prophesy, among others. These supernatural happenings are looked upon as new ways of God responding to the needs and sufferings of humanity. They are exalted as signs of God liberating his people from suffering and poverty as well as ways of evangelization and spread of Christianity. The Pentecostal churches appear to give answers to the needs of the people as it uses a theology that addresses the religious need of the people. They put emphasize on spiritual powers such as deliverance, fighting the evil spirits, healing and prophesy.. Wonders, signs and miracles from God matter a lot in the life of the adherent for they always expect God to act in very supernatural ways. These supernatural utterances have fueled the growth of Pentecostal churches. These churches have also been so vocal through the media where they air their services through Televisions, radios and news papers. Through the media they frequently depict the healings and deliverances taking place as well as proclaim personal and national prophesy. Some pastors or Evangelists have oil that they give at a price declaring that the oil has healing powers. Others give their accounts number claiming that if you send money to their accounts you will receive instant blessings from God. This study focuses on the Gospel of prosperity and its weaknesses. The theory guiding the study is rational choice theory (RCT) by Finke, Adam Smith & Stark. The study objectives are to assess the core message in the preaching of Pentecostal churches, to analyze the place of the cross and the sufferings of Christ in the Pentecostal churches. The study employed descriptive survey study research, Sample and Sampling Procedures. The study used questionnaires and interviews to collect data.*

Key Words: *Pentecostal churches, Gospel of prosperity*

1.1 Background to the study

This study sought to analyze on the Gospel of prosperity and its weaknesses. In this chapter the following areas are discussed: Back ground to the study, statement of the problem, objectives and conceptual framework. Prosperity Gospel is a Christian theology that propagates the idea that God wants believers to be rich and enjoy good physical health. It teaches people to pursue wealth because this is God's promise and wish for his people. It emphasizes that with just enough faith, health and wealth is possible. However, to realize this, the adherents must sow financial seed or give money to the pastor or to the church so that God will reward them in return. It is on this point that Bible students (2007) note that Pentecostal churches teach that those who give abundantly to the church will be rewarded with generous financial success and that this prosperity will continue as long as one keeps giving. They stress that what one gives comes back in double measure. This attitude portrays that giving equals getting. As noted by Mayrargue (2008) personal success, especially financial and material success is valued, individual success is encouraged and legitimized because it is seen as the result of divine blessings. The dictum that the more one gives money to one's Church the more one gets from God acts as an important levy on worshippers. This theology is deceptive because Material wealth does not mean that one is righteous or close to God. In following Christ wealth is not the goal to be sought after.

The problem is not with the concept of giving, but with the expectation of receiving something from God in return. To the contrary, the scriptural promise to Christians has always been that of spiritual prosperity and contentment even through the storms of life. The great gain of Christians is to have peace of mind in whatever condition they find themselves (Bible Students, 2007). The expectation of being repaid by God deviate the followers from seeking the true goal of a Christian which is not to pursue the earthly treasures. However it is not a sin to be rich in material goods but the danger is when one puts material wealth above the love of God for the scripture warns that "If riches increase, set not your heart upon them." (Psalm 62:10)

Simushi (2006) notes that the prosperity preachers stress that it is very much possible for anyone to have what he or she wants. God wants everyone rich and wealthy, every one's heart's desire should be named, claimed by faith, and it will come. God wills that everyone should have what he or she wants. In fact, it is right there in the Bible. So no one should delay in asking God what he or she wants'. This theology makes the prosperity Gospel so appealing to the hearers and it has in some ways started taking root in other churches apart from the Pentecostal churches. According to Parsitau (2014) Success and prosperity are primarily demonstrated in the lavish lifestyle of the church leaders themselves. The founders of these churches live in the most exclusive of residential estates. They also drive luxurious vehicles and dress very expensively. Within these churches, the financial wealth of the church leader and its members are a sign of God's favor. The preachers strongly stress that people are poor because they have chosen to be poor. Parsitau further highlights that they insist that the Scripture makes it clear that if we turn to God in obedience, His blessings shall come upon us (Job 36:11-16.). Hence it is the person who chooses his/ her fate in life. Obedience to God leads one from the ashes of poverty to wealth, health and riches. God is true to his word and he does not discriminate. Anybody who obeys him will surely be lifted. Poverty and prosperity are therefore not matters of luck or destiny. One can choose one over the other. Woodbridge (2013) observes that the heart of the message of Pentecostal churches is material prosperity. One of the most striking characteristics of prosperity teachers is their seeming fixation with the act of giving. Christians need to give generously because when they do so, God gives

back more in return. This supposedly, in turn, leads to a cycle of ever-increasing prosperity.

The key ingredients of the gospel of prosperity in these churches are tithing, offerings and other sacrificial giving. Tithing and giving are critical sources of the church finances. These are collected during and after church services, during midweek services, crusades, conferences, symposia and any other such gatherings. Tithes and offerings accounts for the bulk of church finances although the amounts received are never made public nor are they accounted for (Parsitau, 2014). The tithes and offerings according to Parsitau are substituted by all manner of offerings, which can be in many forms: seed and faith offering, and thanksgiving offering. Money and financial donations are sought aggressively from members and non-members, the public, television and online viewers, international audience and others. During televised church sermons, mobile phone numbers are displayed on the screen where people can send in their donations through mobile money transfers. Mayrargue (2008) observes that the followers are supposed to give 10% of their income to the church (tithes), collections after services and offerings given in thanks for help are all sources of church income. Blessings are always associated with how much one gives as tithes and other contribution in the church. The claim that God blesses one according to how much one gives makes everybody try the best in contribution so as to receive God's blessings.

