

From the charismatic pulpit to the community: an exploratory analysis of the involvement of pentecostal/charismatic religious denominations in community development

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Abstract

Purpose – This study sought to determine the association between religious denominations, with a special focus on Pentecostal/Charismatic denomination and some core community welfare indicators. The study also constructed some religious performance indices to compare the performance of various denominations in poverty reduction activities.

Design/methodology/approach – Data for the study come from the seventh round of Ghana Living Standard Survey and Religion in Poverty Reduction Survey (RPRS) from Greater Accra Region, Ghana. Descriptive statistics and the logit model were used to analyze the data.

Findings – The study found that the presence of Catholic denomination is significantly associated with increased odds that water will be provided in rural areas (odds ratio = 2.88297, $p = 0.008$). The results also show that the presence of Protestant denomination as the major religion in the community is significantly associated with a reduction in the odds that social amenities will deteriorate in rural areas (odds ratio = 0.236, $p = 0.062$). However, it was found that in rural areas, the presence of Pentecostal/Charismatic church as the major denomination significantly reduces the odds for the provision of water (odds ratio = 0.24994, $p = 0.025$), increases the odds of deterioration in social amenities (odds ratio = 2.095, $p = 0.062$) and poverty (odds ratio = 1.4879, $p = 0.094$). The various indices show that in urban areas, the performance of religious denominations on social service delivery, poverty reduction and awareness raising on poverty issues are comparable.

Originality/value – This study is the foremost to construct indices that could be used to objectively assess the involvement of religious denomination in community development in any developing country.

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Keywords Religious denominations, Pentecostal/neo-pentecostal, Franchising, Religion in poverty reduction index, Rural areas

Paper type Research paper

1. Introduction

Estimates suggest a changing religious landscape in Ghana with a continuous steady growth of Pentecostal/Charismatic churches. In 2000, the Charismatic and Pentecostal populations were around 6.5 million, but the number increased to more than 10 million in 2015. According to the current 2022 Population and Housing Census in Ghana, there are more people affiliated to Pentecostal/Charismatic churches than any other religious denomination. Between 2010 and 2021, the percentage of Catholic and Protestant denominations in the population has declined from 13.1 to 10% and 18.4 to 17.4%, respectively. However, there has been an astronomical increase in the population of Pentecostal/Charismatic membership from 28.3% in 2010 to 31.6% in 2021.

In the interest of transparency, data sharing and reproducibility, the author(s) of this article have made the data underlying their research openly available. It can be accessed by following the link here: <https://microdata.statsghana.gov.gh/index.php/catalog/97>



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The exponential growth of Pentecostal/Charismatic churches has come with both blessings and curses. There is a plethora of evidences that most of these churches operate during productive hours. For example, in one study, [Kwarteng-Yeboah \(2019\)](#) reported that, in some churches, during working days, church service could last up to 7 h, from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. There is also an increase in the number of fake/false pastors and prophets with pseudo-religious teachings and practices. For example, in Greater Accra region, the capital city of Ghana, the founder of a Neo-Pentecostal church called *True word Prophetic Fire Ministry* in Accra is reported to have expressed openly that he was capable of curing anyone who has hepatitis and HIV ([Clavarino, 2018](#)). Some Ghanaian Pentecostal/Charismatic pastors-prophets have turned the gospel into a commodity by using different marketing approaches to advertise, brand and package religion as a consumer or spiritual product that can be purchased to navigate around the complexities of life ([Benyah, 2018](#)). These monies are only used for their self-aggrandizement with little regard for the poor and the needy in the society ([Fredua-Kwarteng, 2006](#)). [Gundersen \(2018\)](#) found that women affiliated to Pentecostal/Charismatic churches show less autonomy in decision-making on important household purchases and even their health care than other Christian women. In a critical literature analysis, [Boaheng et al. \(2023\)](#) found that the *prosperity gospel* associated with Pentecostal/Charismatic churches promotes negative work ethics, creates psychological problems for adherents, fosters anti-intellectualism and promotes individualistic mindset.

On the other hand, several studies have explored the positive contributions of Pentecostal/Charismatic churches to Ghana's development. [Benyah \(2021\)](#) has explored the contributions made by the International Central Gospel Church (ICGC), Royal House Chapel, Manna Mission Church and Action Chapel International in the provision of social services. [Sarbah et al. \(2020\)](#) have mentioned the contributions of Lighthouse Chapel International Church in some communities in Ghana. Both [Onyinah \(2020\)](#) and [Anim \(2020\)](#) have itemized the roles of the Church of Pentecost in the socio-economic development of Ghana. [Owusu-Ansah and Adjei-Acquah \(2020\)](#) have outlined the development contributions of *Perez Chapel* to the economic development of Ghana. [Kudadjie \(2024\)](#) reported the socio-economic and political contributions of some major Pentecostal churches in Ghana.

However, to a large extent, the evidence for assessing the role of Pentecostal/Charismatic to national development are church-specific, and normally cover urban and peri-urban areas, and not based on nationally representative data. Again, no objective metric exist to assess the contributions of Pentecostal/Charismatic churches to Ghana's development. Consequently, this study has a two-fold objective: (1) to establish the association between Pentecostal/Charismatic churches and community well-being based on nationally representative data; (2) to construct an index to measure the level of involvement of Pentecostal/Charismatic churches in poverty alleviation in Ghana. Filling these gaps will not only enrich the empirical literature on the association between Pentecostal/Charismatic churches and development in Ghana, but will also provide a clear direction to policymakers to design programmes and policies that could maximize the contribution of Pentecostal/Charismatic churches to the socio-economic development of Ghana.