Soboyejo (2016) explains that the problem is not in giving but in expecting God to reward you for giving. A true follower of Jesus Christ should not expect to be repaid back or to prosper here on earth, neither should they pursue treasures on earth but should patiently lay up treasures in heaven where they can never be destroyed (Mt 6: 20-21). In his letter to the Philippians, St. Paul encourages those who flourish in earthly materials to learn how to live righteously with these earthly treasures, and those who are poor in this world's goods to abound in the grace of God and the spiritual rewards He has promised (Phil 3:8; 4:11-12). These churches are in a way submerged in the quest for material benefits rather than finding solace in Christian hope for eternal life. Instead they portray signs of total submission to capitalistic tendencies. According to Umoh, (2013) spiritual growth and moral sanctity towards better eternity is fast giving way to material craving, as the new idea of life fulfillment.

Gathogo (2011) notes that, gospel of prosperity with all its flaw and abuses have surprisingly attracted large followings into these churches in search of this God who meets all their needs. The core message in their preaching is wealth, health and prosperity that emphasize a life without suffering, without anything disturbing, a life free of all inconveniences. When advertising their crusades or open air meetings they use such convincing and attractive themes that capture the attention of the people and lure them to attend the crusades. Such advertisements may be "Your time for blessing is now. Come for your healing; come for your financial breakthrough, come for your miracles". All your needs will be prayed for thus leading to enormous attraction of people.

1.2 Statement of the problem

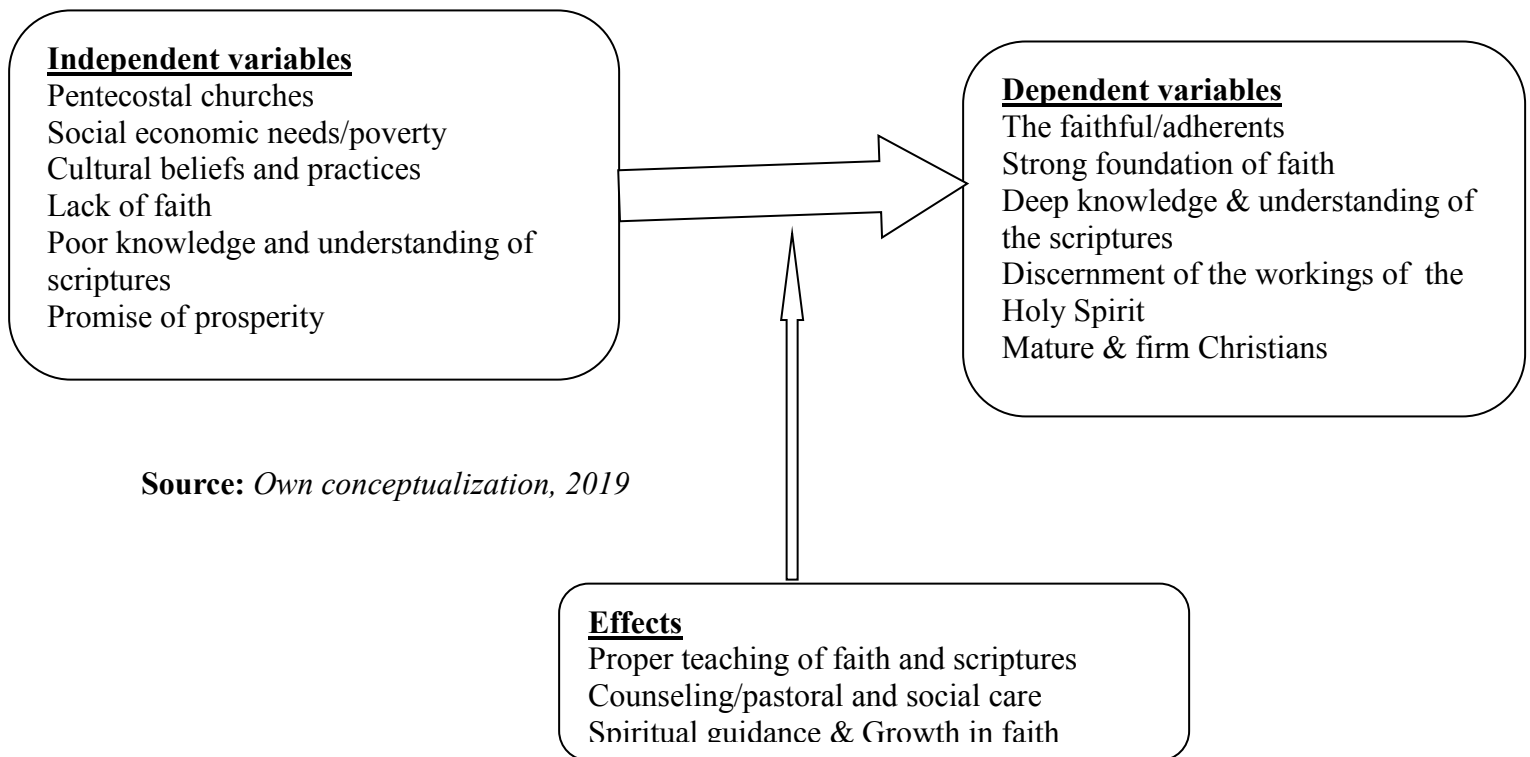
The Pentecostal churches have strong desire for extraordinary, and hunger for astounding experiences in their worship. They are always looking for something new and astonishing. They seek anointing power, vision, revelation or any resemblance of such. They oversimplify life by giving their believers quick and easy solutions to life problems such as various keys to health, healing, wealth, financial prosperity and victory in life. The suffering Christ is overshadowed as nothing is said about the Cross, Christ's suffering and self-denial. This limits the spiritual growth

of the faithful for they focus more on worldly ways of life. The Pentecostal teachings stress so much on money, possessions, health and blessings hence making the faithful strive for heaven on earth now which portrays man centered happiness than God centered. The emphasis on prosperity can influence and lead the church members more to the inclination of getting rich- quick scheme, with the belief that God is in it.

1.3 Objectives

- To assess the core message in the preaching of Pentecostal churches.
- To analyze the place of the cross and the sufferings of Christ in the Pentecostal churches.

1.4 Conceptual framework



Source: *Own conceptualization, 2019*

The framework above suggests the different reasons why many people become adherent of the Pentecostal churches. The membership consists of converts from Christian churches and even other Pentecostal groupings. This is promoted more by lack of enough knowledge of the scriptures as well as lack of deeply rooted faith in God. Poverty in Africa is a reality and when a way of coming out of poverty is given, one tries his best to benefit from it. The countless promises of blessings, happiness, liberation and prosperity proclaimed by the Pentecostal churches attract the poor and the vulnerable flock to these churches. The people are hardly given any teaching on faith or scriptures, the major condition is only to admit that one has accepted Jesus as his personal savior hence their rootedness in the word of God remains very shallow.

By being given proper teaching in the scriptures, spiritual guidance and care one would be deeply rooted in faith and would be in a position of discerning the real ways of God and the workings of the spirit. This leads to a deeply rooted Christian life whose faith is rooted in God not in Material gain. Through pastoral care and social concern adherents are enlightened not to go after empty promises and to make mature decisions in choosing which church to belong.

1.5 Literature review

This chapter reviewed related literature about the Gospel of prosperity. The following areas are discussed: The theory that the study is dependent on, that is the rational choice theory (RCT) by Rodney Stark, Roger Finke (2000) and Adam Smith (1976). The study is about the Gospel of prosperity and its weaknesses. It expounds the weakness of the theology of prosperity, the cross and the Gospel of prosperity, the place of the cross in the Gospel of prosperity, and prosperity gospel versus the cross.

Theoretical review

Rational choice theory (RCT) Finke, Adam Smith & Stark

Adam Smith (1976) usually gets credit as the father of rational choice theory. The proponents of Rational choice theory (RCT) believe that most human decisions are based on maximizing a person's own benefit while minimizing that which can hurt the individual. Iannaccone (1995) observes that people approach all the actions in the same way evaluating costs and benefits and acting so as to maximize their benefits. Rational choice theory focuses on human behavior, freedom of choice and reward for eternal life. It looks at religion as a system of compensators and it views the human beings as rational actors. It sees compensation as what controls the choice which the rational actor makes. Lechner (2006) indicates that in choosing to join a church, or taking on a religious commitment, or accepting a religious belief, people weigh costs and benefits in light of their preferences. Their demand for religion is met by a supply produced by religious organizations. The activities of consumers and producers constitute a market or religious economy. These choices are centered on the satisfaction of wants. It points out that the individuals who join these religious bodies actively weigh the costs and benefits in order to determine whether a particular group is right for them. This theory has a bearing to this study due to the fact it seeks to find out if members join a particular church out of the benefits promised such a life without suffering.

Rational choice theory presents people making decisions for themselves hence people use their own reasoning and judgments. Homans (as cited in Spickard 2016) notes that rational choice theory portrays people as active participants in their own lives and so the theory does not treat people as a product of the institutions. This shows that people have influence over institution; they choose institution with considerable flexibility. Spickard (2016) says that according to rational-choice, people are neither trapped by their beliefs, nor do their beliefs prevent them from changing. Instead, changing is normal and theological fluidity is the accustomed state of affairs. People choose even their beliefs based on their rational consideration of costs and benefits. Such events as mass religious conversions can make sense; not as symptoms of the breakdown of the traditional world but as strategic acts on the part of individuals and groups seeking to attain their ends.