The rest of the study is structured as follows: [Section 2](#) provides a brief review of the literature on the nature of Pentecostal/Charismatic churches and their contributions to poverty alleviation. This is followed by a theoretical outline in [Section 3](#). [Section 4](#) gives the methodology used for the study. [Section 5](#) presents the results, whilst [Section 6](#) discusses these results. Finally, [Section 7](#) concludes the study.

1.1 Pentecostalism in Ghana

In his conceptualization of Pentecostals in Ghana, [Asamoah-Gyadu \(2005\)](#) defined Pentecostals as "a group of Christians who emphasize salvation in Christ as a transformative experience wrought by the Holy Spirit and in which the "Spirit phenomenon" (including speaking in tongues, prophecies, visions, healing and miracles in general) are perceived as a

historic continuity of the experiences of the early Church as found in the Acts of Apostles and as a sign of the presence of God and experience of His Spirit” (Asamoah-Gyadu, 2005, p. 12). In addition to the emphasis on the spirit phenomenon, many Ghanaian Pentecostal/Charismatic churches stress prosperity and the desire for success (Gifford, 2004). There are two basic types of Pentecostals in Ghana: Classical Pentecostal Churches and Neo-Pentecostal (or Charismatic) Churches. The Classical Pentecostal Churches include churches like Church of Pentecost, Assemblies of God, Christ Apostolic Church and the different Apostolic Churches, whose presence in Ghana dates back to the 1920’s, while the Neo-Pentecostal or Charismatics ministries began around the 1970s and 1980s (see Diboro and Ehiem, 2020). The Neo-Pentecostal Churches comprise a collection of renewal movements in mainline churches, trans-national denominations and new independent Pentecostal churches, popularly referred to as Charismatic Churches (Asamoah-Gyadu, 2005). Classical Pentecostals and Charismatics (Neo-Pentecostals) are similar in beliefs and rituals but among the latter, the common emphasis is on “*success, wealth and status*” (Gifford, 2004, p. 44).

1.1.1 The contributions of Pentecostal/Charismatic denomination to poverty alleviation in Ghana. Several evidences abound that Pentecostal/Charismatic churches have contributed immensely to Ghana’s poverty alleviation agenda. Some authors even suggest that the growth of Pentecostal/Charismatic churches is driven by their ability to meet the material need of the youth (see Diboro and Ehiem, 2020). Benyah (2021) reports that ICGC, Royal House Chapel, Manna Mission Church and Action Chapel International provide social services including the award of scholarships, provision of hand-pump boreholes, medical services (such as eye care, dentistry and fistula repairs), financial aid, food supplies, free clothes, rehabilitation centers and support to orphanages. Sarbah *et al.* (2020) have reported that the *Lighthouse Chapel International* Church provide free medical consultation, free medication, payment of apprenticeship fees, as well as pension for the elderly at Korle-Gonno community in Accra. Anquandah Arthur (2021) narrates that in 2014, the leader of the International Gospel Church, Mensa Otabil, encouraged members to adopt a 20 year-long term plan to build prosperity. Kudadjie (2024) reports that in education, apart from the Assemblies of God (AG), Ghana, all major Pentecostal churches in Ghana have established universities, and many also run vocational schools, basic schools and junior high schools. In the political sphere, Pentecostals have made significant contributions to the democratic process in shaping the democratic process through their active involvement on government boards, commissions and committees that make strategic decisions (Kudadjie, 2024). Other authors such as Onyinah (2020) and Anim (2020) also elucidate the role of Church of Pentecost in poverty alleviation. Owusu-Ansah and Adjei-Acquah (2020) provide a vivid account of the contribution of *Perez Chapel* to development of Ghana.

1.1.2 Conceptual framework and hypothesis development. Several reasons explain why religious denominations such as Catholics and Protestants could engage more in community development activities compared to Pentecostal and Charismatic churches in developing countries. Historically, the Catholic church has a long-standing commitment to social justice and community development, and this is ingrained in its social teaching which primarily stresses the significance of serving the poor and addressing systemic issues. This teaching can be traced back to the encyclicals of Pope Leo XIII and subsequent popes (see Kettler, 2010). Again, many Protestant denominations, particularly those with a focus on social gospel, have historically been involved in missionary work that includes community development and social upliftment (Robert, 2009). By and large, Catholic and some Protestant churches are often part of broader, organized entities with established networks that facilitate community development activities such as education, healthcare, and poverty alleviation. In many Mainline Protestant churches, the emphasis has always been holistic approach to salvation, which has mainly included care for the needy, community well-being, social justice and the like. However, many Pentecostal and Charismatic movements tend to focus primarily on personal salvation, spiritual experience and miracles (Horsley, 2012). The theoretical framework below explains how the teachings and organizational structure of religious denominations can affect their participation in community development.

1.2 Wealth maximization of the church: production of social and non-social goods

[Hull and Bold \(1989\)](#) argued that the major function played by churches and religion in any given society is the reduction of transaction costs by enforcing contracts. To be able to survive to provide this important function, it must earn revenue. In [Hull and Bold](#) analysis, the church sells four products to maximize wealth: temporal bliss, social goods, deferred perpetuity and altered fate. Examples of social goods include income redistribution, education, medical treatment, food preparation, sanitation etc. Obviously, apart from helping to meet the core functions of the church, churches' provision of social goods (s) could directly contribute to towards poverty reduction. The other products which we labeled as non-social (ns) goods help the survival of the church to perform its basic function. The nature and modus operandi of a particular church or religion in relation to the state of development of a given society could determine the level of production of social goods vis a vis non-social goods.