Rational choice theory assumes an individualistic approach to a given situation in life. It explains all social phenomena in terms of the rational calculations made by self-interested individuals. It is

too self-centered because it only focuses on what one can gain not what can benefit others. People are motivated by the rewards and the profits that they can obtain. The actions of a person are of self-interest and self-centered thus social life can be impossible because even social interactions are taken as social exchange and are calculated in terms of profit or loss to the individual. The theory focuses on the needs of human person both spiritual and temporal. The needs include reward for heavenly inheritance, divine healing, miracle and deliverance as well as blessings and prosperity. The theory focus on the necessity of material and spiritual needs, Human beings have to make choices that are goal oriented towards the ultimate good who is God. The theory put emphasis on the benefits and reward that the rational being looks upon which include divine healing, wealth and prosperity.

The theory does not do not say anything on the manipulation, inequality and exploitation that is very real within various religious groups. It has not highlighted the fears that are put and stimulate the followers of religions to behave or act in a certain manner.

Empirical review

The Cross And The Gospel of Prosperity

Crucifixion was adopted from the Assyrians by the Romans. It became the way the Romans put to death anyone found guilty of a serious crime. Crucifixion was the execution of a criminal by nailing or binding him to a cross. It was one of the most horribly painful and disgraceful methods of capital punishment (Okanlawon, 2011). Crucifixion was mostly applied to slaves, disgraced soldiers and foreigners. The victim was tied or nailed to a large wooden beam and left to hang even for several days until he died due to exhaustion. It was the most agonizing and it was the most shameful of all deaths (Colliers 2008). According to Ironside (2017) before the death of Christ, the Cross then was not an ornament to be worn on a chain; it was not a sign to be placed above some building. The Cross was the symbol of deepest shame and ignominy; it spoke of an accursed death.

Through the death and resurrection of Jesus the doctrine of the cross of Christ became the central truth of Christianity (1Cor 1:18). The Cross is the principal symbol of the Christian religion, recalling the Crucifixion of Jesus Christ and the redeeming benefits of his Passion and death. The cross of Jesus is a central narrative in Christianity and is a religious symbol for many Christian churches. The cross is thus a sign both of Christ himself and of the faith of Christians. Okanlawon (2011) highlights that Christian theology teaches that the death of Jesus Christ on the cross provided the perfect atoning sacrifice for the sin of all humanity, thus making the cross one of the defining symbols of Christianity. The cross became an important part of Christian liturgy and art after Jesus Christ was crucified on it. The Redemption was accomplished through the Cross of Christ, that is, through his suffering.

The Place Of The Cross In The Gospel of Prosperity

The Prosperity Gospel preachers though they call themselves Christians, do not have the cross of Jesus at the center of their preaching, they hardly talk on the suffering and death of Jesus on the cross. Instead they emphasize that the cross is for the sake of the born-again to enjoy life.

According to Goliama (2013) the preachers insist that Jesus Christ has suffered and died on the cross for our sake once for all. In his death he took as well our sickness and poverty. Hence, the Calvary package included salvation and prosperity. As Jesus has finished all suffering on our behalf, what remains for a Christian is to enjoy life rather than undergo suffering again. Fitzpatrick et.al (2016) note that Evangelical Christians are certainly of the view that human suffering ought to be prevented and relieved wherever possible assuming that the means of doing so are ethical. Woodbridge (2013) observes that the Gospel of prosperity is an incomplete gospel because it excludes the cross of Christ. Jesus himself said that if one wants to be a follower of him he must deny himself take up his cross and follow him (Mt 16:24-26). Jesus too told his disciple that “in this world you will have trouble but take courage” (Jn16:33). Hence the gospel of prosperity diverts from Christ’s teaching. It avoids the suffering Christ or Christ as the suffering servant and emphasizes only on the glorious Christ. The wisdom and the power of God is demonstrated not primarily in God's superabundant material blessings or in His awesome force displayed in nature, but at the cross on Golgotha's hill. The genius of God is found not in His display of power, but in His willingness to suffer and even die. The genius of Christianity is found not in a conquering hero, but a suffering Servant. A theology of God's blessings that bypasses His suffering is heresy (Wilhelmsson, 2000). He further notes that a theology of God's resurrection that minimizes His death is empty optimism. A theology of God's exaltation that depreciates His humiliation is fantasy. The cross is central, pivotal, not only because it meets human need, but also because it meets divine necessity. The cross provides not only the forgiveness of sin, but provides it in such a way that God does not compromise with evil and thus remains just, holy, and righteous. The message of the cross is thus consistent with God's nature or character. While it magnifies His love it also vindicates His holiness. Thus God is both a Savior and a Judge. What the sun is to light, the cross is to Christianity. The Christian religion revolves around the cross. It is empowered by and lives by the cross. It holds a pivotal place in the teachings of Holy Scripture.