1.2.1 Doctrine of Pentecostal/Charismatic denominations and wealth maximization. The doctrines and organizational structure of Pentecostal/Charismatic churches show that, if they are found in underdeveloped societies, they are less likely to produce social goods and more likely to produce greater level of non-social goods. According to [Gifford \(2004\)](#), the Christianity of Neo-Pentecostalism is about success, and this success relates to material prosperity ([Gifford, 2004](#)). One could argue that, within [Hull and Bold's \(1989\)](#) analysis, the gospel of prosperity message supports the production of non-social goods such as *temporal bliss* and *altered faith*. It is argued that the gospel of prosperity message has the inspiring tendencies of entrepreneurship, optimism, self-reliance and self-supporting initiatives among believers ([Kwateng-Yeboah, 2019](#)). Indeed, [Beck and Gundersen's \(2016\)](#) study suggests that the gospel of prosperity could be associated with improved outcomes in the market such as improved earnings among women.

However, some theories could be used to suggest that the gospel of prosperity message could lead to less cooperation and less involvement in developmental activities. For example, social exchange theory suggests that individuals participate in social relationships through the exchange of resources with one another based on the expectation of a reward ([Richard and Emerson, 1976](#)). Hence, if an individual is primarily fixated on their own prosperity, they may not see any use in engaging in welfare activities in the community, because they may not see a direct benefit for themselves. Self-determination theory also argues that basic psychological needs such as autonomy, competence and relatedness could explain prosocial behaviors such as helping and community-oriented behaviors like volunteering and caring ([Ryan and Deci, 2017](#)). Individuals who are primarily focused on their own prosperity may have less sense of relatedness to the community and consequently an absence of motivation to engage in community activities. Some studies have indeed found the non-cooperative behavior of people and limited concern for family and community due to their inspiration from the gospel of prosperity (see [Kwateng-Yeboah, 2019](#)).

Another argument linking Pentecostal/Charismatics to involvement in developmental activities comes from their emphasis on spirituality (see [Gifford, 2004](#)) and deliverance theology (see [Asamoah-Gyadu, 2005; Gifford, 2004](#)). Charismatic Christianity is normally marked by the world-view in which spiritual forces are pervasive and dominant. It is these spiritual forces that are believed to be holding people back from success and wealth ([Gifford, 2004](#)). Although, this over-emphasis on the supernatural could make followers ignore real issues of "efficiency, competence and professionalism" in their economic life ([Gifford, 2004](#), p. 189), in underdeveloped societies with limited social and economic infrastructure, there is always an underlying demand for these fatal messages as people see this as the only way out of their predicament. Hence, this doctrine deprives members from the actions needed to improve the structural and dysfunctional socio-economic as well as political factors that underpin development and the creation of prosperity ([Kwateng-Yeboah, 2019](#)).

If we denote all revenue obtained from non-social goods produced by the church as R_{ns} and the revenue obtained from commodities that satisfy social needs of the community as R_s , then given the above considerations, we would expect that at a given price for selling these goods,

the revenue from producing social goods will be lower for Pentecostal/Neo-Pentecostals churches. Assume we can discount these streams of revenue overtime at r , then, in general, we will expect that the present value for producing social commodities will be lower for Pentecostal/Neo-Pentecostal (p/c) churches than other denominations ($non-p/c$)

$$\left\{ \sum_{t=1}^n \left[\frac{(R_{ns} - R_s)}{(1+r)^t} \right] \right\}_{p/c} > \left\{ \sum_{t=1}^n \left[\frac{(R_{ns} - R_s)}{(1+r)^t} \right] \right\}_{non-p/c} \quad (1)$$

1.2.2 Organizational structure of Pentecostal/Charismatic churches and wealth maximization. Further argument linking Pentecostal/Neo-Pentecostals to wealth maximization and hence the production of social goods vis a vis non-social goods concerns their organizational structure. Gifford (2004) observed that most of these churches are not really communities or fellowships. They normally revolve around one central authority called the “*Man of God*” who acts as the “*Big Man*” over the congregation. Overall, the character of these leaders perpetuates the “*dysfunctional structures of patrimonialism and unaccountability that characterizes Africa’s political system*” (Gifford, 2004, p. 189). White (2021) also noted that although most Classical Pentecostal Churches have structured leadership and administration, a lot of Charismatic/Neo-Pentecostal Churches are independent churches that have no written church policies and constitution. Based on Allen’s (1995) categorization of churches in terms of power making, Zech (2003) classified churches that operate in the manner such as the Neo-Pentecostals as *free-standing entrepreneurial organizations*. This organizational structure markedly differs from church organizations that operate as vertically integrated branch office or owner-operated franchise, such as the Catholic church, where decision making on church resources is concentrated at the center with tight controls over congregations (see Zech, 2003). Again, the organizational structure of most Neo-Pentecostal churches is also different from Protestant denominations which take on the form of business-format franchise and trademark/product franchise with regulations (see Zech, 2003). Unlike the franchise churches that have regulations, DiMaggio (1998) noted that in the Neo-Pentecostal churches, there are no regulations, no stewardship nor accountability of church resources.

The above illustration shows that in making a decision to provide more social goods or non-social goods, for a given monetary cost for a specific project, churches that operate along the lines of franchises may incur additional cost than free-standing entrepreneurial churches. Some of these costs include the cost of lobbying the franchisor to agree for the franchisee to introduce innovations or divert resources to the production of non-social goods. This may take considerable time and bureaucracy, and sometimes some monetary outlays for documentation and convening will be necessary. Additionally, franchising organizations have to show their viability through proper accountability, and this comes at a cost. These include cost incurred on hiring experts to prepare financial performance indicators such as balance sheets, income statements, cash flows and annual financial reports. This may not be done in churches that operate as free-standing entrepreneurial organizations. As DiMaggio (1998) noted, in the Neo-Pentecostal churches, there are no regulations, no stewardship nor accountability of church resources. Given other cost considerations such as specific way of organizing services or even designing church infrastructure, the overall cost of operating a church as a franchising entity may be greater than the cost involved in operating churches as free-standing entrepreneurial entity. However, with respect to the specific issue of the cost involved in the decision to devote or sometimes divert more church resources for non-social or social goods, we expect that Pentecostal/Neo-Pentecostal churches may incur less costs than churches that operate as franchising organizations. Denoting the cost of producing social goods as C_s and the cost of producing non-social goods as C_{ns} , assume a discount rate r , it is expected that the present value of the cost of producing non-social goods for Pentecostals/Charismatics (p/c) will be lower than churches that operate as franchising churches ($non-pc$).

$$\left\{ \sum \frac{(C_{ns} - C_s)}{(1+r)^t} \right\}_{p/c} < \left\{ \sum \frac{(C_{ns} - C_s)}{(1+r)^t} \right\}_{non-p/c} \quad (2)$$

Combining (1) and (2), one could argue that the net present value of producing non-social religious goods could be greater for churches that operate as free-standing entrepreneurs such as Pentecostals/Charismatics than those who operate as franchises such as Protestants. That is,

$$\left\{ \sum_{t=1}^n \left[\frac{(R_{ns} - R_s)}{(1+r)^t} \right] - \sum_{t=1}^n \left[\frac{(C_{ns} - C_s)}{(1+r)^t} \right] \right\}_{p/c} > \left\{ \sum_{t=1}^n \left[\frac{(R_{ns} - R_s)}{(1+r)^t} \right] - \sum_{t=1}^n \left[\frac{(C_{ns} - C_s)}{(1+r)^t} \right] \right\}_{non-p/c} \quad (3)$$

In a nutshell, one expects that based on simple cost-benefit analysis, barring other considerations, churches that operate as free-standing entrepreneurs similar to many Pentecostal and Charismatic churches are more likely to engage less in community development than those such as Protestants that operate as franchising organizations. However, as mentioned earlier, in many mainline Protestant churches, these other considerations, such as the emphasis on the holistic approach to salvation, including the care for the needy, community well-being, social justice and the like may overwhelm any cost-benefit analysis and lead to greater participation in community development.

H1. Relative to Orthodox churches such as Protestant and Catholic denominations, Pentecostal/Charismatic churches could have lower participation in community welfare.

2. Methods

2.1 Data for the study

The main [H1](#) of this study is that relative to Orthodox churches such as Protestant and Catholic denominations, Pentecostal/Charismatic churches may have lower participation in community welfare. To test this, [H1](#), the study used secondary data from the Ghana Living Standard Survey, round seven (GLSS 7). To support this, [H1](#), the study constructed three indices to provide an objective measure of the involvement of religious denominations in providing social services and poverty alleviation. These indices were constructed based on data from Religion in Poverty Reduction Survey (RPRS) conducted in 2017.

2.1.1 The Ghana Living Standard Survey, round seven (GLSS, 7). GLSS 7 is a regionally and nationally representative survey conducted by the Ghana Statistical Service (GSS) from 22nd October 2016 to 17th October 2017. It is a household-based survey which focuses on key socio-economic characteristics and well-being of households in the country. As part of the survey, community leaders answer questions about the welfare of their communities.

2.1.2 Religion in Poverty Reduction Survey (RPRS). To construct an index to measure the involvement of Pentecostal/Charismatic churches in community development, the study collected primary data from some communities in Greater Accra Region, the capital town of Ghana. This is because the GLSS 7 secondary dataset does not contain this information. Through the RPRS conducted from 15th January 2017 to the 5th January, 2018 in Greater Accra Region, the study collected a lot of information on the religiosity and religious-related issues from heads of various households. Greater Accra Region was chosen because it exhibits a lot of variability in terms of its people and economic activities; it serves as the headquarters of almost all the major religions in Ghana, and has experienced a boom in religious activities than any other region in Ghana. One particular estimate it that, approximately, there are 10 churches per sq km in the region ([Knott and Gyamfi, 2019](#)). The [Cochran \(1977\)](#) approach was used to select a sample size of 385 households from a population of 1,036,426 households in Greater Accra Region from 15 towns selected randomly from a district, municipal and metropolitan areas in the Greater Accra Region.

2.1.3 *Analytical model.* To assess the association between religion and community welfare indicators, the study used a social welfare production function similar to [Shah and Shah \(2024\)](#). In this study, this is stated simply as

$$S_w = S_w^p(OCC_c, OIC_c, REL_c, \varepsilon_c) \quad (4)$$

where S_w is community welfare or its indicator, S_w^p is a functional notation indicating a welfare production function, OCC_c and OIC_c are observable community and individual characteristics, respectively; REL_c is religious input into community welfare, and ε_c is an error term.

2.1.4 *Econometric modeling.* An assumed latent community welfare and the relationship between this latent community welfare (S_i^*) and observed community welfare S_i is modeled as

$$S_i^* = \alpha' REL_i + \beta_{oc} OCC_i + \gamma_s OIC_i + \varepsilon_i \quad (5)$$

where: $S_i = \begin{cases} 1 & \text{if } \alpha' REL_i + \beta_{oc} OCC_i + \gamma_s OIC_i + \varepsilon_i > 0 \\ 0 & \text{if } \alpha' REL_i + \beta_{oc} OCC_i + \gamma_s OIC_i + \varepsilon_i < 0 \end{cases}$, α, β, γ are parameters to be estimated, ε_i is a stochastic error term which has a logistic distribution with zero mean and variance = $\pi^2/3$. In a typical logistic regression, the coefficients do not make intuitive meaning. Therefore, the study reported the odds ratio. The odds ratio is the ratio of odds of success of an event to the odds of failure of the event. Odds ratio greater than or equal to one shows the odds in favor of the event occurring. Odds ratio less than one shows the odds against the event occurring. Two sets of control variables were included: observable community characteristics (OCC) and observable individual characteristics (OIC). The measurement of these variables is discussed in the next section.