Woodbridge (2013) observe that Jesus himself made it very clear that following him involves suffering, self-denial as well as embracing the cross and the cost of it. Large crowds were traveling with Jesus, and turning to them He said, if anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters yes, even his own life he cannot be My disciple. And anyone who does not carry his cross and follow Me cannot be My disciple. In the same way, any of you who does not give up everything he has cannot be My disciple (Lk 14:25-27, 33). He further notes that the doctrine of the cross of Christ is the central truth of Christianity (1 Cor 1:17- 2:3). St. Paul too emphasizes the centrality of the cross in Christian life when he said that "Jews demand miraculous signs and Greeks look for wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ is the power of God and the wisdom of God" (1Cor 1: 22-24). According Gyadu (2006) African Pentecostal prosperity theology may have some ground to recover in respect of its weak theology of suffering. Be that as it may, the cross of Christ is not just a symbol of weakness, but also one of victory over sin, the world and death. Pentecostals draw attention to the fact that the gospel is about restoration, so it is expected that the transformation of the personality would be manifest in personal health, well-being and care, in short, salvation is holistic and includes spiritual as well as physical abundance. Christianity cannot be seen as magic but a journey of faith that has with it suffering and self-denial. The Christian faith is trusting God to do his will not human’s will.

Prosperity Gospel Versus the Cross

The Prosperity Gospel emphasizes on easing or avoiding suffering, living a life free of suffering, a life without a cross. On the contrary Jesus calls those who follow him to take up his cross and follow him (Mt 16. 24-26). Christ himself was not an exemption he suffered and died on the cross. There is no escapism in the cross; God does not run from pain. In the cross, God enters raw pain, and he does so naked and vulnerable (Gary 2010). Since God accomplishes good purposes through suffering, it has value and one shouldn't try to avoid it at all costs. Even Jesus chose to suffer during His life on Earth, so it's reasonable to expect that the Christian life's main goal of becoming more like Jesus will involve suffering (Woodbridge, 2013). The Prosperity Gospel does not deal with sin nor suffering, neither does it deal with dying to self. Its promises are concerned exclusively with selfish, individual gain through magical thinking, God in Christ and his cross is concerned exclusively with radically humble self-giving and suffering for the sake of others (Gary 2010). Jesus does not run away from death but willingly lays down his life on the cross fulfilling the scripture "though he was in the form of God Jesus did not count equality with God something to be grasped rather he emptied himself taking the form a servant being born in the likeness of men. He humbled himself and became obedient unto death even death on a cross (Phil 2. 6-11)

The prosperity gospel presents an exalted view of faithful. According to Woodbridge (2013) Prosperity theology inverts the relationship between the Creator and the creature. Man is now at the center of the universe and, therefore, God simply exists in order to meet all of man's needs, including good relationships, sound health, and financial gains, among other desires. Prosperity gospel is man-centered and, thus, egotistical. The true Gospel is Christ centered, it is about Jesus and him only. Green (2014) highlights that Jesus is the front and center of everything, man's needs and desires are surrendered upon the altar of His will. If one's desire is to live for Jesus and walk with him daily, then he/she must die to self daily. One will have the same circumstances the unbeliever faces, but he/she will have hope. Our Lord is near to the broken hearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit (Ps 34. 19). The gospel of prosperity focuses on worldly riches, focuses on worldly materials, money wealth leisure but not heavenly riches. Woodbridge (2013) notes that Prosperity gospel does not teach one to seek God and the heavenly kingdom but teaches you to seek the hand of God for God to give you worldly things; worldly materials and health. Biblical gospel leads one to God teaches one to seek first the kingdom of God and other things will be added (Mt. 6. 33). The true gospel calls to lay her treasures in heaven where neither moth nor rust can corrupt and where thieves do not break through nor steal (Mt 6. 20). The gospel of prosperity is an incomplete Gospel because it has no place for the cross and suffering. It is a gospel that is deprived the suffering Christ and is man centered than Christ centered.

1.6 Research Methodology

The researcher used Questionnaires and interviews to collect data. The study used both open and closed ended questions so as to provide diverse information on the gospel of prosperity. The researcher administered 100 questionnaires to different groups of the church. The questionnaires were divided under two different sub headings which include personal information, financial and material blessings. The researcher used a face-to-face contact with the interviewee. The researcher used both unstructured and open ended interview that aimed at getting the respondent open up through stimulating statements and structured interview to collect data which is quantifiable. Therefore, the researcher prepared questions that prompted the discussion between the researcher and the respondents. The researcher took keen on observing behavior patterns and non-verbal

communications triggered by the questions. The questions were open-ended in order to obtain in-depth information about the topic as well as qualitative information.

1.7 Data Analysis And Presentation

Table 1: Questionnaires Administered

Sample 100	Questionnaire Returned 97	percentage 97%
-----------------------	--------------------------------------	---------------------------

The table 1 presents the data on the questionnaires filled and returned by the respondents. Out of the 100 questionnaires distributed to the respondents, 97 of them were correctly filled and returned. Since the questionnaires issued were 100 the researcher needed to get 80% of the questionnaires issued to validate the research. The 80% would be a good representation of the church members. Thus, the return rate being 97% improved the reliability of the findings and made the research a true representation of the targeted population.