2.1.5 *Measures. Dependent variable: Community welfare/well-being.* This study adopted the conceptualization of community well-being/welfare suggested by [Sung and Phillip \(2016\)](#). These authors conceptualized community well-being to embrace individual well-being, quality of life (QOL), social norms and values, and various qualities of community and by extension, community development. In terms of operationalization, the study relied on GLSS 7. In GLSS 7, community leaders are asked to list the *major welfare indicators* which have made their communities to become “better”, “slightly better”, experienced “no change”, has become “slightly worse” or “worse” in the last five years. This study relied on the first five most ranked indicators which are used to evaluate the well-being of the community. Following this, community leaders cited (1) *the provision of electricity*, (2) *provision of drinking water*, (3) *poverty*, (4) *unemployment* and (5) *deterioration in social amenities* as the first five most ranked indicators of well-being of their communities. A dummy was created for each welfare indicator wherein 1 indicates that the community has that indicator and 0 otherwise.

Independent variable. The main independent variable is the *first major religious denomination (REL)* in the community. The GLSS ask community leaders to determine the first major religious denomination in the community. A dummy was created wherein 1 was assigned to the major denomination and 0 otherwise.

Control variables. The study included age, population and immigration status as observable community characteristics (OCC). Also, major economic activity, major ethnic background and commuting status of community members were included as observable individual characteristics (OIC). Apart from the population of the community which was measured as a continuous variable, all other control variables were measured as dummy variables.

2.2 Construction of religion in development indices

2.2.1 *Religious denominations' Involvement in the Provision of Social Services.* As already indicated, to construct an index to assess the involvement of religious denominations in the

provision of social services, the study relied on the RPRS collected from Greater Accra Region. The study used the self-rating of members affiliated with the various denominations. The study constructed some items that could measure involvement of religious denominations in provision of social services and asked members if their place of worship has undertaken these activities within some reference period. For concreteness, these items were selected based on the three core values of development (see [Todaro and Smith, 2015](#)), Sustainable Development Goals and the conceptualization of community well-being by [Sung and Phillip \(2016\)](#). Respondents were asked: “Which of the following has your Church/mosque done to promote the welfare of members or the community in recent years?” Items included were “scholarship to needy students, health screening for Church members and community, clean-up exercise in the community, construction of borehole, construction of health facility/donation of healthcare items, microcredit facility to Church members, skills training for community members/Church members, construction of school/provision of school items such as books, school uniforms, computers etc”. The responses to these questions were a “yes” and “no/not sure” answers coded as 1 and 0, respectively. The study used these ratings as proxies for religious denominations’ involvement in the provision of social services.

2.2.2 Involvement in Awareness Raising on Poverty Reduction Related Issues. To assess religious denominations’ involvement in awareness raising on development issues, the study used members’ rating of their religious denominations’ involvement in awareness creation. From the perspective of SDGs and also [Sung and Phillip \(2016\)](#), respondents were asked: “For the past 12 months, as far as you can recall, how often has your Church/mosque through the pastor, Imam, elder, an invited guest or a member of the Church spoken publicly about each of these? Items included: health and health behaviour, savings, entrepreneurship, sending a child to school, child labour, family planning, trust, hard work, environmental care, reconciliation, marriage, parental involvement in child education (e.g. reading to a child at home/helping a child do homework/attending PTA meetings)?” Responses were graded on a five-point Likert scale and coded as 1 = “Never”, 2 = “rarely”, 3 = “sometimes”, 4 = “often”, 5 = “always”. The major religious denominations considered in this study included Catholic, Protestant, Pentecostal/Charismatic, Islam and Other Christian.

2.2.3 Religious in development indices. To summarize the differential involvement of religious denominations in awareness raising on development issues and the provision of social services, the study constructed three indices: *religious denominations in development awareness raising index (RDDARI)*, *religious denominations in social service delivery index (RDSSDI)* and *religious denomination in Poverty Reduction Index (RDPRI)*. It must be noted that *RDDARI* and *RDSSDI* are sub-indices which form the dimensions of *RDPRI*. To do this, the study followed closely the methodology used to construct the new human development index (see [Todaro and Smith, 2015](#)). The dimension indices were amalgamated into a unified index called the *RDPRI* ranging from 0 to 1. Following the *NHDI*, the study categorized religious denominations’ involvement as *low* for scores between 0.00 and 0.535, *medium* for scores between 0.536 to 0.711, *high* for 0.712 to 0.79 and *very high* from 0.80 to 1.00. For each dimension, a goalpost was earmarked; the maximum and minimum goalposts. Using these goalposts, each dimension index was calculated as

$$\text{Religion in Development dimension index} = \frac{\text{Actual value} - \text{minimum value}}{\text{Maximum value} - \text{Minimum value}} \quad (6)$$