Table 2: Respondents’ Gender

The results are shown in table 4.2.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Male	55	56.7	57.7	56.7
Female	42	43.3	43.3	43.3
Total	97	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field data, 2019

Table 2 shows that 55 questions given to the men were filled and returned. The women had been given 45 questionnaire and 42 of the questionnaires were filled and returned. Three questionnaires were not returned thus in total there were 97 respondents. As the frequency table clearly indicates, there is a slight imbalance between the male and female respondents. The male respondents were the majority. This was due to the fact that most of the women don’t take active roles in leadership of the church hence making church leadership male dominated. The researcher wanted to know the gender percentage of the participants and see if it influenced the findings. It showed that men participated more in answering the questionnaire than the women.

Demographic Finding

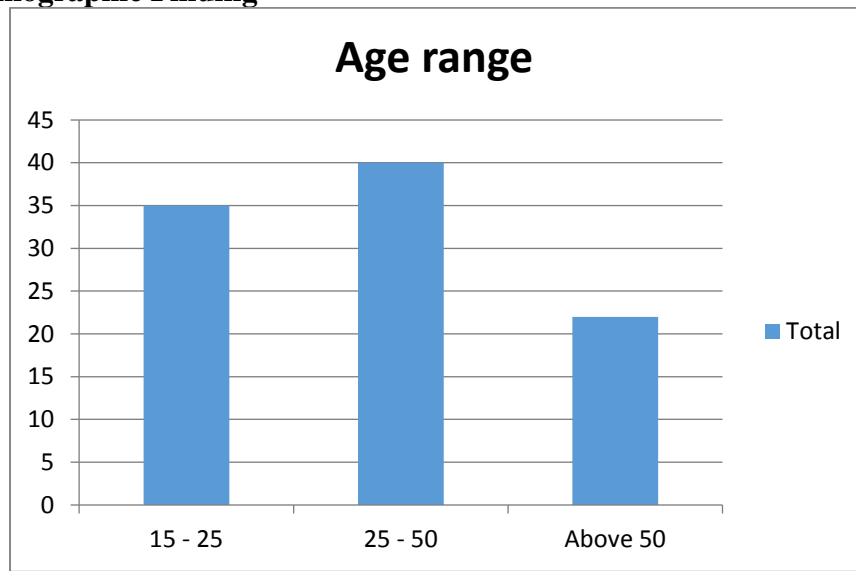


Figure 1: Age range

Source: Field data, 2019

Figure 1 above presents the distribution of age range for the respondents. Its objective was to assess the fair distribution of the respondents to represent the whole target group of the members of the Pentecostal church chosen. The ages were divided into three categories as indicated in the chart above. The reason for this was mainly to get responses from different age groups and to find out if, different age groups have different views and perceptions about religion. This variance in perceptions would enable the researcher to capture different opinions. From this chart, the majority of the respondents were between the ages of 25 and 50, followed by those between the ages of 15 to 25. Those above 50 years had the lowest response rate as shown in the chart. This shows that majority of the church members comprise of youth and young adults. The youths are full of life and are active in the churches. They look for identity in life and want to feel being part of the church. The young adults though still settling down in life also take an active role in the church and participate in most of the church groups as choir members, intercessors, ushers among others. As shown in the graph the church members above 50 years are the minority. They are looked upon by the younger members as guides and model. They too take different roles in the churches. One of the youths, an oral respondent commented that the elder members of the church give strength to the church as they have experience and are focused. They are their role models in the service of the church and in their faith (Ann Kirugo, personal communication 17th Feb 2019). Another young member of the church affirmed this saying that elder members of the church motivate the young ones to serve God through their presence and commitment in the church (Jamleck Kiio, 24/02/2019)

Emphasis On Preaching

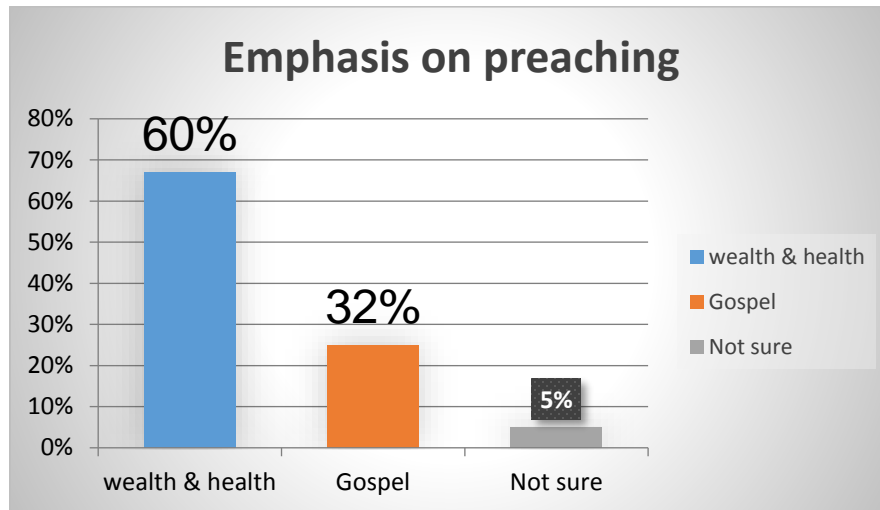


Figure 2: Emphasis on preaching

Source: Field data, 2019

Figure 2 shows that 60% of the Christians indicated that the aspect of health, wealth and prosperity is strongly emphasized in the church more than the Gospel. 32% of the respondents agreed that preaching of the Gospel is more emphasized and their pastors' call people to repentance and personal transformation. They also however pointed out that the pastors also do preach on financial sowing though it is not the main focus. 5% were not sure what is more emphasized in their church between the Gospel, wealth or prosperity.