The actual value was computed based on the average score of members rating of the various items used to measure religious denomination involvement in awareness raising and provision of social services. The maximum and minimum values representing the maximum goalposts and minimum goalposts were computed respectively as:

$$Maximum_{Goalpost} = \sum_i^n Max_i / n \quad (7)$$

$$Minimum_{Goalpost} = \sum_i^n Min_i / n \quad (8)$$

where Max and Min are the maximum and minimum scores obtained by denomination i and n is the number of denominations. The maximum and minimum goalposts for social service delivery index are 40.83 and 23, respectively. The maximum and minimum goalposts for the awareness raising index were also found to be 4.6 and 0, respectively. The various questions and hence items comprising these dimensions have been explained in the previous sections. The overall RDPRI was calculated as:

$$RDPRI = (RDSSDI \times RDARI)^{1/2} \quad (9)$$

As already stated, this methodology followed the computation of the NHDI (see [Todaro and Smith, 2015](#)). In this approach, the geometric mean is used instead of the simple arithmetic mean to account for non-substitutability in the various dimensions. To this extent, if religious denomination scores lower on one of the dimensions but scores higher on other dimensions, the lower score will affect the overall dimension. The study also used the arithmetic mean to complement the geometric mean. The arithmetic mean allows for substitutability of the various dimensions. For the arithmetic mean, we used the formula

$$RDPRI = \left(\frac{RDSSDI + RDARI}{2} \right) \quad (10)$$

3. Results

3.1 Descriptive statistics: demographic characteristics of communities and households

Communities: In the GLSS 7 data, there were 891 communities, made up of 597 and 293 communities in rural and urban areas, respectively. The average population in these communities was 16, 511. Over 95% (852 communities) have existed for over 50 years and above, 4.04% (36) have existed between 20 and 49 years, and the rest have existed for less than 20 years.

Households: Out of the 385 households that participated in the RPRS, 59% identified themselves as males and the rest (39%) identified themselves as females. In terms of education, only 7% of the respondents had no education. Most of the participants (65%) live in urban areas and the rest 35% live in rural communities.

3.2 Association between religious denomination and community welfare indicators

[Table 1](#) gives the odds ratio estimates of a logistic regression model of the association between the presence of the first major religious denomination in the community and five core community welfare indicators based on the GLSS 7 dataset. All communities that had missing values were excluded. The study found that the presence of Catholic denomination as the major religious denomination in the communities is positively associated with the provision of drinking water (*odds ratio* = 1.944, $p = 0.049$). Similar results were found for the presence of Protestant denomination (*odds ratio* = 1.817, $p = 0.096$). However, findings reveal that the Presence of Pentecostal/Charismatic denomination as the first major religious denominations in the community is negatively associated with the provision of drinking water (*odds*

Table 1. Associations between religious denominations and community welfare indicators based on logistic regression model

	(1) Provision of drinking water	(2) Provision of electricity	(3) Unemployment	(4) Poverty	(5) Deterioration of social amenities
<i>Religious denominations (REL)</i>					
Catholic	1.944** (0.049)	1.1801 (0.553)	0.9399 (0.804)	0.9434 (0.798)	1.5927 (0.221)
Protestant	1.817* (0.096)	1.1673 (0.590)	1.1389 (0.561)	1.1067 (0.689)	0.3974* (0.062)
<i>Pentecostal</i>	<i>0.3954***</i> <i>(0.028)</i>	<i>1.1013</i> <i>(0.680)</i>	<i>0.8132</i> <i>(0.309)</i>	<i>1.1858</i> <i>(0.425)</i>	<i>1.7825*</i> <i>(0.068)</i>
Other	0.5206 (0.479)	0.518 (0.428)	3.1877 (0.015)	0.5235 (0.319)	LSS (.)
Islam	0.7299 (0.466)	0.7521 (0.459)	0.7005 (0.291)	0.978 (0.934)	1.1839 (0.696)
Traditional	1.0437 (0.927)	0.8457 (0.70)	0.8393 (0.6871)	0.867 (0.675)	0.2365** (0.045)
Other +CONTROLS	LSS (.)	LSS (.)	4.8504*** (0.028)	0.733 (0.734)	2.2035 (0.496)
<i>OCC</i>					
Age	0.6246 (0.458)	1.6708 (0.392)	2.391704 (0.122)	0.9139 (0.802)	1.5316 (0.577)
Immigration (arrivals)	1.7495** (0.080)	1.6098* (0.054)	0.6617** (0.042)	0.6459** (0.019)	1.0904 (0.779)
Population	1.000** (0.034)	1.0000** (0.042)	1.0000 (0.686)	1.0000 (0.351)	1.0000* (0.065)
<i>OIC</i>	0.6008 (0.138)	0.8445 (0.513)	3.357906*** (0.000)	0.9887 (0.954)	0.7167 (0.343)
Economic activity (farming)	1.5498 (0.383)	1.2421 (0.494)	0.4714*** (0.001)	2.7549*** (0.001)	1.1571 (0.749)
Commuting status	1.2696 (0.422)	0.8922 (0.654)	1.1146 (0.599)	0.5818*** (0.005)	2.1682** (0.021)
Constant	0.3679 (0.697)	0.0103* (0.051)	0.5756** (0.024)	0.6161 (0.734)	0.1452 (0.163)
<i>N</i>	801	801	801	801	801
Pseudo <i>R</i> -squared	0.0629	0.0323	0.1147	0.098	0.0565
Wald (<i>p</i> -value)	(0.0104)	(0.0268)	(0.0000)	(0.0000)	(0.0809)
Conditional number (<i>k</i>)	67.6681	67.6681	67.6681	67.6681	67.6681
Conditional index (\sqrt{k})	8.23	8.23	8.23	8.23	8.23
Mean (VIF)	1.4	1.4	1.4	1.4	1.4

Note(s): *p*-statistics in parentheses; **p* < 0.10, ***p* < 0.05, ****p* < 0.010. +CONTROLS are based on Pentecostal/Charismatic regressions. NEST means not estimable due to low number of observations. OCC is observable community characteristics; OIC is observable individual characteristics. The values in italics show the scores obtained by Pentecostal/Charismatic churches. It also emphasizes the overall scores obtained by the various denominations

Source(s): Author's computation based on GLSS 7 (2016/2017)

ratio = 0.3954, *p* = 0.028) and positively associated with “deterioration in social amenities” (*odds ratio* = 1.7825, *p* = 0.068).

In the *rural-urban sub-samples* analysis, results reveal that the presence of Catholic denomination is significantly associated with the provision of water in rural areas (*odds ratio* = 2.88297, *p* = 0.008). The results also show that the presence of Protestant denomination as the major religion in the community is significantly associated with a

reduction in the odds that social amenities will deteriorate in rural areas (*odds ratio* = 0.236, $p = 0.062$). However, it was found that in *rural areas*, the presence of Pentecostal/Charismatic church as the major denomination significantly reduces the odds for the provision of water (*odds ratio* = 0.24994, $p = 0.025$), increases the odds of deterioration in social amenities (*odds ratio* = 2.095, $p = 0.062$) and poverty (*odds ratio* = 1.4879, $p = 0.094$).

3.3 Control variables

In addition to religion, several control variables were found to be significantly associated with welfare indicators in the community. One notable result is that, in communities where farming is the first major economic activity, the odds of poverty increases (*odds ratio* = 0.4714, $p = 0.001$). [Table 1](#) provides the details.

3.4 Religion in poverty reduction indices

3.4.1 Descriptive statistics. Religious denominations' involvement in provision of social services. Based on the data from the RPRS, results show that 25.5, 28.8 and 32.2% of households indicated that their places of worship have given scholarships, taken part in health screening and engaged in clean-up exercises, respectively, within the reference period. A high percentage (about 51%) of respondents answered that their congregation has taken part in the donation of books/uniforms/stationery/construction of a school. Still, about 28.81% of respondents answered that their congregation has undertaken free health screening among the members of the church or the community. However, items like the provision of microcredit (5.93%), skills training (4.24%) and the construction of borehole (2.545) recorded lower patronage from religious denominations in the study area.

Awareness raising. Results reveal that most of the religious denominations have taken part in awareness raising on development issues. Only 5.7, 8.72 and 9.26%, respectively, of respondents said that their place of worship never/rarely speaks about health, financial management and family planning. For those who rarely/never spoke about the issues considered, the highest percentage comes from family planning (14.48%), child labor (15.85) and parental involvement in child education (13.55). Only a few churches do not talk about hard work (1.1%), trust (1.65%), marriage and family issues (1.64%) and reconciliation (0.83%). On the other extreme end, the results show that 44.02, 60.38, 59.89, 64.74% of respondents indicated that their places of worship always talk about health, marriage and family issues, trust and reconciliation respectively. Again 30.52, 37.53 and 35.99% indicated that their places of worship always talk about schooling, hard work and environmental issues, respectively. However, only 6, 7.08, 7.38, 9.29 and 9.04% of respondents indicated that their places of worship always talk about financial management, entrepreneurship, child labor, family planning, parental involvement in child education, respectively.

3.4.2 Religious Denominations in Poverty Reduction Index. [Table 2](#) provides the results on the three indices measuring the involvement of religious denominations in community development for poverty alleviation obtained from RPRS. The results, as reported in [Table 2](#), show that all religious denominations, including Charismatic/Pentecostals, obtained a *medium* score on the RDDARI. The overall score on the RDDARI was a medium score. On the RDSSDI, apart from Islam which obtained a medium score, all religious denominations obtained a *low* score. Finally, on the RDPRI index which combines both indices, all the religious denomination obtained a *low* score.

4. Discussion

In recent times, there has an exponential growth of Pentecostal/Charismatic churches. This growth has come with both optimism and pessimism. On a positive note, several studies suggest that Pentecostal churches especially the traditional Pentecostal churches have made significant contributions to the socio-economic development of Ghana (see [Benya, 2021](#);

Table 2. Religion in poverty reduction index based on religious denominations' involvement in the provision of social services and awareness raising on developmental issues

Denomination	Actual (AR)	RDDARI	Description	Actual (SSD)	RDSSDI	Description	RDDPRI (geometric mean)	Description	RDPRI (arithmetic mean)	Description
Catholic	33.27	0.56	Medium	1.77	0.38	Low	0.46	Low	0.47	Low
Protestant	33.89	0.61	Medium	1.53	0.33	Low	0.45	Low	0.47	Low
<i>Pentecostal/charismatic</i>	<i>34.22</i>	<i>0.63</i>	<i>Medium</i>	<i>1.29</i>	<i>0.28</i>	<i>Low</i>	<i>0.42</i>	<i>Low</i>	<i>0.46</i>	<i>Low</i>
Other Christian	32.19	0.52	Medium	2.2	0.48	Low	0.50	Low	0.50	Low
Islam	33.5	0.59	Medium	2.63	0.57	Medium	0.58	Medium	0.58	Medium
Others	33	0.56	Medium	1.2	0.26	Low	0.38	Low	0.41	Low
<i>ALL</i>	<i>33</i>	<i>0.61</i>	<i>Medium</i>	<i>1.77</i>	<i>0.38</i>	<i>Medium</i>	<i>0.48</i>	<i>Low</i>	<i>0.50</i>	<i>Low</i>

Note(s): The values in italics show the scores obtained by Pentecostal/Charismatic churches. It also emphasizes the overall scores obtained by the various denominations

Source(s): Author, based on RPRS, 2017/18

Owusu-Ansah and Adjei-Acquah, 2020; Sarbah *et al.*, 2020). There is also the pessimist view that the growth of modern Pentecostal/Charismatic churches has adversely affected socio-economic development (for example, see Boaheng *et al.*, 2023). However, these studies are not based on nationally representative data. The current study used GLSS 7—a nationally and regionally representative data—to examine the association between Pentecostal/Charismatic denomination and some core community welfare indicators across Ghana. The study also relied on primary data from Greater Accra Region to construct objective indices to assess the contributions of Pentecostal/Charismatic denominations in community development.