Thus a big number of Christians indicated that material wealth and prosperity was emphasized more in the church than faith and personal transformation. This agrees with the pastors response during interview who highlighted that preaching on wealth and prosperity is more appealing to the faithful more than spiritual emphasis (Pastor Paul Chege personal communication 17th February 2019). Thus, it can be concluded that pastors' ability to increase the number of the faithful in their churches is based on how much the pastor puts emphasis on the proposition that the more one gives to the church, the more this increases once opportunities of becoming prosperous and wealthy. It also shows that most of what is preached or the focus in their worship is material wealth and prosperity. This is what lures people into these churches. Thus, spiritual life and radical following of Christ is overshadowed with call to prosperity and the focus is taken from Jesus to the self.

Place Of The Cross And Suffering

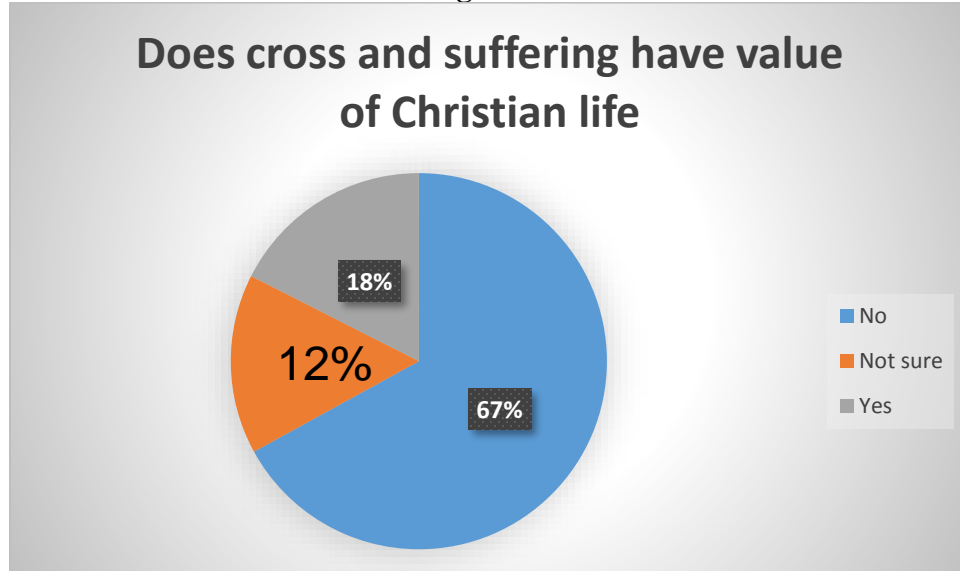


Figure 3: Suffering on the cross and its value to Christians

Source: Field data, 2019

Figure 3 above reflects the responses concerning suffering and the cross in Christian life. 67% said that a follower of God should not suffer. Suffering is not so much looked at as God's way of encountering his people. They stated that cross and suffering are hardly spoken of in their churches. Great emphasis in their churches is on a life of liberation from all sufferings. Health wealth and prosperity are strongly emphasized

12% were not sure if suffering has spiritual value in their lives and 18% agreed that suffering has value and is a sign of God working in the life of a person. 3 % did not respond to the questions. The findings show that majority of the faithful in these churches do not see suffering as way of God working in their lives. They don't believe that suffering brings one closer to God and makes one have a share in the sufferings of Christ. They have not understood that since the goal of a Christian is to become more like Christ, it is important to embrace the role suffering plays in one's life. The Pentecostal churches have thus made their followers live a disintegrated Christian life that does not recognize God working in their lives through suffering. Wilhelmson (2000) notes that to maintain an ascent to Christianity without a willingness to pay the price, the cost of faithful obedience is contradictory and is nothing less than cheap grace. To remove the radical nature of Jesus' call to suffering servanthood is to lose the very nature of that call. Such a gospel is a watered down, diluted Christianity that appeals to the masses, but is not true to historic orthodox faith. The gospel of the Faith Movement is an indulgent, painless, costless and crossless Gospel.

1.8 Recommendations

The research was able to bring up some insights and more knowledge in regard to the Gospel of prosperity and its weakness. From the research findings of this study, several recommendations were made, for consideration by various organizations interested in religion research

- a) There are so many Pentecostal churches in Kenya and most of these churches are more or less personal business and an income generating project for the pastors at the expense of the vulnerable. The government through the Registra of societies in Kenya need to be keen and have regulations on the registration of these churches The founders of these churches need

- to be followed and to give clear objectives of starting their own churches whereas there are already other existing Pentecostal churches.
- b) The government need to take legal actions on the pastors who take advantage of the poor and abuse their rights.
 - c) The interdenominational body National Council of Churches in Kenya (NCCCK) to put up a committee that vets the pastors of the upcoming churches, to verify their genuineness and commitment in preaching the good news.
 - d) Most of the people who fall victims of these churches do so because of other underlying needs such as poverty, suffering, fear among others. There is need for the mainstream churches to offer free social services such as counselling and guidance. This would address some issues and problems of life that lead people to leave the mainstream churches to join the Pentecostal Churches.
 - e) The Catholic Church to revisit its call on option for the poor which addresses the material, spiritual, psychological and social needs of the people. The church should not remain silent and blind to oppressive and dehumanizing system that some Pentecostal churches use to exhort money from their faithful. The church needs to question the structures of the society in which it lives and serves.
 - f) The mainstream churches need do re-evaluate their evangelization systems and to be more active in the media so as to reach out to many who get misled through incomplete gospel

1.9 Conclusion

The Pastors of the Pentecostal churches mostly misinterpret the word of God to fit their ideas. Faith is portrayed as magic and human formula that makes God bend to the man's wish and desires. This is more or less a proclamation of capitalism under the umbrella of preaching the good news. It portrays as though the faithful have great faith in God, but they claim to serve God while with materialism strings attached. The culture of getting quick riches is what is proclaimed under the umbrella of preaching the good news of Christ.

References

- Bible students. (2007). The end of times: The prosperity Gospel and tithing. *Bible report quarterly no.39*: Retrieved on June 11, 2019 from <http://www.Biblestudents.com/images/upload/39prosperity>
- Cilliers, L. (2008). History of medicine: the history and pathology of crucifixion. *South African Journal 93 (12), 938*
- Fitzpatrick SJ, Kerridge IH, Jordens CFC, Zoloth L, Tollefsen C, Tsomo KL, Jensen MP, Sachedina A, Sarma D. (2016). Religious perspectives on human suffering: Implications for medicine and bioethics. *Journal of Religion and Health 55:159–173*.
- Gathogo, J. (2011). *The challenge of money and wealth in some East African Pentecostal churches*. Retrieved on April 18, 2015 from uir.unisa.ac.za/handle/10500/5124
- Gary, B. (2010). The prosperity Gospel: God in a Box. Retrieved on June 10, 2019 from <http://bertgary.blogspot.com/prosperity-gospel-god-in-box.html>
- Goliama, M. (2013). The Gospel of Prosperity in African Pentecostalism: A Theological and Pastoral Challenge to the Catholic Church – With Reference to the Archdiocese of Songea, Tanzania. *Unpublished dissertation*
- GREEN, H. (2014). THE PROSPERITY GOSPEL VS TAKING UP YOUR CROSS.

RETRIEVED ON JUNE 12, 2019 FROM

HTTP://CONCERNINGTHETIMES.COM/PROSPERITY-GOSPEL-VS-TAKING-CROSS

- Gyadu, A.K. (2006). African Pentecostal/charismatic Christianity: An Overview Retrieved on May 7, 2015 from <https://www.lausanneworldpulse.com/themedarticles-php/464/>
- Mayrargue, C. (2008). The paradoxes of Pentecolism in Sub-sahara Africa. The Institut Français des Relations Internationales (infri). Retrieved on May 12, 2015 from [https://www.ifri.org/...](https://www.ifri.org/)
- Okanlawon, S. (2011). ORITA. *Ibadan Journal of Religious Studies XLIII/2*
- Ongong'a, J. (2015). Prosperity Gospel in Kenyan Urban Centers: Come, See, Pay and receive your miracles and healing. *Research on Humanities and Social Sciences Vol.5, No.10*
- Iannaccone, L. (1995). Vadoo economics? Reviewing the rational choice approach to religion. *Journal for the Scientific Study of religion, 34 (1): 76-89*
- Ironside, H. (2017). The Cross of Christ. Retrieved on June 7, 2019 from www.wholesomewords.Org
- Lechner, F. (2006). Rational choice and religious economies*. Unpublished thesis
- Parsitau. D. (2014). *The civic and public roles of neo-Pentecostal churches in Kenya (1970-2010.)* Unpublished PHD thesis, Kenyatta University.
- Simushi, L. (2006). The prosperity gospel in the assemblies of God church: Unpublished thesis Retrieved on May 10, 2017 from udil.africau.ac.zw:8282/greenstone/collect/disserta/.../doc.pdf
- Soboyejo, J. (2016). Prosperity gospel and its religious impact on sustainable economic development of African Nations. *Open Access Library Journal, 3: e3153.*
- Spickard, J. (2016). Rethinking religious social action: what is 'rational' about rational-choice theory? Retrieved July 10, 2017 from <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/249291606>
- Umoh, D. (2013). Prosperity Gospel and the Spirit of capitalism: The Nigerian Story. *African Journal of Scientific Research Vol. 12, No1*
- Wilhelmson, L. (2000). The gospel of health, wealth & prosperity. Retrieved on May 10, 2017 from www.vitalchristianity.org/.../Gospel%20of%20Health%2C%20We...
- Woodbridge, S. (2013). Five errors of the prosperity gospel. Retrieved on May 10, 2017 from <http://www.liberty.edu/index.cfm?PID=9720&blogpid=26955&id=655880>
- The New Jerusalem Bible.* (1995). London: Darton, Longman & Todd