The study found a significant positive association between Catholic and Protestant denominations as the major religious denomination in the communities and the provision of drinking water. On the contrary, whenever Pentecostal/Charismatic denomination was the first major religious denominations in the community, the odds of water provision reduces while the odds of deterioration in social amenities increases. These significant findings of the study are largely in line with the main H1 established in this study. It could be said that largely the teachings of Pentecostal/Charismatic churches which emphasizes spirits, miracles, individual prosperity etc. could explain these results. These results could also be attributed to the loose organizational structure which characterizes most of these churches (see Gifford, 2004; Asamoah-Gyadu, 2005; White, 2021; DiMaggio, 1998).

The study also found variations in the level of involvement in rural and urban communities. The study found that in *rural areas*, the presence of Pentecostal/Charismatic church as the major denomination significantly reduces the odds for the provision of water, increases the odds of deterioration in social amenities and poverty. The low participation of Charismatic/Pentecostal churches in rural development has been a subject of intense public discourse in Ghana. Arhin (2018) decried the situation whereby rural churches (mainly Charismatic) are obliged to send contributions to the head office in the cities instead of the head offices sending help to the rural areas. He also decried how most of these Pentecostal/Charismatic churches hold end of year Crusade and miracle sessions to dupe people of their harvested income as farmers in the rural areas.

The RDPRI found virtually no differences in the level of engagement in developmental activities between the Pentecostal/Charismatics and the other denominations. The study opines that this result could be explained from the perspective of the organizational structure of Pentecostals churches in Greater Accra Region. Almost all the major Pentecostal/Charismatic churches which operate as franchises have their headquarters and branches established in Greater Accra Region. Notably, Pentecostal/Charismatic churches such as ICGC, Royal House Chapel, Action Chapel etc. which are developmentally-oriented are found in most places in Accra. The study opines that perhaps the positive impact of these pro-development churches is almost parallel to that of Protestants and Catholics. Hence, their activities tend to eclipse those of the other Neo-Pentecostal churches which may have little regard for community development.

5. Conclusions

Evidence from various communities in Ghana shows that there is a significant negative association between the presence of Pentecostal/Charismatic churches as the first major denomination and core community welfare indicators such as the provision of water and social amenities, especially in rural areas. In contrast, in communities where Protestants and Catholic religious denominations appear to be the first major denominations, this association is positive. This conclusion implies that policies that regulate the organizational behavior of Pentecostal/Charismatic churches, especially those that operate as “one man” churches without any proper organizational structure, could go a long way to maximize the positive engagement of churches in community development. This assertion comes from one observation made in the study that religious denominations such as Protestants whose operations mimics franchising organizations seem to engage more greatly in community

development than Pentecostal/Charismatics whose organizational structure resembles that of free-standing entrepreneurs. Indeed, in Greater Accra Region where most of these Pentecostal Churches operate as franchises, their contributions to development are comparable to the other denominations. Therefore, the study recommends that the government through the Ministry of Religion and Chieftaincy Affairs should begin a stakeholder engagement with the Christian Council of Churches and the Ghana Pentecostal and Charismatic Council (GPCC), aimed at streamlining and “formalizing” the activities of the numerous Pentecostal/Charismatic churches by designing, adopting and enforcing a licensing requirement for planting/establishing churches. The study recommends that the process for establishing churches should require a document detailing church policies for leadership, management of finances, community development and members’ welfare. This licensing could be carried through a franchising arrangement in which Neo-Pentecostal churches whether new or old are made to use “franchisors” trademarks, business techniques, and some or all the merchandize (see [Rothenberg, 1967](#)).

The study also concludes that in highly urbanized communities such as Greater Accra Region, based on the new metrics constructed in this study, there exist no differences in the level of engagement in developmental activities of Pentecostal/Charismatic churches relative to other religious denominations such as mainline Protestants, Muslims and Catholics based on objective indices. This conclusion implies that it will be quite easier to assess the development contributions of the various denominations in Ghana if a common metrics exist for that purpose. Therefore, to guide public discourse and adequately inform policy on how to position the various churches for development, an objective assessment tool based on a nationally representative data is sorely needed. To this end, this study recommends the adoption, extension and scaling of the religion in development indices constructed in this study in Ghana. The study recommends a generalized nationally and regionally representative periodic religious survey by the GSS or a university research centre to capture the developmental activities of the various denominations and turn such activities into simple indices such as the ones proposed in this study. It is highly expected that public announcement of these performance indices at regular time intervals could encourage churches to enact policies to improve their scores and rankings on dimensions where they think they fall short. Eventually, the overall impact of the churches on poverty reduction could be maximized.

It must be emphasized that notwithstanding the notable results and recommendations, this study is not without its limitations. Firstly, the use of cross-sectional data means that it would be difficult to pin down the associations established between religious denominations and welfare indicators to causality. For now, the study opines that these results are just correlations and not necessarily causality. Secondly, with respect to the primary data collected in Greater Accra, only the responses of congregants were sought. Using data involving the responses of both the clergy and the congregants will improve the richness of the data and the generalizability of the results in this study.

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